CLOSE TO THE LAND

Connecting Northern Indigenous Communities and Southern Farming Communities
Through Food Sovereignty

By
Karlah Rae Rudolph

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Department of Environment and Geography
University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
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ABSTRACT

Southern rural farming communities and northern Indigenous communities in the Prairie Provinces of Canada each experience the Globalized Agri-Food System (GAFS) as detrimental to their food sovereignty. This study explores the Northern food crisis from an Indigenous perspective. It examines the degree to which rural-settler and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives can benefit by combining their resistance to the GAFS through North-South collaborative networks, and the pivotal role that youth and youth learning might play in achieving these ends. Insights derived from a youth-focused garden project in the South were complemented by interviews with youth and adults in both locations. The outcomes of this research position the Northern food crisis as a justice issue with connections to culture, environment and food, which in turn reflect a historic and ongoing colonization of Indigenous territories and communities. Successful intercultural alliances towards Alternative Food Systems (AFS) must work towards Indigenous food sovereignty in addressing these issues.

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1 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM FRAMING

There is increasing interest in the development of sustainable, alternative food systems (AFS) to address shortcomings of the global agro-food system (GAFS). The failings of the GAFS have been well detailed by numerous authors, in terms of environmental destruction (Horrigan et al. 2002, Troughton 2004), nutritional inadequacy (Skinner et al. 2006, Pawlick 2009) and through creating and contributing to poverty and political disempowerment in sites of primary production (Diaz et al. 2003, Buckland 2004, Desmarais 2007). A sustainable food system has been defined as one in which: environmental integrity of agricultural lands is maintained; family farms experience economic success; and methods of production are socially responsible and nutritionally adequate (UCSC 2009). Various models, such as community-supported agriculture, local food and fair trade are promoted as best alternatives to the GAFS. Yet most of these initiatives are centered on servicing urban consumers, and very little attention has been paid to food needs and priorities of rural and remote regions. Moreover, common definitions do not acknowledge food harvest systems based in fishing or Indigenous traditions around hunting and gathering wild edibles and medicines. The question of how sustainable food systems will evolve in the Prairie Provinces (Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta) is particularly interesting, as it redirects a process that has been on-going for many generations in these sparsely populated, colonized landscapes where food production systems were designed at a distance once settled, without considering any environmental, social, or cultural constraints (Anderson and McLachlan 2008).

Food security and food sovereignty are two concepts often employed within alternative food system literature. Food security has gone through many definitions, starting with the World Health Organization's (WHO) 1996 definition: Food security exists "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life" (WHO 2011). From this definition, food security has broadened conceptually to include people's right to meet their needs through preferred

means and recognition that access is limited by physical, social and economic means (FAO 2011). However, issues of power and privilege in the GAFS are often overlooked by food security. In contrast, these issues are explicitly addressed by food sovereignty, which recognizes the right of all communities to define their own food systems, be it peasant, small farm, fishing, hunting, gathering or some combination thereof, independently from the will of international market powers embodied in the World Trade Organization and actuated through externally imposed regulations such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Desmarais 2007). From a food sovereignty perspective, food security initiatives that fail to identify and challenge the power structures embedded in the initiation and actuation of the GAFS will fail to address the root causes of poverty and hunger (Desmarais 2007).

An ongoing rural crisis in Western Canada is characterized by farm foreclosures, declining mental and physical health, loss of infrastructure and services, fewer and larger farms, and outward non-farming urban migration (Diaz et al. 2003, Bell 2004). Across the northern reaches of these provinces, Indigenous communities are facing a food security crisis brought about by declines in the quality and availability of traditional country foods, increased accessibility to highly-processed, low-nutrition foods, and prohibitively high prices on fresh fruits and vegetables (Thompson et al. 2010). This food insecurity is aggravated by pervasive poverty and the long-term impacts of colonial constructs such as residential schools, and accompanied by an array of diet-related diseases, especially diabetes and heart disease (Willows 2005). The GAFS is thus failing both rural and Aboriginal communities in Western Canada. There has been recent excitement around food sovereignty as a response to these shortcomings, defined as the right of all people to define their own food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems in direct opposition to international market powers (Desmarais, 2007). Rapidly adopted by rural and Indigenous communities around the world, food sovereignty also has important implications for food justice in

Canada. Food sovereignty is thus a useful lens under which to consider emerging AFS in the Prairie Provinces and in Canada as a whole.

A potentially innovative and untried way of addressing the Northern food crisis may lie in creating connections between Northern First Nations communities and Southern farmers interested in AFS over the issue of food sovereignty. A connection of this nature would give Southerners greater insight into the importance of food-related cultural traditions in the North and the healthy food products that are a part of Northern lands while simultaneously giving Northern community members direct access to food-related knowledge and healthy food products located in the South. In some respects, the idea of trade between these communities is not new. Pre-European contact, an extensive trade network for wild edible plants, bison, fish, farmed grains and game existed between Northern and Southern Indigenous Nations of the western prairies and beyond (J. Munroe, personal communication, 27 August 2010). While colonialism and the initiation of the GAFS in the early years of European settlement on the Canadian prairies has largely dismantled this system, there is a renewed interest in localized and regional trade as AFS begin to emerge. Now, however, a relationship between the North and South must account for differing conceptualizations of food sovereignty and must navigate the tension-ridden historical and ongoing relations between First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians.

1.1 Thesis Objectives

The overall goal of this thesis was to explore novel and potentially radical ways of addressing the food epidemic confronting Indigenous communities in the North, while affirming the independence, traditions, food sovereignty, and vitality of both Northern Indigenous and rural communities. An important objective was to describe and explore the implications of the conventional food system for Northern Indigenous communities and to explore the attitudes of Northern Indigenous community members regarding food sovereignty. This research, detailed in Chapter 6, specifically sought to:

- Describe the needs and priorities that confront many Northern Indigenous communities as they relate to food;
- Describe how these needs and priorities have changed over time and what factors underlie and give rise to these changes; and
- Identify the relative importance of existing and potential responses to these challenges, especially as they relate to Food Sovereignty.

An equally important objective was to explore the role of North-South reciprocative networks in achieving food sovereignty and to evaluate changes in attitudes towards such networks in both regions, as associated with participants' experiences with a pilot project involving a Southern garden and emergent reciprocative food network. This research, detailed in Chapter 7, specifically sought to:

- Identify attitudes towards a North-South collaboration around food on the part of Northern Indigenous community members and Southern farming community members;
- Identify the potential for and implications of a North-South collaborative farm project in mitigating food insecurity in the North;
- Explore how intercultural alliances in AFS can contribute to Indigenous food sovereignty; and
- Identify the role that youth can play in North-South collaborations.

The experiences, discussions, actions and overall outcomes associated with this project will have implications for all actors in Northern food systems and for the interpretation and understanding of emergent AFS in the Prairie Provinces as a whole. The successful elements of the pilot project will reveal how AFSs may evolve in sparsely populated, Northern regions and how farm families and rural communities can be involved in this process. This project aims to provide solutions to an ongoing

Northern food crisis and have strong implications for communities, decision-makers, and other stakeholders elsewhere in Manitoba and indeed Canada as a whole. This project will add to the wider citizen discourse on evolving solidarity across difference, a concept currently embraced by adherents to the global movement for food sovereignty, as project participants seek common understanding, as reflected in transcommunality theory (Childs 1998), transformative learning (Mezirow 2003, Perry and Shotwell 2009) and food sovereignty (Desmarais 2007, Morrison 2011). Moreover, this project will contribute to the emerging policy initiatives of the alternative food movement, which is thus far experiencing gaps in adequately identifying the needs of rural and Northern communities and especially those of Indigenous communities.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 GAFS: Progress for Whom?

The global agro-food system (GAFS) is the result of the globalization of agri-industrial forms of food production for an international commodity market at the expense of subsistence land-use, Indigenous food systems and small-scale agriculture oriented to local markets. While the broader process of globalization is partly responsible for the development of the GAFS, this notion must be refined to direct attention towards the globalization of a particular world view: the commodification of food and neo-liberal economic assumptions that globalized trade in and of itself generates wealth at the local level (Riches 1999, Desmarais 2007). This colonization of food production in Canada is largely actualized through Northern and transnational corporation-favouring policies in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and NAFTA, and in the case of Indigenous food systems, began with the invasion and appropriation of land and land-based resources by colonial forces (Buckman 2004, Desmarais 2007, Morrison 2011). These policies and laws encourage the use of chemicals and seeds owned by transnational corporations and disregard the knowledge and production systems of farmers and hunter-gatherers who do not engage in "acceptable" forms of agriculture and food-production (Desmarais 2007). The process of launching the GAFS experiment without due concern for environmental or social factors and without respecting Indigenous and small-scale forms of localized production is devastating both farming and Indigenous communities alike.

Rural areas have a greater reliance on resource extraction, contain fewer services, have populations with lower levels of formal education and income, and use different criteria for adjudicating 'quality of life' (Diaz et al. 2003). In farming, market power is increasingly consolidated within input-supply, seed and processing companies (Diaz et al. 2003). In a process known as "the technological treadmill" farmers are forced to enlarge farm size and use increasingly automated equipment and corporate owned

seeds and farm chemicals to potentially achieve benefits associated with increased economies of scale (Buckland 2004). The results for rural communities can be devastating as young people who might otherwise farm, or contribute to the community in multiple ways, are forced to leave for urban areas. In most industrial nations, farm population has declined from 25% to just 4% of the total from 1950 to 2000 (Buckland 2004). Local businesses in rural communities increasingly relocate to larger centers, as there is no longer a population large enough to condone servicing a smaller centre. Rural community members are forced to travel ever-longer distances for a multitude of services including education, health care, postal service and groceries (NFU 2005).

The GAFS undermines food security in rural communities in Canada, as fresh produce, arriving in the country from as far away as Mexico and traveling first through urban centers, is of very poor quality by the time it arrives. Access to high-calorie, low nutrition convenience foods has increased and obesity rates are disproportionately high in rural communities (Diaz et al. 2003). According to Desmarais (2007), "the production, distribution, preparation, consumption, and celebration of food are all fundamental aspects of rural cultures" (p. 197) and this land-based culture never emerged in rural farming communities as the settlement process was initiated and designed with commodity, export-based agriculture in mind (Anderson and McLachlan 2008). Despite increasing evidence mounting against the GAFS in Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the main political body responsible for international and domestic food and agriculture policy, continues to place economic considerations and a dedication to global competition ahead of environmental sustainability, community development and consumer health (MacRae and the Toronto Food Policy Council 1999, AAFC 2008).

However, these values are beginning to be challenged. While change is slow, food is now at least on the agenda. In the lead-up to the 2011 Federal Election, five federal parties unveiled food policy platforms as part of their campaigns. This is the first time in Canadian history that food has been at the forefront of a federal election. Of these, the New Democratic Party's is the thickest and is most

reflective of the discourse ongoing in academia and civil society (Epp 2011). The Conservative Party maintains a focus on export-oriented agriculture and on profit-motivated strategies for a successful agriculture system (Epp 2011). Thus, if current election trends continue, progressive change will not be forthcoming.

While the GAFS is clearly failing rural farming communities in Canada, food system colonialism has ruinous consequences for Indigenous communities worldwide. Indigenous peoples see land not just as a source of food, fibre and energy, but also as territory and a sense of identity: homeland, culture, religion, spirituality and a connection to ancestors and the natural environment are elements intertwined with and dependent on Indigenous peoples' ability to access land (Kuhnlein et al. 2006, Stavenhagen 2006, Power 2008). In nations such as Mexico, commercial crop varieties and the implementation of private property regimes have displaced subsistence farming practices (Stavenhagen 2006) and contaminated the genetics of traditional crops varieties (Soleri et al. 2005).

The distancing of Indigenous communities from their means of subsistence in the Prairies extends far into the history of Northern Manitoba, a region that was central to the North American fur trade and the commercial activities of the Hudson's Bay Company, which was active in the area from 1670 to 1870 (Friesen 1987). Indigenous communities moved from a subsistence lifestyle that relied largely on local resources to trapping fur pelts for the Company in exchange for imported goods and later, money. Resources were depleted in many regions and the Hudson Bay Company found it more profitable to supply Indigenous communities with food rather than see these valuable employees commit time and resources to hunting and trapping for their own subsistence (Tough 1996). These deeply asymmetrical trade relations were only the earliest of arguably ongoing attempts to separate First Nations from land and resources, understood within a Marxist framework of primitive accumulation as a method used by more powerful interests to obtain said resources for commercial profit (Mascarenhas 2007). These early experiences with global capitalism both resulted from European demand for exploitative resource

consumption and also embroiled Indigenous communities in a dependence on this system as local resources dwindled and the opportunity to live through subsistence consequently declined (Tough 1996).

The slaughter of the Plains Bison is a clear example of the exploitation of Indigenous food sources for industrial benefits. According to Taylor (2011), the near-extinction of the bison resulted from three factors: the invariability of the price of bison hides regardless of diminishing supply, the lack of regulation on the hunt in North America and most particularly, the introduction of a tanning method which rendered the industrial demand for bison hides in Europe almost insatiable (Taylor 2011). In Western Canada, the appropriation of lands by colonial powers and the selling-off of this land to a farming culture based in private property rights through the Dominion Lands Act, combined with the forced resettlement of Indian Bands onto reserve-lands further disabled the ability of First Nations to access and live off of land-based resources (Cariou 2006, Smits 1994). These accumulative historic factors, among others, all led to the dependence of Indigenous communities on farmed and imported foods. This is a devastating history, as Indigenous communities depend on access to land not only for traditional foods and their connections with health and healing (Kuhnlein et al. 2006), but also require land as a "social space" in which cultural reproduction takes place (Stavenhagen 2006).

Indicators of social well being are substantially lower for Indigenous peoples in comparison to others residing in Canada (Stavenhagen 2006) and the situation worsens as displaced Indigenous people, unable to rely on traditional food sources, replace traditional diets with market foods high in sucrose, fats and salts (Kuhnlein et al. 2006). In Canada, First Nations have higher rates of diet-related diseases such as diabetes, which in Manitoba is quadruple that of the national average (MacKinnon 2005). Urban First Nations people are disproportionately represented in lines at food banks and often access traditional food sources far less frequently than families and individuals living on reserve (Riches 1999). Obesity rates are also unusually high in First Nations communities: in Northern communities, 29% of young people and 60% of women are obese (Milburn 2004). In the North, fresh foods often must travel by

plane. They are expensive and often of poor quality and low variety (Skinner et al. 2006) and when convenience foods are available, individuals often choose convenience foods over these culturally unfamiliar and poor quality fruits and vegetables (Kuhnlein et al. 2004).

Although country foods are still consumed by many in these communities, there are ever-increasing threats to the availability of these foods, including reduced access to traditional lands, restrictive government policies, changes in wildlife and plant species migratory patterns and abundance, a reduced transfer of cultural knowledge, a reduced taste for country foods, particularly amongst young people, and prohibitive costs associated with hunting and fishing (Power 2008). Increasingly, academics, activists and concerned community members are identifying the need to counterbalance these unhealthy dietary practices with multiple healthy food alternatives that focus on traditional diets, both as a means to cultural renewal and a solution to diet-related disease (Milburn 2004, Willows 2005). Food-related initiatives will be more successful if they are community-based, participatory and empowering in nature, and most importantly, if they seek to reestablish Indigenous nutrition, i.e. "culturally and bioregionally specific food-related knowledge that results in a dietary pattern meeting nutritional needs while avoiding Western diseases" (Milburn 2004, p. 421).

2.2 Responses to the GAFS: Alternative Food Systems, Alternative Relationships

A movement for sustainability in the food system is emerging in response to these and other failings of the GAFS. Advocates of a sustainable food system wish to re-embed the food market into a regional cultural context and guide the social impact that food production has within the communities of both producers and consumers (Morgan et al. 2006). This is a form of alter-globalization and advocates of a sustainable food system find that a local model for production and trade can accomplish these ends and that it is also associated with reduced environmental costs. Food produced for a local market is also often organic in nature, as producers feel no competitive pressure to standardize their product for a

world market and instead prefer to reduce their use of inputs derived from non-renewable resources (Buckland 2004).

Those who share a world-view in which sustainable food systems are the preferred method of food production and trade find they have an ethical objection to food products commoditized for a free trade market without due attention paid to negative social and environmental ramifications. Consumers and producers instead form meaningful relationships with one another and work together to determine how the food system will operate (Morgan et al. 2006). While consumers and producers alike are realizing that diet is a private choice, they also recognize that what food is available, who has access to it and how our system of production and distribution affects environment, society and community is a matter of public concern (Morgan et al. 2006). While many alternative food movements are concerned with sustainable rural communities formed of producers receiving fair prices for their products, others make affordability of nutritious food options in low-income urban centers their priority. There is undoubtedly a tension afforded between nutrition and affordability and a well-founded concern that unequal food choices will be made available to different socio-economic classes of society (Guthman 2008a).

The history of the GAFS in Indigenous communities began with colonization of the land base, the relocation of Indigenous communities onto reserves and the replacement of land foods with low quality government provisions (Bell-Sheeter 2004, Turner et al. 2008). The residential school system in many communities almost eradicated inter-generational transfer of the skill sets required to harvest and use traditional foods (Turner et al. 2008). Currently, intensive resource extraction within traditional territories, including mining, forestry and energy development, is an ongoing threat to the abundance and health of the food source itself (Alkon and Norgaard 2009, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011).

Thus, Indigenous alternatives to the GAFS are embedded in traditions that concern access to healthy foods on ancestral lands and have deeper connections to the maintenance of Indigenous culture

and the reconciliation of past injustices (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011). Indeed, the survival of many Indigenous cultures, languages, and spirituality depend on access to the traditional land base and to the knowledge and skills required to make full use of the food it provides (Carino 2006). While the epidemic of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease confronting Indigenous communities in industrialized nations requires urgent attention, the health related impacts of the GAFS are not simply physical, but cultural, spiritual and political in nature (Kuhnlein et al. 2006, Alkon and Norgaard 2009).

2.3 Engaging with Diversity When Exploring Alternatives

The alternative food movement has been criticized as catering to the needs of upper and middle class eaters in urban centres (Slocum 2006, Guthman 2008a, Alkon and Norgaard 2009). According to Guthman (2008a), healthy and local food is often highly priced, partly because of a dedication amongst adherents to the movement to ensuring a living wage for farmers and also due to the niche market nature of the food. Slocum (2006) and Alkon and Norgaard (2009) emphasize that the association of the sustainable agriculture movement with "slow" European food traditions and fine (exclusive) dining may actually limit the ability of this movement to challenge agri-industrial models of food production with its connections to privilege.

While the higher cost of local food is frequently cited as an example of the exclusionary nature of alternative food practices, there is increasing acknowledgment that even the spaces and institutions in which good food alternatives exist are based in the cultural values of dominant society (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996, Allen 2008). When food "evangelizers" attempt to "bring good food to others", assuming that knowledge, access and cost are the primary barriers to accessing good food, they bring their set of (dominant) cultural assumptions with them (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996). As stated by Slocum (2006), "the desire for good and sufficient food and jobs and thriving economies is not white. It becomes white through what white bodies do in this effort" (p. 2).

Alternative food projects based in addressing hunger amongst the disenfranchised can reflect the desires of the food "missionaries" more so than the needs or desires of the intended recipients (Slocum 2006). Thus Guthman (2008a) argues "the intention to do good on behalf of those deemed 'other' has the markings of colonial projects, in that it seeks to improve the other while eliding the historical developments that produced these material and cultural distinctions in the first place" (p. 436). When food activists from dominant society initiate projects within disenfranchised communities without engaging a critical lens and without adequate community involvement, their actions may serve to recreate the very discourse that served to generate structural inequalities in the first place (Slocum 2006, Guthman 2008a).

In their exploration of food justice issues of the Karuk tribe in Northern California, Alkon and Norgaard (2009) emphasize that the tribe considers their current lack of food security to be an ongoing development in the "history of genocide, lack of land rights, and forced assimilation" (p. 297) that have devastated Indigenous communities across North America since colonization. Thus, the basis of food insecurity from this Indigenous perspective is linked to the larger issues of environmental and social injustice. Alkon and Norgaard (2009) further argue that "sustainable agriculture scholars and activists have not yet understood the ways that race shapes a community's ability to produce and consume food" (p. 300), and suggest that "a food justice approach emphasizing race and power" (p. 301) may allow sustainable agriculture activists to work within and build upon the momentum of other justice movements. This new lens for the alternative food movement might then permit food scholars and activists to engage with marginalized communities in meaningful and equitable ways.

According to Alkon and Norgaard (2009), Indigenous communities want to largely provide their own food for their own communities. The Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (2011) emphasizes community mobilization around Indigenous foods located within traditional territory and a need for community members to respond to their own needs. These food activists also identify an

ongoing need to reconcile Indigenous food traditions and values with colonial laws and policies through a restorative framework (PFPPa 2010). Thus, non-Indigenous allies from settler communities are welcome to engage, within a context of social learning that can reveal Indigenous food sovereignty perspectives with connections to treaty and land rights to non-Indigenous citizens (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011, Morrison 2011).

Grossman (2003) discusses the benefits of collaborative action between residents of rural settler communities and First Nations through their mutual defense of the sacred Black Hills of South Dakota against industrial incursions. He found that when these intercultural alliances directly addressed the relationship between Native American and white rural communities, lasting bonds were built that were both more successful than isolationist approaches to resisting unwanted development and which also provided a path out of historical natural resource conflicts between the two groups. Grossman (2003) and Childs (1998) acknowledge that such Indigenous/non-Indigenous alliances are difficult to maintain due to deep cultural and economic differences. There are very few examples of rural-Indigenous alliances in North America, however, and no examples of solidarity action on food between non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities within the alternative food literature or popular media in a North American context.

Actors in AFS are attempting to respond to these concerns over the recreation of existing societal power dynamics within the alternative food movement. Advocates of the sustainable food movement agree that alternative forms of development in the food system should embody principles of participation that allow marginalized people to define their own needs (Morgan et al. 2006, Desmarais 2007). Indeed, Levkoe (2006) argues that alternative food activities can bring together people who are traditionally in conflict and provide a model for wider citizen discourse on what good governance formed of diverse cultures might look like. Levkoe (2011) subsequently states that alternative food projects must become politically transformative through processes of transformative social learning in order to offer genuine

alternatives to the GAFS. The unanswered question of how communities of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds can come together over good food in mutually affirming ways is thus an important one for the alternative food movement – one that has yet to be addressed.

2.4 Transcommunality Theory, Transformative Learning and Food Sovereignty

According to Childs (1998), as economic globalization continues its process of uprooting and destabilizing communities-of-place, the ability of individuals to act in tandem with the competing social and cultural groups with which they collide is in fact essential for their resistance to the very forces underpinning the destabilization (Childs 1998). Otherwise, conflict distracts communities from constructive action and resistance (Dobbie and Richards-Schuster 2008). Conflict and fragmentation within social movements formed of diverse groups reduces the capacity of such movements to construct lasting alternatives (Dobbie and Richards-Schuster 2008); yet, attempts to reduce conflict in social movements through suppressing expressions of difference upholds problematic 'frames of reference' which are incapable of comprehending diverse perspectives (Mezirow 2003), recreates existing societal power hierarchies (Guthman 2008a) and distorts the validity of such movements as their goals and actions are inevitably skewed towards outcomes that favour the perspectives of the powerful (Mezirow 2003). As Childs (1998) states, "the real dilemma we face is the lack of constructive and mutually respectful interaction among those diverse settings, rather than the diversity itself" (p. 7).

Increasingly, social movement theory is focused on how social movements can create collective efforts across diverse social boundaries (e.g. Childs 1998; Dobbie and Richards-Schuster 2008). Childs (1998) labels successful coalitions as having engaged in a process of transcommunality, which begins with practical action on a shared problem. Shared practical action brings individual who might otherwise never interact into close proximity with one another, offering opportunities to engage in critical discourse (Mezirow 2003), participate in hands-on activities that take participants outside their societal

norms and usual frames of reference (Mezirow 2003, Perry and Shotwell 2009) and form trusting friendships (Childs 1998). Perry and Shotwell (2009) label the knowledge gained through these opportunities as 'propositional knowledge', 'tacit knowledge' and 'affective knowledge', respectively, confirming that all three must coalesce in order for transformative learning to take place.

Constructive disputing is essential to transcommunal action (Childs 1998), as participants understand that arriving at the 'truths' or 'frames of reference' that guide group action is a process of negotiation (Dobbie and Richards-Schuster 2008). The presence and participation of diverse groups requires that participants analyze the source, structure and history of their own frames of reference (Mezirow 2003) and thereby begin to recognize relations of power and racialized identity that have been shaped by historical processes of colonization (Walter 2009). These processes of transformative social learning can create more politically effective individuals and organizations (Levkoe 2006), evolve individuals engaged in conscious thought towards dismantling the economic, political and social structures that uphold inequality (Perry and Shotwell 2009) and ultimately contribute to more effective societal functioning as decisions are based in a broader knowledge base that is more reflective of reality (Mezirow 2003).

Guthman (2008a) argues that transcommunality offers an alternative to conversion tactics employed by food evangelizers from dominant society when they engage with marginalized – and often food insecure – groups. While Guthman (2008a) suggests that initiating AFS "through an alternative supply side emphasis is inadequate and possibly misguided" (p. 442), she also acknowledges that it is only through experiential learning derived from participatory action that involved individuals actually live the "frictions" that arise from working cross-culturally. Physically and mentally engaging with these frictions makes them visible, such that an individual initiating action from a dominant societal background can begin to identify and challenge the cultural assumptions embedded in the alternative

food movement (Childs 1998). Slocum (2006) also states that only through practice can a student begin to understand racial difference and racial connection.

However, this transformative learning requires a different sensibility: one that “encourages those who wish to convert, to listen, watch, and sometimes even stay away instead” (Guthman 2008a, p. 444). Ultimately, the “frictions” of engaging across and forming bridges between distinct cultural groups can lead to a greater understanding of other positions and result in new arrangements of culture and power. Thus, while alliances that cross boundaries of power and privilege may carry with them risks associated with food colonization, it is only through engaging in direct action and forming genuine relationships through that action that members of dominant society can become aware of the contours of structural inequality and of the dominating discourse present in the food movement (Guthman 2008a, Perry and Shotwell 2009).

Food sovereignty is the lens being employed within AFS that has the greatest potential to build upon and connect with transcommunality theory and transformative learning. Food sovereignty is defined as:

> “people’s right to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution and consumption of food that guarantees the right to food for the entire population, on the basis of small and medium-sized production, respecting their own culture and the diversity of peasant, fishing and indigenous forms of agricultural production, marketing and management of rural areas, in which women play a fundamental role”
>
> *Fisher and Ponniah 2003, p. 166.*

The movement for food sovereignty becomes actualized through the evolution of solidarity amongst its inhabitants (Desmarais 2007); that is, recognition of the moral other and the attached obligation to meet diverse needs amongst community members at the local level, within political jurisdictions such as provinces and states and internationally through initiatives such as fair trade (Sachs and Santarius, 2007). This solidarity is embodied in the principle of “unity in diversity” and it is adherence to this

principle that allows the movement for food sovereignty to move forward with common goals and active political motion while acknowledging, respecting and celebrating diversity in an environment of "constant tension and reaffirmation" (Desmarais 2007, p. 198).

The cycles of tension and reaffirmation described by Desmarais (2007) resonate strongly with the "friction" of cross-cultural interactions identified by Guthman (2008a). So, too, does the principle of "unity in diversity" resonate within transcommunality theory (Childs 1998). While the term food sovereignty was first used in the context of multi-stakeholder and cross-cultural relationships amongst the world's peasant and Indigenous farmers in Latin America, it is clear that emerging solidarity in diversity is of equal importance when considering the development of AFS within Canada and at the local level. This is particularly the case when considering cross-cultural relationships between farming communities and Indigenous communities because of the long history of divisive oppression (Childs 1998). Food sovereignty as a definition must be continually evolved in order to acknowledge the perspectives diverse players bring forward (Wiebe and Wipf 2011).

Food sovereignty perspectives bear particular relevance for cross-cultural coalitions that work across boundaries of power and privilege. At an international level, food sovereignty contrasts with food security (i.e. a supply-side emphasis), a perspective that ignores how power relations determine favoured production, distribution and consumption patterns within the food system and in turn justify the high-input, intensive production methods favoured by the GAFS (Wiebe and Wipf 2011). Food sovereignty perspectives instead position social, political and economic structures as the causes of food insecurity and of social and environmental devastation (Wiebe and Wipf 2011). In the same way that food sovereignty perspectives recognize political and economic power at the international level through organizations such as La Vía Campesina, localized cross-cultural collaborations that seek to mitigate food insecurity can benefit from this critical approach as it can direct participants towards the root causes of food insecurity through processes of social learning (Guthman 2008a, Wiebe and Wipf 2011).

Worldwide, globalization undermines the lifestyles and cultures of Indigenous communities most destructively (Carino 2006) and the so-called 'modernization' of agriculture and food actuated through the GAFS and world government policy is amongst the most damaging influences of globalization within Indigenous communities (Carino 2006, Wiebe and Wipf 2011). Collaborations between Indigenous and settler communities can be particularly difficult because of the long history of domination and suppression and resultant lack of trust (Wallace 2009). Indeed, it can be equally important for marginalized groups to disengage and discuss priorities amongst themselves (Childs 1998, Dobbie and Richards-Schuster 2008). Yet, Indigenous communities have much to offer AFS: traditional knowledge systems, innovations and land use practices serve as living viable alternatives to globalization (Carino 2006) and examples of the community-based control that results in sustainable food production and genuine food security (Wiebe and Wipf 2011). Moreover, collective pressure from a unified group representing a diversity of citizens can place greater political pressure on governments and decision-makers within the food system (Levkoe 2006).

Indigenous Peoples are partnering with non-Indigenous organizations to address food sovereignty at the national and international level (Carino 2006). In Canada, the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty contributes the unique perspectives of Indigenous communities to the PFPP (People's Food Policy Project) (PFPPa 2010). This Indigenous group engages, disengages and reengages at will within the PFPP, as is appropriate to transcommunal action (Childs 1998) and the result of this distinct entity within the organization is that each discussion paper of the PFPP contains material pertaining to the particular needs of Indigenous communities (PFPPb 2010). Moreover, the Working Group has presented a First Principles Protocol for Building Cross-Cultural Relationships (PFPPb 2010) and requires all PFPP partners to adopt these principles. An essential principle is that PFPP partners support Indigenous struggles with colonial governments towards addressing issues with "Aboriginal title and rights" and "self-government" as described in section 35(1) of the Canadian Constitution (PFPPb 2010).

A first step towards the transformative social learning that can create effective alliances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities is hands-on learning through engaging non-Indigenous allies with Elders and traditional harvesters (Morrison 2011). Thus, intercultural alliances necessarily take AFS beyond notions of "good food" to ones of "just food", where AFS are developed in ways that challenge the "economic and cultural conditions in which the alternatives to the alternatives operate" (Guthman 2008a, p. 442). Levkoe (2011) suggests that this question is central to the potential of AFS to create substantive change and avoid becoming assimilated into the larger GAFS.

2.5 Emerging AFS in Canada and Transcommunal Food Action

While AFS are emerging in the Prairie Provinces and in Canada as a whole, there are still gaps in both the knowledge and the practice of food sovereignty. For instance, in a cursory look at alternatives currently existing in Canada, including direct-marketing, farmer's markets, community gardens and community supported agriculture (Canadian CED Network 2007, Canadian Social Economy Hub 2009, MAFRA 2011), few of these operate with a food sovereignty lens and even less is mentioned about the specific perspectives of Indigenous communities in achieving food sovereignty.

As argued by Morgan et al. (2006), localized food chains do not automatically escape the problems of power, privilege and poverty that are associated with the GAFS. Certainly, many individuals and communities are excluded from accessing good food and many are concerned about an emerging bifurcated system. As noted, when members of the alternative food movement reach out to others, they run the risk of imposing their assumptions regarding the nature of the problem and its potential solutions. Moreover, there is a concern that AFS and even food sovereignty will remain the pet-interest of an informed and privileged few (Allen 2008). According to Morgan et al. (2006), unless AFS find political expression and challenge the political, economic and institutional structures that support industrial agriculture, they will only be co-opted by dominant forces and fail to substantiate real change

for food providers and consumers. Thus, understanding the relationship of food security to power and privilege and challenging the GAFS and even existing AFS at an institutional level may be a necessary element of success for emerging AFS (Allen 2008).

The legwork on AFS policy recommendations is being initiated in Canada (MacRae and the Toronto Food Policy Council 1999, Canadian CED Network 2007, PFPPa 2010). Again, even within the alternative policy framework, there is an identified gap of knowledge surrounding Indigenous farming, fishing, hunting and gathering food systems in Canada and the perspectives and needs embedded in those systems. The People's Food Policy Project, recognizing this gap, seeks advice from the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (PFPPa 2010). Power (2008) in particular identifies the need for Aboriginal perspectives on food security to emerge at the forefront of the consideration of AFS in Canada. The Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (2011) may provide a model and rallying point for the emergence of this important work.

In Canada, rural and Indigenous communities have common interests. Despite being land-based peoples who are geographically close to and often involved in food-procurement activities, they, along with the urban poor, are most negatively affected by the GAFS with respect to health and livelihood. These communities are further united in their existence at the resource peripheries and sites of primary production. Although rural and Indigenous communities can come together in their common identity as land-based peoples, there are great differences in how each of these groups will perceive their needs through food sovereignty. First Nations and Métis communities in Canada have a tradition of hunting and gathering medicines and wild edibles and in farming – both prior to and after European contact. Food security for these Nations encompasses traditional food practices surrounding harvesting, sharing and consumption of country foods and a specific worldview that is constantly threatened by Western perspectives (Simpson 2002, Power 2008, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011).

3 RESEARCH ORIGINS

3.1 Community Participants and Project History

Pam and Clint Cavers, family farmers, owners of Harbourside Farms in Southern Manitoba and associated with the Harvest Moon Local Food Initiative (HMLFI) contacted Dr. Stef McLachlan in 2009 about partnering with Northern communities. It was suggested that interested Northern community members would temporarily move to their farm near Pilot Mound in Southern Manitoba and raise their own livestock, crops, and vegetables with the ongoing and active mentorship of experienced farm family members. In the fall, food products would be transported to participating Northern communities and distributed in whatever fashion project participants felt appropriate. On the return trip Northern foods and cultural products such as fruit, wild rice, fish, moose, smoked meats, preserves, clothing and furs would be transported south, to be distributed in both urban and rural regions and especially amongst low-income groups partnering with the Manitoba Alternative Food Research Alliance (MAFRA) in inner city Winnipeg. In September of 2009, Dr. McLachlan sought out and identified a potential Northern champion in Gerald McKay, an Indigenous fisherman from Grand Rapids and Band member of Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) who attended Residential School with Dr. Peter Kulchyski, a colleague of Dr. McLachlan's at the University of Manitoba. Gerald, Stef and I met and discussed this idea of a North-South food network. Gerald then introduced me to Connie Cook, the local culture camp coordinator and MCN Band member. A series of meetings in the North, combined with Gerald and Connie journeying south to see the farm solidified the participation of Grand Rapids and MCN in Year One of the project.

As conversation occurred between the farmers, the Northern community and myself, additional elements were added to the original scheme. Connie indicated an interest in using the Southern farmland as a training ground and establishing an equivalent sister-farm in her home community in the future.

Gerald felt that Grand Rapids and MCN would be good places to try the idea out in and have it expand from, as it was the more remote and fly-in communities who most needed solutions to the food crisis. A direct trade of Harbourside Farms grass-raised meats such as chicken, pork and beef for Northern fish occurred in February of 2010.

In April of 2010, Connie Cook withdrew her support for the project, citing a disinterest in developing trade between the two communities and a desire to focus on establishing and improving gardens in Grand Rapids and MCN. In the following months, Gerald introduced me to many community members with an interest in gardening, wild harvests and community health, eventually leading me to Alice Cook, a community Elder and former Chief of MCN. Feeling that youth would benefit from an experience on a Southern farm, Alice directed me towards Grand Rapids School while simultaneously encouraging me to spend more time in the community to better learn the Northern food culture, by visiting the local culture camp and by engaging directly with spiritual and cultural activities associated with obtaining food from land.

After several conversations with Annie Ballantyne, a Band member and Principal at Grand Rapids School, it was established that students from grades 6-11 would travel south and set up a five-acre garden on land near Pilot Mound owned by the Cavers. The Grade 8 students were receiving small raised garden beds through the school and their teacher Sarah Hanniman decided to take these students to the farm so they could learn gardening skills in a hands-on environment. Charles Lahaie, the agriculture teacher for Grade 11, thought his students would benefit from hands on learning as well. Both teachers agreed to also take any other interested students from grades 6-11 with them when they travelled south. Lelaine Tugade, the Grade 4 teacher and Chad Conrad, the Physical Education teacher also accompanied the youth on several occasions and Annie and her husband Edwin were instrumental in transporting the harvest north. Trips south commenced in June 2010 and nine weekend trips took place throughout the growing season, with the final trip occurring in October 2010.

3.2 Study Area

3.2.1 Pilot Mound and Clearwater

The town of Pilot Mound was incorporated in 1904, after relocating one mile south of the original town site on 'Old Mound' in order to be in proximity to the recently constructed CPR railway (Pilot Mound and District Chamber of Commerce 2000). The "Old Mound" is a site of historic significance to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In the 1850s, a battle between Métis buffalo hunters and Sioux tribal members resulted in the slaughter and burial of five hundred and ninety-seven Sioux on the west slope. And, in 1885, Canada's first Prime Minister John A. McDonald addressed an audience on the slope of the Mound during his only journey in the West (Pilot Mound and District Chamber of Commerce 2000). The town is surrounded by farmland and Pam and Clint Cavers own and operate Harbourside Farms within sight of the Mound, where they raise and direct market grass-raised beef, poultry and pork. University-community research affiliations in this part of Manitoba are extensive – the Harvest Moon Local Food Initiative, of which Pam and Clint Cavers are a part, is associated with the Harvest Moon Society located in the nearby community of Clearwater, which has close working relationships with the University of Manitoba (Anderson and McLachlan 2008). Pam and Clint Cavers and their three children, in addition to Wian Prinsloo, were employed by the project to manage the Southern garden plot.

3.2.2 Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation

Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) and the town of Grand Rapids, located 480 km north of Winnipeg in Northern Manitoba, lie within the territory governed by Treaty 5, which was concluded in 1875 (Coates and Morrison 1986). At that time, residents of Grand Rapids and MCN were fortunate in having access to a vibrant fisheries in Lake Winnipeg and to the rich hunting and trapping grounds of Summerberry Marsh, located some 50 km upstream. Beginning in 1961, the

construction of the Grand Rapids Dam and Generating Station changed this situation for the worse: mercury release from flooded lands devastated the Lake Winnipeg fishery and the dam floodwaters completely submerged Summerberry Marsh (Loney 1987, Kulchyski et al. 2006). The environmental, economic and social ills created by the dam continue to the current day and clearly illustrate the close link between environmental and food injustice (MCN 2010).

4 METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Philosophical Foundations – PAR as a Methodological Approach

Creswell and Clarke (2007) differentiate between methodology, which is the worldview or epistemological basis of research, the research design, which is the plan of action for conducting research, and research methods, which are the physical acts that permit a researcher to gather information. This graduate research project is qualitative, participatory (Fals Borda 2001) and action based in its epistemological approach (Smith 1999, Patton 2002). Participatory research, as a methodology, seeks to involve lay people deeply in the processes that guide their civic lives, including the act of research (Boudorkes and Pataki 2009). Thus, a research project committed to participatory approaches engages willing participants in activities normally reserved for the researcher including research design, ethical considerations, data collection, analysis and interpretations, writing and dissemination of results (Genat 2009).

Participatory Action Research (PAR) furthers this commitment to participation for the "political purpose of mobilizing for social action" (Cousins and Earl 1995 *in* Patton 2002, p. 185). Action researchers, having concluded that knowledge is a social construct and that any theory on truth drawn from research is ultimately embedded in and thereby clouded by a system of dominant societal values, believe that research should instead be used to challenge "unjust and undemocratic economic, social and political systems and practices (Brydon-Miller 2003, p. 11) such that the research can reveal "a greater understanding of how people can transform their particular life situation for the better" (Genat 2009, p. 108). This understanding is the knowledge or information gained from a participatory action research project. In such projects, diverse stakeholders and community members design and implement an action or activity to help solve a common problem (Fuller-Rowell 2009). My role as a researcher becomes facilitating and finding funding for aspects of the desired project that require additional resources

(Brydon-Miller 2003). And, while theory may be used to inform the research, the point is to allow the research project itself to suggest theory as activities are carried out and relationships are formed (Brydon-Miller 2003).

4.2 Research Design and Research Methods

Gardeners, wild food harvesters and farmers were identified in both the rural and Northern Indigenous communities, as were other stakeholders including community health organizations, bandleaders, grocery stores, government agencies, community experts and university and legal experts. Individual semi-directed interviews (n=20) and focus groups (n=5) were conducted with these individuals and with youth and adults participating directly in the pilot project. I developed an interview guide to ensure that each conversation covered essential items of interest and to help maintain focus throughout the interview, but did not make use of a fixed set of questions, rather allowing the conversation to evolve naturally. I interviewed available and knowledgeable members of the Southern and Northern communities and continued to interview until saturation was reached (Patton 2002) and no new information was obtained by continuing to invite research partners. The focus group participants were drawn from individuals and adults engaged heavily in the pilot project and from those with a keen interest or expert knowledge in Northern food systems. Adult and youth focus groups were conducted separately to enable independent perspectives to emerge. These interviews and focus group sessions were conducted throughout the 2010 growing season and into 2011.

Written materials (community documents etc.), my field notes and observations, and especially participatory video were used in all stages of this research (Creswell 2003). Throughout the research and after every interview, I recorded field notes. These describe the activities of the pilot project, the interview process, and document direct quotes, my reactions, insights and interpretations. Action in the way of farm work, Northern community activities, trade and discussion amongst research partners were

videotaped for later incorporation into the participatory video work, which was developed with input from the youth at Grand Rapids School. The Environmental Conservation Lab at the University of Manitoba provided me with video and computer equipment in addition to expertise on their use for the duration of my fieldwork. I sought and received project funds from Heifer International ($10,000.00). Project costs that were not covered through this grant were covered through Dr. McLachlan's SSHRC operating grant.

The case study, interviews, focus groups, observations, field notes and participatory video all informed questions regarding how Northern needs and priorities towards food have changed over time and the importance of existing and potential solutions to the Northern food crisis. At the same time, these methods were used to explore the feasibility of North-South linkages in food production for addressing Northern food security, the role of youth-centered intercultural alliances in promoting Indigenous food sovereignty and the influence of this linkage on participant attitudes and priorities in both regions. As appropriate to an action research design, the exact plan of action was flexible and changed in accordance to the ideas and reflections of project partners. Moreover, my thinking and understanding was informed deeply by my personal participation in community events and pilot project activities in both the North and the South over the time period in question.

4.3 Ethical Considerations and Data Collection Methods

The most important element of ethical research for an action-based project is its ongoing adherence to a cycle of reciprocity, collaboration and solidarity (Maiter et al. 2008). Thus, community participants and researchers engaged in ongoing negotiations regarding the research design, research roles, formal ethical considerations regarding data collection methods and anonymity of participants, analysis, representation of the data, writing and dissemination of research results (Maiter et al. 2008 and Genat 2009). Formal ethics approval for this research was obtained from the University of Manitoba

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (2009: #J2010:097). While Grand Rapids and MCN do not have any formal research protocols, at all stages, this research seeks to remain consistent with the OPAC principles of ownership, control, access and possession as necessary conditions for ethical research in Indigenous communities (First Nations Centre 2007). Minkler (2004) discusses some of the particulars of ethical considerations in community-based participatory research and it is her list of relevant questions (p. 695) that I reflected upon periodically throughout this research process.

Recordings of individual and group interviews were transcribed. These transcriptions, a copy of all primary data (written materials, field notes and participatory video) and an audit trail reporting analytical procedures and processes were collected and will be held on file at the Environmental Conservation Lab at the University of Manitoba for five years following the completion of the thesis and a copy provided to each of Grand Rapids, MCN and the Cavers family. Individual interview transcriptions will be shared with the interview participants and a set of all other materials including field notes, transcriptions of focus group activities and video work will be given to Annie Ballantyne, Principal at Grand Rapids School, and to Alice Cook, community Elder, for safekeeping on behalf of the youth and Northern community members and also to Pam and Clint Cavers of Harbourside Farms. It is not the intention of this research project to maintain the anonymity of research partners. In fact, in the tradition of action research and in accordance with Indigenized perspectives on ownership and voice, it is important to respect, value and privilege local knowledge, including individually acknowledging its source and empowering the individual voice in experiencing and finding solutions to problems (Boudorkes and Pataki 2009, Genat 2009). However, I sought permission from each research partner before using direct quotes and all research partners will have an opportunity to oversee the creation of the final outcomes, withdrawing comments they do not feel comfortable sharing in a public context, and remaining anonymous if they so desire.

Research participants will be given an opportunity to suggest ways in which the research findings can be presented to the public and in their own communities (Minkler 2004). Research participants will be notified of any other research outcomes such as public presentations, academic articles or magazine or online publications and given an opportunity to comment on and suggest changes to the research outcomes beforehand. A copy of any research outcomes will be included in the packages delivered to Annie Ballantyne, Alice Cook and Pam and Clint Cavers. Research participants will be given the information required in order to attend or be part of any public events related to this research.

4.4 Description, analysis and interpretation

I compiled the research results from interviews, focus group activities, written materials and field notes into this graduate thesis and potential papers that may be presented in public forums and published in magazines, online and in academic journals. Community members helped identify emergent themes and important points of learning and experience throughout the research project and especially during the description, analysis and interpretation phase. The ideal forum for this to take place was a focus group discussion.

In action research, participant partners remain involved during all stages of the project. Thus, the use of participatory video was essential to this project, as it allowed participants to capture, report and discuss, in their own words, their understandings and interpretations of how the GAFS has failed in their respective communities and to identify any potential solutions. Youth were the primary users and developers of this video and were engaged in every aspect of recording, editing and producing this research outcome, which included their food-related activities on the Southern farm and in their home communities and their focus group responses around achieving community food security.

I anticipated that the themes and emergent points co-identified by research participants would be linked to the literature surrounding food security, food sovereignty, transformative learning and

transcommunality theory. However, as noted by Boudorkes and Pataki (2009), the focus and methods of action research frequently change over time as researchers and research partners carry out ongoing and iterative cycles of reflection (both personally and upon the project), reformation of values, understandings and goals, and renewed activity based upon these transformations (Boudorkes and Pataki 2009). Thus, I encouraged research participants to reframe the research in different directions over time as new understandings and perspectives emerged from this feedback and as my own insights grew richer. Moreover, I intend to make use of direct quotes in their original context as much as possible in all research products, which will undergo a process of scrutiny, restructuring and review by all project partners until they are satisfied that it accurately represents their lived experiences.

5 CHARACTERIZING THE FOOD CRISIS: ORIGINS AND RESPONSES

5.1 Abstract

A food crisis has emerged in the northern reaches of the Prairie Provinces in Canada, as reflected by wide-scale food insecurity and diet-related disease in many Indigenous communities. Responses to this food crisis are being deployed across the North, yet many of these responses work at odds with Indigenous food sovereignty principles and are disengaged from environmental and food justice perspectives. This study seeks to explore the needs and priorities of northern residents regarding existing and potential responses to the food crisis. Insights into these perspectives were derived through individual and focus group interviews with youth and adults and others with an interest in northern and Indigenous food security. Results indicated an inextricable link between food injustice and environmental injustice in Indigenous communities, with connections to historic and ongoing colonization of land and land-based resources. Central to Northern priorities for food related action was access to the skills and knowledge that would enable local control over a wide variety of responses. All participants felt that Indigenous communities should play the central role in whatever decision-making or actions took place, and that these should be informed by Indigenous food sovereignty.

5.2 Introduction

Northern Indigenous communities in the Prairie Provinces are facing a food crisis brought about by the introduction of high sugar, low-quality processed foods and a concomitant decline in the consumption of healthy land-based foods due to increasing costs as well as environmental decline, restrictive regulations and cultural change (Thompson et al. 2010). Increased consumption of processed foods has contributed to rising occurrence of Type 2 Diabetes in these comunities and related increases in heart disease, stroke and various form of nephropathy (Martens et al. 2007, Haman et al. 2010). This

food crisis is further attributed to the high prices and limited selection of produce, fruit, dairy products and other perishables in the North, as well as the contribution of other factors including poverty, unemployment and a reduction in the availability and use of country foods (Ho et al. 2008, Haman et al. 2010, Thompson et al. 2010). These changes have been aggravated by initiatives including the residential school sytem and the “sixty’s scoop” that have worked to assimilate and undermine Indigenous livelihoods, lifestyles and cultures (G. McKay, personal communication, 17 October 2009, Partridge 2010).

While efforts by governments and researchers have assessed genetic predispositions to diabetes and diet-related disease on the part of Indigenous peoples (Haman et al. 2010) and documented the comparative prices of healthy foods in Northern groceries (Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee 2003), very little work has examined the Northern food crisis from a justice perspective. Exceptions include Loney (1987) and Kulchyski et al. (2006) in their investigations of the intergenerational impact of hydro development in Grand Rapids, Manitoba. These studies emphatically attribute the reduction of fish and wild meat consumption and the increased consumption of unhealthy Western foods in the communities of Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) to the violent eradication of both foods and livelihoods dependent on traditional territories flooded by Manitoba Hydro in 1965.

Within most Indigenous communities, healthy foods are indistinguishable from the territories on which they are located (Page 2007, Alkon and Norgaard 2009). Consequently, environmental injustice as it relates to environmental decline has deep implications for food justice and this connection suggests that a critical approach that analyses food insecurity and diet-related disease within Indigenous communities from an historical justice perspective may have much to offer in understanding and offering solutions to the Northern food crisis. However, the critical work necessary to identify community-based perspectives on origins of and solutions to the Northern food crisis remains largely

undone. Moreover, solutions implemented in the North, when driven by outside priorities such as those of governments, academia or NGOs may serve to undermine or displace actions prioritized by community members when a critical community voice is absent. The concept of food sovereignty (Desmarais 2007), the right of all people to design and control their own food systems in order to achieve food security (i.e. adequate nutritional calories) (WHO 2011) may offer guidance in resolving this dilemma.

In 2009, I began working with the Northern Indigenous communities of Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation on a project that would create a direct connection between these Northern communities and the Southern farming communities of Pilot Mound and Clearwater in Southwestern Manitoba. The purpose of this connection was to explore the role that Southern farmers and Southern land could play in alleviating the Northern food crisis.

During the initiation stages of this action research project, I was struck by the number and diversity of largely Southern agency-initiated food projects taking place in these communities and across the North – including my own! I was concerned that these activities were generally taking place without any communication amongst their purveyors and, based in the struggles I had conducting adequate community consultation, wondered if it was possible that any of these other initiatives had been any better engaged in that respect.

Two different Indigenous food activists raised concerns to me about the North-South exchange: Lyna Hart, working in public health, warned against the activities of Southern food activists in the North, stating that she was very concerned about the introduction of non-native and invasive agricultural species to the area; Kimlee Wong, an Indigenous food activist from Sagkeeng First Nation and residing in Winnipeg suggested that Southern perspectives on food sovereignty were overwhelming Northern communities before these communities had an opportunity to develop their own understandings of Indigenous food sovereignty.

At this point, I realized that it was going to be important to contextualize the North-South project within Indigenous perspectives around AFS and food sovereignty as a whole as part of my research project and to respond to these concerns, as appropriate to a participatory action research methodological approach.

5.3 Purpose and Rationale

Authors critical of the alternative food movement suggest that many sustainable agriculture scholars and activists engage with marginalized communities within a charity framework that seeks to alleviate hunger through an emphasis on production and supply that does not connect with the historical and often racialized underpinnings of food insecurity (Guthman 2008a, Alkon and Norgard 2009). Authors such as Slocum (2007), Guthman (2008b) and Levkoe (2011) describe the process by which existing power structures are reproduced within the 'alternative' food system when actors from dominant society seek to resolve food insecurity in marginalized communities. These 'band-aid' solutions, not only overlook the original and deeply racialized causes of food insecurity in these communities, but may actually act to invisibilize any root causes, reducing the likelihood that they will ever be dealt with in a meaningful way (Guthman 2008a).

In a North American context, there is emerging evidence and testimony to Indigenous peoples' unique ways of understanding and addressing historical and current food insecurity. In Alkon and Norgaard's (2009) investigation into community-based perspectives on food insecurity in an Indigenous tribe in Northern California, they found that community members "located their current food need in the history of genocide, lack of land rights, and forced assimilation" and that "these processes have prevented tribal members from carrying out land management techniques necessary to food attainment" (p. 297). Accessing traditional foods is an essential element of protecting Indigenous culture and language – which are necessities for mental and spiritual wellness (Bell-Sheeter 2004, Kuhnlein et al.

2006). Kawamura (2004) states that while the Nez Perce of Idaho do not rely on traditional foods as their primary source of food calories, the maintenance of ties to the land through food-provisioning activities is tied to political battles concerning the protection of land-use rights guaranteed in treaties. Economic concerns also play a role, as producing and eating foods located on traditional territories could contribute to on-reserve revenue-generating activities (Bell-Sheeter 2004, Kuhnlein et al. 2006) and also gives Indigenous community members an important opportunity to take part in 'Indian economy' – the sharing and giving of foods within a non-capitalist mode of exchange – a basic feature of Indigenous food culture (Kawamura 2004).

According to many sources, Indigenous communities in North America maintain a particularly uneasy relationship with agriculture as a means to addressing food security. The language engaged by some Indigenist writers in Canada is riddled with agriculture-related allegory of the colonizing forces of the "plough" (LaRocque 2010, p. 43). There is also evidence of an historical and, indeed, ongoing intention to convert Indigenous peoples to agriculturalists. West, *in* LaRocque (2010), writing in the early 1800's suggests "…the scarcity of animals that now prevails… is a favourable circumstance towards leading them to the cultivation of the soil; which would expand their minds, and prove of vast advantage" (p. 42). Piper and Sandlos (2007), in their work on eco-colonialism, cite the introduction of domesticated European reindeer, various breeding programs involving muskoxen, wood bison and cattle, as well as land grants, transportation infrastructure, experimental farms and land clearance programs as evidence of government-sponsored initiatives to expand the agricultural frontier into the far North (Piper and Sandlos 2007).

Other studies suggest that the presence or absence of agriculture is a cultural feature that, in Western thought, distinguishes between cultures that are "civilized" and those that are "uncivilized" and therefore open for colonization (Brody 2000, Mann 2005). Early in the history of European contact, the Hudson's Bay Company benefited from the commercial exploitation of the resources of Rupert's Land

(Tough 1996) and in the South, this disregard for traditional Indigenous foods and livelihoods culminated in the slaughter of the North American bison (Taylor 2011). These bison, which migrated in herds exceeding one hundred million (Smits 1994), were overexploited as a resource and their near extinction was both encouraged and precipitated by the American military as a most effective and decisive strike against the Indigenous resistors of the late 1800s (Brown 1970, Smits 1994). The residential school system also played a part in dissolving the Indigenous food system, particularly in the North where enrolled Indigenous children laboured in institutional gardens rather than learning traditional skills applicable to life in the bush (Piper and Sandlos 2007).

While the increased reliance of North American First Nation communities on farmed foods was forced and a result of colonial intentions to distance Indigenous communities from their independent subsistence lifestyles (Tough 1996), the supposed disinterest of Indigenous people in farming is largely inaccurate (Tang 2003). After all, Native American crops developed and grown by Indigenous Peoples account for 52% of all foods currently cultivated worldwide (Bell-Sheeter 2004). Some further argue that Indigenous farming practices, along with their hunting and gathering systems, are perceived as 'backwards, wasteful and destructive' (Carino 2006).

Indeed, archeological evidence indicates that pre-colonial cultivation of corn occurred as far north as the area surrounding present-day Selkirk, MB (Flynn and Syms 1996) and large-scale gardens containing potatoes, corn, pumpkins, onions and carrots were observed in Grand Rapids and farther north in Norway House as early as the late 1700s (Carter 1990). It is not clear whether these gardens were the result of European contact through the fur trade or from much earlier cultural exchange with pre-contact farmers. There is no doubt, however, that these gardens played a key and early role in the food sovereignty of communities in Northern Manitoba, one that continued to be supplemented by wild gathered meats, medicines and plant life – then and until very recently.

The history of on-reserve farming is well-detailed by Carter (1990) and Bateman (1996) who support the contention that the signees to Treaties 1 through 6 in Western Canada perceived that their containment onto reserves and the demise of the bison would require them to ‘take up farming’ in order to provide for themselves and for that reason demanded agricultural supplies and instruction as part of treaty provisions. On-reserve farmers were frustrated with policies of control and government emphasis on individualism at the expense of traditional collectivism, which contributed to the breakdown of on-reserve farming (Carter 1990, Bateman 1996, Tang 2003). First Nations farmers are disadvantaged as they cannot leverage reserve lands for operating loans from banks (SWDM 2010) and are prohibited from accessing many of the same subsidy programs as other farmers (Natcher et al. 2011). Today, 80% of the 1.6 million acres of agricultural reserve land in Western Canada is leased to non-Indigenous farmers (SWDM 2010). While Indigenous perspectives on agriculture as a means to achieving food security often varied dramatically among cultures (Bell-Sheeter 2004), it is clear that most wanted the opportunity to frame (rather than farm) their own food security – an opportunity that was historically denied.

Indigenous communities thus maintain a unique relationship with their traditional territories both as a source of food and livelihood. Environmental issues that affect the wellness of land also affect the healthfulness and supply of the food that can be obtained from it (Bell-Sheeter 2004). While Page (2007) positions salmon farming on British Columbia’s West Coast as a case of environmental injustice for Indigenous communities relying on wild salmon as a source of food and cultural continuity and Trainor et al. (2007) present climate change in the Arctic as a case of environmental injustice, exploring its impact on the country food system, neither of these studies explicitly investigate this link between environmental justice and food justice in Indigenous communities. Nor does the overview of environmental justice in Canada presented by Haluza-Delay (2007). However, in reviewing the participant quotes used in each paper, it is clear that land-as-source-of-food is central to Indigenous

peoples' experiences with environmental injustice in all these situations. Bell-Sheeter (2004) presents evidence that government food provisions guaranteed in treaties and initiated shortly after the settlement of Indigenous communities onto reserves disrupted traditional systems, creating reliance and dependency and contributing to poor health. Thus, in Indigenous communities, food security (understood as simply platefuls of food) is clearly distinguishable from food sovereignty, where solutions to hunger are controlled locally and have political connections to land rights and self-determination (Carino 2006).

The intersecting issues of environmental justice, food justice and food sovereignty in Indigenous communities remains largely unexplored in a Canadian context. Thus, a recent collection of papers on food sovereignty by Wittman et al. (2011) contained only one chapter on Indigenous food sovereignty in Canada. The relevance of food sovereignty – the right of communities to individually identify and engage with preferred options around accessing food (Desmarais 2007) – in addressing the food crisis confronting many Northern Indigenous communities may provide valuable information to all parties working on Northern Indigenous food security issues and potentially bring issues of food justice in a Northern Canadian context to light.

5.4 Research Objectives

The goal of this research is to describe and explore the implications of Northern Indigenous community conceptualizations of the Northern food crisis. This research will evaluate current solutions to the Northern food crisis and add to understandings of food justice approaches in resolving hunger. The results of this research will reveal the importance of Indigenous perspectives on food sovereignty within AFS and what that may entail for allied food activists and NGO's working in the North and for government-directed projects and policies.

The specific objectives of this chapter are to:

- Describe the needs and priorities that confront many Northern Indigenous communities as they relate to food;
- Describe how these needs and priorities have changed over time and what factors underlie and give rise to these changes; and
- Identify the relative importance of existing and potential responses to these challenges, especially as they relate to Food Sovereignty.

5.5 Study Background

5.5.1 Study Area

Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation are located on opposite sides of the Saskatchewan River as it enters Lake Winnipeg a few kilometers north of the 53rd parallel in the Province of Manitoba. Archeological evidence dating back 7,000 years demonstrates profound reliance on sturgeon and whitefish as food sources and oral history acknowledges the role seasonal migrations around hunting, gathering and trapping played in the lives of the people until relatively recently (MCN 2010). Treaty negotiations with Misipawistik Cree Nation began in 1875, and, despite disagreement between the Band and the government as to whether or not an agreement had been reached, treaty payments began in 1876 (Coates and Morrison 1986 and Friesen 1987). Band members had to move from the west side of the Saskatchewan to the east where the Reserve was to be located, and each member was compensated $500.00, although many opted out of the Treaty and their Indian status in order to remain on the west side (MCN 2010). This history has created the two communities present today, with the town of Grand Rapids, which is primarily Métis, located on the west side and Misipawistik Cree Nation, composed primarily of Band members, on the east.

Other changes in the community arose shortly after treaty, as churches, schools and a commercial fishery were established (MCN 2010). In 1961, work began on the Grand Rapids Dam and Generating

Station, and in 1965, the work was complete and the rapids were eliminated. The ensuing flooding and its effects particularly on Summerberry Marsh, located upstream from the dam, devastated the Cree culture, economy and language (Kulchyski et al. 2006, MCN 2010). Moreover, a third community component was created, as the town of Hibord (a part of which is locally referred to as the "Taj Mahal") was constructed 2 km outside of Grand Rapids for Hydro employees. The differences between this 'colonizer's community' and that of the town and Reserve persist as a remarkable picture of disparity today (Kulchyski et al. 2006).

While most research participants are residents of Grand Rapids and MCN, I travelled more broadly in the North, speaking with people from a variety of locations in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. I found that the implications of my research findings in Grand Rapids and MCN also resonated with Indigenous communities throughout the Prairie Provinces. While the specific knowledge and experiences of residents of Grand Rapids and MCN are focused on in the results, these findings are embedded in a wider framework that relates the knowledge and experiences of other research participants from across the Prairie Provinces.

5.5.2 Study Participants

Research participants from Grand Rapids include Betty Calym, an Elder and retired nurse; Eileen Einarson, a community Elder; and Sarah Dumas, a community Elder and also a former meat cutter and manager at one of Grand Rapid's earliest commercial grocery stores. Also from Grand Rapids is Jim Sangster, a long-time resident and former teacher and principal at Grand Rapids School. Research participants from MCN include Alice Cook, a community Elder and former Chief of MCN; Annie Ballantyne, Band member and principal at Grand Rapids School; and Bernard Beardy, an MCN Band member and the current manager at the Band-owned grocery store – *MCN Foods*.

Several research participants were involved in various types of food activism. These respondents included Gerald McKay, a Band member and Indigenous fisherman and advocate for the Northern fisheries; Heidi Cook, a resident of Grand Rapids and Manager of the Traditional Lands and Waters Office for the MCN Band; and Kim Izzard, a resident of MCN with expertise in gardening for community wellness.

Other key participants not residing in Grand Rapids, but with an interest in and knowledge of Northern Indigenous food sovereignty include Blaine Klippenstein, a food activist, teacher and long-time Northern resident; Brenda Gaudry, an member of the Norway House First Nation who grew up in Wabowden, and who has expertise in Indigenous food activities; Joe Munroe, a Cree food activist, a member of Muskoday First Nation, of the River Cree People, and the Indigenous Peoples Food Coordinator for Heifer Project International Canada (a non-profit organization); and Byron Beardy, the Food Security Coordinator for the Island Lake communities in Northeastern Manitoba through Four Arrows Regional Health Authority, and a member of Wasagamack First Nation.

5.6 Methodology

5.6.1 Philosophical Foundations – PAR as a Methodological Approach

This project is embedded within a Participatory Action Research (Fals Borda 2001) approach, and my attempt to contextualize subsequent food related research within a Northern context of community priorities (see Chapter 6). From this critical and responsive perspective, it became clear that there was a need to explore the needs and priorities of Northern Indigenous community members around food and to understand the Northern food crisis and the existing and potential responses to this crisis according to Northerner's perspectives. Furthermore, the PAR approach induced a number of related actions, which were carried out in partnership with participants throughout the research process.

5.6.2 Research Design and Research Methods

The plan of action in this research initiative was largely derived from the PAR commitment to cycles of reciprocity, collaboration and solidarity in the North-South exchange described in Chapter 6 (Maiter et al. 2008). The exact research design was one of acknowledging community-identified areas of importance not elaborated upon in the original research design methods and employing subsequent methods that would address this gap. The methods overlapped strongly with those of the overall research design and while some research participants spoke more to the areas of investigation in this chapter and are listed below, the interviews (n=19), focus group interviews (n=5), recorded field notes and collected written materials informed the research project as a whole.

In each of the individual interviews, I asked participants to identify Northern food related needs and priorities, how these have changed over time, and what actions they felt would address these needs. The 19 interviews were conducted from May 2010 until August 2011, and were semi-directed in nature. Participants were encouraged to explore their own views on these themes.

Specific action arose from this investigation. These actions included my direct and related involvement in helping youth in Grand Rapids create and care for small raised-bed gardens, facilitating a shared learning excursion of interested community members from Grand Rapids and MCN to Muskoday First Nations in Saskatchewan to discuss the potential of Nation-to-Nation trade of fish and potatoes, and redirecting a planned North-South relationship towards work-shop focused food-related learning activities for youth in both the North and South. I also spent considerable time on the water with Indigenous fishers, participating in and observing food-related activities at the local culture camp and participating with community members in cultural and spiritual activities. This larger community context helped inform my own ideas around the specifics of the research as well as the larger food related priorities of the community, and helped me contextualize outcomes of the interviews.

5.6.3 Data Interpretation

This project element itself arose from a need to better understand the varied and often-conflicting community responses to the related North-South project. Formal ethics approval for this project was obtained as part of Protocol J2010:097 from the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. All participants were given the opportunity to review the outcomes of the interviews, to amend them as they saw appropriate, or for that matter to withdraw from the research at any time.

Project participants were involved in data framing through a series of focus group discussions and through the involvement of Gerald McKay and Annie Ballantyne, as community members of MCN, on my thesis committee. All data emerging from the interviews were transcribed and, along with my field notes, evaluated using Atlas Ti, a software suite for qualitative data analysis that will help to identify and categorize emergent themes (Muhr 1991 and Creswell and Clark 2007). These themes spoke to the importance of food security, food sovereignty and an emerging food justice perspective, which will frame the results and reflections on this research project.

5.7 Results

5.7.1 The Past of the Northern Food System and Factors Underlying Change

Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation effectively functioned as one Indigenous community that was healthy relying on local food resources up until construction began on the Grand Rapids Dam and Generating Station in 1961. Their country foods consisted largely of fish; hunted and trapped meats such as moose, muskrats, ducks, spruce chickens and rabbits; as well as wild berries and other plants and medicines that were stored for winter. Families moved according to the location of food that was ready to be harvested, and Summerberry Marsh, located towards The Pas on the Saskatchewan river system, provided a rich and diverse source of all kinds of land-based foods. Gardens focusing on root crops such

as onions, carrots and potatoes complemented these wild harvests and were situated wherever suitable soil was found.

Radical changes to this food system occurred when construction of the Grand Rapids Dam and Generating Station was initiated. This event fundamentally altered the entire structure of the localized food system, with respect to land foods, hunting, fishing and even gardening:

> "[Summerberry Marsh] was one of the most productive delta marshes in North America. It was managed for muskrat trapping. It was good for migratory birds, moose, all that kind of stuff… for bears. And it supported all these people. Nobody was poor before. People lived good by eating what was out there and trapping to make some income. Selling fish. People cut cordwood for the steamships, whatever. There was money income, there was plenty of food to eat. People never thought of themselves as poor. Nobody was hungry. Any time of the year you could get fish or moose. After [the dam], the marsh is underwater, the trapping is gone. The moose, the habitat for migratory birds are gone. The fisheries, the spawning grounds are destroyed."
>
> *Heidi Cook, Grand Rapids*

Most participants indicated how the gardens that existed in Grand Rapids were destroyed when dam construction took place, since any soil suitable for gardening was re-located to make lawns in the small separate community that was built for the new Hydro employees. In addition, parts of Summerberry Marsh that could be used for agriculture were flooded, reducing community access to agricultural products. While the land and water base was radically and irreparably altered, the presence of the dam and workers also indirectly contributed to the dissolution of the food system:

> "When they started construction of this dam in 1961, all of the things came in here. Like a hotel, a beverage room and a big grocery store opened. The people started getting dependent on the grocery store because it was right there all the time. And they had a good selection. It was actually called Superior Fruits. So, they had apples and oranges, bananas and tomatoes and everything you would need. The problem is that it was only here for four years. After the dam was finished, all of the construction workers left and the store closed down and then there was no more. People had gotten away from gardening because the vegetables were available at the store. Nobody went back to gardening and it just

> basically died. So, the only place you could get fresh vegetables was down the highway in Ashern or Winnipeg or wherever."
>
> *Gerald McKay, Grand Rapids*

Additional social devastation resulting from the dam was equally striking for all residents, but especially the women:

> "I didn't know what politics was until I started studying it in university and I learned politics means power. I always though it was lies and bullshit, right? There's so much tied up in that Hydro project. The loss… everything changed. Your food changed, your lifestyle changed, your environment changed. Everything that you know about the land, where to hunt or to fish, where to walk on the ice, where to find a moose or where to… all that stuff was no good any more. It must have been devastating. You can't drink the water and you can't eat the fish. You can't speak the language and you can't, if you're a woman, you can't walk by yourself at nightime. I don't know if the story of the women of Grand Rapids will ever be told because it's still too painful."
>
> *Heidi Cook, Grand Rapids*

Many commented on the subsequent loss of medicinal knowledge within the community because of the inability of youth to speak Cree with Elders, as they had been forced to speak English at school. Others spoke to the onerous influence of the Manitoba government, which enforced restrictions on the wild harvests of the Métis hunters who did not have treaty status, in turn creating substantial food hunger within Métis families. It is clear that the Grand Rapids Dam and Generating Station cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider experience with colonization, but rather aggravated the effects of long-standing policies and activities. These results reveal the tight relationships between food justice and environmental injustice in these communities. While food might not appear to be a justice issue at first glance, it becomes political because of the way that power has structured access to healthy food and has promoted understandings and beliefs regarding the nature and composition of a healthy and desirable food system.

5.7.2 Food and the Construction of Dependency

Indigenous communities in both the North and the South of the Prairie Provinces have a unique perspective on food security as a result of the radical changes in land and food that have taken place since colonization. Some reflected on how the creation of the Treaties in the South undermined people's lives and their food systems:

> "Through the treaty process, we gave up our economy based on buffalo and moved onto the reserves to a more sedentary life than one of constant moving with the seasons. Our Elders often say, when we put ourselves under their care, the other side of the treaty, that was when we started knowing hunger and poverty. We took care of ourselves before that. Before contact our people only had to go out four hours a day to get their food, cook it and eat it. People were taught that our people were starving. Far from it. We were living well."
>
> *Joe Munroe, Muskoday First Nation*

These observations not only identify the process of colonization and its connections to the construction of poverty, but also collide with the common belief held by many non-Indigenous Canadians that the food system and, by association, the culture of pre-contact Indigenous communities was an inferior one that merited replacing. The decline of the existing food systems emerged soon after the treaties were signed, which had substantial and long-term implications for community food security:

> "Four or five years after the treaty was signed, our people were depending on handouts from the Government of Canada. In the treaty it was negotiated that we would have the means to take care of ourselves, which never really came… it was never really fulfilled. In the absence of that, they had to feed us. They're still feeding us today, with the welfare… not very well, but feeding us today. So, it's not like the world owes you a living, but, the Crown owes the First Nations food security."
>
> *Joe Munroe, Muskoday First Nation*

These changes thus created long-term dependency on the government, a dependency that continues to undermine local food initiatives today:

> "Going back to history with the treaties, the Crown had said that First Nations people will be taken care of as long as the rivers flow, the grass grows and the sun shines. And with that onus in mind, the Elders really, still, hold the government to that. But, if we could try and stay away from trying for handouts and if we could do this on our own…"
>
> *Byron Beardy, Wasagamack First Nation*

In order to meet treaty commitments regarding Indigenous communities having the means to care for themselves, the Canadian federal government provided agricultural training, tools and materials to reserve communities across the Prairie Provinces. The rise and collapse of on-reserve agriculture is well-detailed by others (e.g. Carter 1990, Bateman 1996), and these studies suggest that on-reserve agriculture represented an attractive opportunity for reserve residents to develop a cash economy and contribute to local food security. However, at least some participants in this study questioned the relevance of Western approaches to farming and recognized that the government emphasis on large scale agriculture had other motivations:

> "When the Treaties were made, farming was the big thing. We're going to move these people from this transient lifestyle and turn them into farmers. Farming never took off in some places because farming is not suitable in all places. For the most part, that can't be our primary source of food because that's not what our environment is. Our environment is fish and berries and moose and, you know, birds. Ducks, geese… that kind of stuff. And, you can garden your root crops."
>
> *Heidi Cook, Grand Rapids*

Consistent with Indigenous experiences with food security across both the Northern and Southern reaches of the Prairie Provinces is that communities were engaged in a food system of their own creation that was based in an intact cultural and spiritual way of life, and that they were healthy at the time of European contact. Fast forward 100 years and mining and forestry now continue to alter the Northern landscape. Participants were aware of the implications of these extractive industries for food sovereignty

and acknowledged the risks of resource exploitation for meeting local needs in the four Island Lakes communities:

> "In Island Lakes, that we're not connected to a highway is a pro in itself, that it's only accessible by winter roads. It's good in preserving our hunting areas. It's good in that it's undisturbed. But I do hear that there is already exploitation of the natural resources there, namely through mining."
>
> *Byron Beardy, Wasagamack First Nation*

Thus, the case for a politicized food justice perspective that incorporates and responds to the past, ongoing and potential threats posed by dominant society is only too clear when addressing food security in Indigenous communities both in the North and the South. While the health implications of the conventional food system for Indigenous communities in Northern Manitoba are detailed by many (e.g. MacKinnon 2005, Martens et al. 2007, Thompson et al. 2010), an explicit investigation into how community members in Grand Rapids and MCN view the conventional food system may shed light on how these communities are affected by and respond to this colonized foodscape.

5.7.3 The Current Food System: Not Working for Community Health

Northern community members reported a multiplicity of problems with the conventional food system. Fresh food arriving in Northern communities is expensive. Freight charges are added to the prices as the trucks come from the South, and the inability of a small store to purchase and move product in bulk quantities restricts the access of Northern grocers to the same savings large urban stores receive from wholesalers. This situation is particularly problematic for fly-in communities, where, excepting a few short weeks in February and March when the winter roads are passable by semi-trucks, fresh groceries must travel in a net suspended from a helicopter. Products that do store well are shipped in bulk in large quantities and can be sold cheaply. They are largely processed items – the sugary meals

that are primary culprits in diet-related disease (Kuhnlein et al. 2006, Ho et al. 2008). Poverty within Northern communities plays a role in directing food choices as well:

> "You can go into a grocery store, and you can buy a two litre Pepsi for ninety-nine cents, whereas you may be looking at six dollars for a jug of milk or two bucks for a litre of apple juice. So, I know that for a lot of parents, it really comes down to cost. And trying to get the biggest bang for their buck. Unfortunately, it leads to some bad choices when it comes to our food and nutrition."
>
> *Kym Izzard, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

Even when produce is available in Northern grocery stores, it is often unappealing. Much of the produce arriving in Grand Rapids from Winnipeg first travels to Thompson, 600km north of Grand Rapids, where it is repacked. Store managers and residents alike indicated that produce was often bruised or decaying by the time it was placed on a grocery shelf and that residents tended not to purchase these "fresh" vegetables and fruits.

Community members reported that even amongst Elders, there was a lack of knowledge regarding which types of foods are healthy; or how to create a traditional balanced diet. Healthy foods were still accessed from land, but their availaibility was limited and their safety sometimes in doubt. Moreover, the skills required for harvesting and preparing these country foods were diminishing in many families. The extreme ease of accessing unhealthy choices also played a role in structuring food choices in most Northern communities:

> "It's too convenient to be honest. Why would you try to cook for yourself at home when you can just call the restaurant and get a meal cooked for you in 30 minutes? You can probably cook more than half the stuff we have here in the store [MCN Foods] in 30 minutes. I don't think there're too many people that are trying to eat health-wise, or even natural food that, supposedly, our parents had grown up with. Not too many of the younger kids want to eat that stuff any more."
>
> *Bernard Beardy, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

The three-fold threat of expensive and scarce fresh produce, the poor quality of any healthy fruits and vegetables, and the ease of accessing unhealthy processed foods was creating a plethora of diet-related diseases in Grand Rapids and MCN. Community members were aware of the situation and their greatest concern was for their children, who they recognized as suffering from sugar addictions, diabetes and obesity.

While Northern communities are certainly experiencing a crisis with respect to how the conventional food system is operating within the North, it is not Northern food that is making them sick. Indeed, land foods are amongst the most healthy of food choices available in the North (Thompson et al. 2010) and also form an important connection to land and culture for Indigenous Northern residents (Kuhnlein et al. 2004, Power 2008). Thus, the Northern food crisis might be more appropriately labeled the Southern food crisis, or perhaps even the Industrial food crisis. Contrary to common perception, many Northern community members are very aware of broader issues in the Global Agri-Food System, recognizing both the impacts it has for farms and farmers and its uncertain implications for the larger environment:

> "The way the food system is, they grow huge monocultures and it's all corporate and unhealthy and has additives and chemicals. There's no biological diversity to protect it. The corporate food system – the huge factory farms and the monoclture farming – is really vulnerable."
>
> *Heidi Cook, Grand Rapids*

5.7.4 Solutions to the Northern Food Crisis: Northern Perspectives and Priorities

Solutions to this "South generated" food crisis are currently being explored, and a larger number and diversity of food alternatives are emerging across Northern Manitoba. The history of change in the food system in Grand Rapids and MCN, combined with the urgent need to create alternatives to the conventional food system, affected how residents of these communities prioritized both existing and potential solutions. Solutions to the Northern food crisis currently being explored were placed in four

loose categories: the *revival of country foods traditions*, *community and individual gardens*, *agriculture in the North*, and accessing *better food arriving from elsewhere*.

Revival of country foods traditions: These traditions were viewed as a potentially important solution by Northern participants. When traditional lands were healthy and unaffected by resource extraction activities, there was still much potential to access large quantities of land-based foods. Even in the case of dam-devastated communities like Grand Rapids and MCN, many wild foods had persevered and Northern residents, in addition to those working in Northern food security, reported a recent interest in reviving wild food harvests. Procuring food from ancestral lands had a deeper meaning for Indigenous communities beyond food security, as it affirmed connections that were needed to safeguard treaty rights and represented an opportunity to engage in traditional culture and spirituality, and to connect with ancestors and feel pride in Nationhood:

> "Kids growing up think being from Grand Rapids is just this. And it's not, it's all that [traditional territory] too. That is important. That's when you feel really rich to be from here is when you go out and you know all these areas that we have and what's out there. And, we have to [procure foods from land], even just to protect our Treaties. I mean, what good is a hunting right if no one knows how to hunt?"
>
> *Heidi Cook, Grand Rapids*

There were also many barriers to harvesting country foods. Provincial regulations were viewed as limiting the ability of wild harvesters to distribute their products widely and to generate any income from this distribution. Income was especially important given how expensive fuel and equipment was becoming. Many older community members worried that the upcoming generation lacked interest in these activities and would not be willing to learn the necessary skills. Within this discourse, there was a fear that over-harvesting could damage wild populations, even irreparably. However, those that voiced this fear also stressed that the solution was to reeducate hunters and harvesters in traditional knowledge rather than for an external agency to impose restrictions on harvesting activities.

In addition to the regulatory barriers and the ostensible decline in traditions, participants recognized that it would be difficult to meet food needs exclusively through country foods because of the growing sizes of Northern communities and concerns about the availability of land foods. Moreover, it would be difficult to engage in a lifestyle that required traveling a large territory according to the season in order to harvest foods as they became ready to harvest:

> "Everything has got a cycle and a time. It depends on our Mother Nature and weather. You've got to come [when it's ready]. You can't wait until it's convenient for you. When they're ready, they're ready and when they're done, they're done."
>
> *Brenda Gaudry, Barrows, MB*

Community and individual gardens: Gardens emerged as another response to the Northern food crisis, and were deeply favoured by most Northern residents. Garden harvests of root crops such as potatoes, onions and carrots were, until recently, an important part of the local food system in Grand Rapids and MCN. Abundant garden harvests complemented country foods, which were primarily meat-based, and reduced the need to purchase externally sourced fresh fruits and vegetables. Local gardens would also reduced the "price-squeeze" represented by fixed monthly incomes. Many of the food related agencies also favoured individual and community gardens, indicating that gardens had a purpose beyond simple food production:

> "I think sometimes people go in with these big ideas. That's what I always hear from community people. Like, it's the small projects and you've really got to be proud of those small successes and it's those little projects. It's so much more than just a garden for those communities."
>
> *Raquel Koenig, Food Matters Manitoba*

Community members were aware of limitations to gardens as a source of food security. The shorter growing season in the North limited the harvests of the available varieties of some favoured vegetables such as corn and tomatoes. A host of skills were required to grow vegetables and fruits well

and to save and store the produce through the winter. Most importantly, soils needed to be amended and continually maintained in order to be productive. If materials were to be imported into the communities, developing a suitable soil became expensive. Indeed, despite the general excitement around and government support for gardening projects, the challenges of successfully establishing productive gardens had some Northern participants feeling very uncertain about the viability of garden projects. As a community Elder who had gardened in Grand Rapids every year since 1968 indicated:

> "I have these university graduate students come and they want to make gardens. First of all, where are you going to get soil? What grows in limestone? You tell me! I can see people starting off gung-ho. But, three years from now, that will all disperse. It will be disbanded because it's so difficult under the circumstances."
>
> *Betty Calym, Grand Rapids*

Thus, while gardens are favoured activity by many residents and by many of the agencies active in Northern food security, there were also barriers to this solution advancing beyond a simple "feel-good activity" that provided a modest harvest for two weeks in the fall. While gardens may not contribute greatly to food security, there are many other benefits to them – ones that may actually out-weigh the need for food security in some Northern communities. As other studies have indicated (e.g. Turner 2011) the power of gardens, especially community gardens that are established by marginalized groups living in the inner city, often has much less to do with food and much more to do with building community, linking youth and Elders around gardening, generating a sense of pride and empowerment and enabling people to learn about food and where it comes from.

Agriculture in the North: A variety of agricultural ventures were being explored, as facilitated and promoted by provincial agencies such as Northern Healthy Foods Initiatives and Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. Agricultural options included market gardens, small-scale livestock projects and greenhouses, either for private use or on a larger for-profit scale. Gardening and *agriculture in the*

North might initially seem quite similar; however, the first was seen by most as a widely acceptable solution to the Northern food crisis while the second raised concerns for many.

A first concern was that farmed plants and animals had been introduced in a landscape for the first time by outsiders. Representing a form of eco-colonialism (Piper and Sandlos 2007), their introduction simply expanded the agricultural frontier – with all of its cultural structures, aggressive weed and insect pests, and use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers – into Indian Country:

> "I find it really scary and against nature and to be spelling out disaster. I would like to see the North protected from that kind of food system. Do we want our land to be turned into a huge plantation of potatoes because we need to contribute to that kind of a food system? I don't think so. Food systems have to be local, right? And not homogenous. Just like we need biodiversity in an ecosystem, we need diversity in our food systems. So, a food system in the North is not going to be the same as a food system in the South."
>
> *Heidi Cook, Grand Rapids*

A second concern reflected the associated need for land conversion. Proponents of commercial scale market gardens would seek naturally occurring meadows or the creation of other high-light environments, in turn reducing habitat for wild game and wild edibles and creating an further increased community reliance on farmed foods.

Livestock was also seen as posing a potential threat to proteins obtained from land foods. Already, youth in many Northern communities accessed farmed meats more frequently and even preferred farmed to wild. Thus, some participants indicated livestock such as pigs and chickens were unnecessary when surrounded by wildlife:

> "It's a lot of work to raise those chickens. When they're ready, your neighbors go out and hunt geese. And they have instant food. They didn't have to raise it, right? Which is going to win out in the end? The goose hunting because it's easier, right? And, it's a traditional lifestyle. Raising chickens is not going to work in the North unless you like those chickens. Nobody's going to raise chickens if it's easier to get geese."
>
> *Gerald McKay, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

However, farmed meats entering Grand Rapids and MCN from the South were always frozen. Consequently, other Northern residents saw great merit in having some domestic livestock on site, suggesting the cleared hydro lines might be used for grazing. Overall, participants wanted the ability to choose from a wide variety of solutions and to have the opportunity to apply them within their communities as they saw fit.

Another possible response was the establishment of greenhouses, both individual and commercial in scale. The MCN Band had been exploring the development of a commercial greenhouse, which would use technology imported from Israel in its design. However, many recognized that, without knowledge on how to use and maintain greenhouses of any scale, the actual physical structures would be of little or no use.

For many Northern residents, it was not the nature of the ‘tools’ being proposed as solutions to the Northern food crisis that was of concern, but rather the worldview with which these practices were being applied within Indigenous communities. Some believed that if these new tools were used according to traditional laws and values, that they would in turn avoid many of the environmental and social equity problems that had emerged in dominant society in the South. Traditional share-culture was still a fundamental aspect of modern-day Cree life. Continuing with a free, community-operated food distribution system, particularly for Elders and those in need, was thus still important to residents of Grand Rapids and MCN. Unfortunately, this tension between public and private food systems was not well understood by agencies providing funding to Northern food projects, and some representatives of these agencies indicated their frustrations when negotiating the terrain between what was culturally appropriate for Indigenous food providers and what programs agencies were willing to fund.

This issue was seen in subsequent attempts to secure further funding for food projects in Grand Rapids and MCN from the Rural Secretariat (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada), which would only

support food-related projects that resulted in immediate job creation and that were adult-focused and which were thus unworkable in Northern communities.

While Indigenous communities might benefit from agriculture in the North, many of the proposed solutions were culturally and environmentally inappropriate. Northerners did not want the organizational or biological structures of food-related ventures to be imported intact from the South.

Better Food from Elsewhere: This category represents a final and also controversial alternative suite of responses being actively explored by many Northern residents. Many residents wanted access to the same exotic fruits and vegetables enjoyed in urban centres in the South, but which Northern climates would not support. Thus, as in many other alternative food initiatives, the question of what distance was acceptable for alternative food was on the minds of many Northern participants.

The first option being explored was to obtain higher quality, externally sourced food through improvements to the conventional grocery system. The Federated Co-operative grocery store burned down in 2009, and there were plans to build a Band-owned and operated store of up to 10,000 sp ft. Residents expressed hope that a store of this size would allow for a better selection and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables and that the in-house meat shop the Band planned to incorporate into the store would provide fresh farmed meats to the community. However, the store has yet to be built.

Community members in Grand Rapids and MCN and other Northern communities were also exploring alternative food supply streams. Members reported that food from the South has been made locally available over the last 50 years through direct exchanges between farmers from the South and fishers from the North. While this type of direct exchange had now declined to the point of non-existence, a Elder in MCN had accessed an abundant supply of Southern foods through a small, family-owned distributor and another relationship of this nature was subsequently explored in this research (Chapter 7). Because of the short supply chains, these foods were cheaper than those available through

the local grocery store. However, this relationship was discontinued when it became too time-demanding and when the supplier raised his prices.

While the dysfunction of the conventional grocery system is not easily overcome and alternative food supply streams constantly encounter legal, regulatory and infrastructural barriers (C. Anderson, personal communication, 12 August 2011), that these alternatives are discussed at all indicates some of the failures of the GAFS in Northern communities. The neoliberal economic premise of comparative advantage underlying the GAFS assumes that all communities can achieve food security (and wealth) if they specialize in those goods they produce efficiently and then import all others (Gonzalez 2011, Otero 2011). Extending this logic, if the GAFS was functioning in the North, there would be no need for Northern communities to be exploring *better food from elsewhere* through alternative supply chains. Overall, community members indicated that food grown closer to home was typically of higher quality by the time it arrived in Grand Rapids and MCN:

> "The Peak of the Market stuff is actually pretty good. And, it's grown here in Manitoba, too. So, the closer the stuff is that gets to us, the more nutrients and stuff it holds."
>
> *Bernard Beardy, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

The potential of *better food from elsewhere* was explored in related research, and took the form of a direct North-South exchange project between Grand Rapids and MCN on one hand and the rural farming communities of Pilot Mound and Clearwater on the other, the results of which simultaneously indicated that this approach had promise for some but was highly objectionable for others (Chapter 7).

A final option presented by some participants was that food sovereignty will only be achieved through political sovereignty. For the respondents, the only realistic approach to resolving hunger in Indigenous communities was through addressing the broken relationship between Indigenous communities and the Government of Canada:

> "We have stewardship over the territory, given to us by the Creator. That's where our food is. Mother Earth – our food supply. Everybody is a Treaty person here, one side or the other, in this country. There were three parties at the Treaty: the Crown, the First Nations and the Creator. First Nations understood the Treaty to mean we're going to hold the land together – our hand and your hand. We're going to share the land. The Government of Canada had a different idea of what the Treaty was to be about. It was to be about subjugation and assimilation. We need to rebuild our Nations. When we can deal with the Government of Canada effectively as a Nation, we can insist on fulfillment of the Treaty. Sovereignty and Nation-building is the way out of hunger and poverty for our people."
>
> *Joe Munroe, Muskoday First Nation*

5.8 Discussion

5.8.1 Reflecting on Community Voice

A theme of food justice emerged when Northern Indigenous participants spoke about their concerns and solutions that might address the food crisis that confronted their communities, and which in turn would alleviate their dependence on a food system engineered in the South. They largely placed the ongoing food insecurity and health-related impacts of poor nutrition as only the most recent outcome of a series of externally imposed actions that had long acted to undermine Indigenous food sovereignty while attacking Nationhood and reducing the viability of traditional food systems. There were many similarities between the experiences of those from Southern and Northern Indigenous communities and these closely mirror those reported elsewhere in North America (e.g. Page, 2007, Alkon and Norgaard 2009) and, indeed, internationally (e.g. Carino 2006, Kuhnlein et al. 2006, Dressler and Pulhin 2010)

The process by which colonizing policies and practices related to food undermine Indigenous food sovereignty and eventually replace traditional food systems with ones considered superior by dominant society are clear. Over time, communities move from an independent existence based largely in land activities to one of few economic opportunities, aside from employment with extractive resource industries such as hydro, mining, forestry or even agriculture. These latter industries are not designed or

directed by the communities in which they are operating. The establishment of service industries (e.g. grocery stores, restaurants) are in turn facilitated by the extractive industries and they too contribute to change, in effect further displacing the importance and need for land-based activities and livelihoods. The service industry operations are often owned and operated by outsiders and any revenues generally leave the community, or become concentrated in the hands of a local elite when they choose to live in town. For most, the only economic benefits that emerge from these developments is occassional low-income employment with little job security or room for advancement. While environmental injustice confronting Indigenous communities has been described as it relates to water pollution in Canada (Mascarenhas 2007), the siting of nuclear waste facilities in Taiwan (Fan 2006) and mining in Latin America (Urkidi and Walter 2011), studies rarely investigate the direct links between environmental justice and food justice (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996). This is especially problematic since environmental injustice in Canada is most clearly located in Indigenous communities (Haluza-Delay 2007).

Ironically, the major ‘invading industry’ that radically altered the landscape and eradicated the food sovereignty of Indigenous communities in the South of the Prairie Provinces has been the introduction of monoculture cropping and private land ownership (McLeod 2007). Thus, colonization in the South centered largely around the displacement of an Indigenous food system by a European industrial food system. Indigenous food activists I spoke with identified that the displacement and dismissal of the original food system is part of a series of cultural myths promoted by dominant society in order to undermine and even erase these Indigenous cultures.

Within this historical context, it it not surprising that solutions such as the revival of country foods traditions and the creation of community and individual gardens were largely preferred. These solutions are small enough in scale to be community-controlled and thus community-located. At its base, this need for local control indicates that food sovereignty plays a fundamental role in how Northern residents prioritize and experience solutions to the ongoing food crisis that confronts their communities and

Indigenous communities around the world (Kuhnlein et al. 2006). Smith (1999) speaks clearly to the importance of self-determination within Indigenous communities, stating that any activities that do not enable Indigenous communities to "determine priorities, to bring to the centre those issues of [their] own choosing, and to discuss them amongst [themselves]" (p. 38) are likely to promote, rather than repair, past colonizing influences – a contention supported by others (Guthman 2008b, Slocum 2007, Levkoe 2011).

Northern community members linked country foods traditions to the protection of treaty rights, decolonization and resistance – as do the Nez Perce of Idaho (Kawamura 2004). Moreover, sharing land food is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous food sovereignty for many traditional Indigenous communities (Bell-Sheeter 2004), a sentiment Northern research participants also reported. Revival of country foods traditions and gardening hold potential for autonomy and perhaps even broader political sovereignty from the South, an outcome deeply desired by many Northern residents. However, due to a variety of limitations including declining health of traditional territories and challenging growing conditions, participants were uncertain as to when or even if these initiatives could ever fully reverse dependence on foods sourced from the South.

A variety of agricultural projects are beinge explored in the North, and community members stated that they want the opportunity to decide whether and how their communities can benefit from each. It is important to recognize that Indigenous communities need not be limited to historical activities in order to retain their 'Indigenousness' (LaRocque 2010). Thus, the specific 'tools' were of less concern than the need to control and direct these solutions in their own communities, according to their distinct cultural paradigms. Agricultural solutions implemented in the North without community direction could further contribute to environmental injustice, which often revolves around issues of cultural recognition within an Indigenous context in Canada (Mascarenhas 2007, Page 2007). Indigenous peoples have unique cultural paradigms that inform solutions to Indigenous food insecurity (Kuhnlein et al. 2006) and

thus wish to protect their cultures and traditional landscapes from actions reflecting non-Indigenous perspectives (Fenelon and Hall 2008).

Within programming initiated by the federal and provincial governments, and, increasingly, by mainstream non-governmental organizations, funding is often contingent upon program applicants demonstrating that the projects contribute to business solvency, employment, and assumptions of individualism and privatization – my experiences with the Rural Secretariat being but one example. The incentives that these types of externally-imposed conditions create for Northern residents who want to establish food-related projects are problematic and potentially deeply colonizing. Participants wanted to see viable business ventures in their communities, many of which related to food. However, the design of such ventures, when initiated by community members, would likely differ from what an outsider from Western society considers "viable". For example, the design might contribute to share-culture, with no expectation of enforced exchange, either monetarily or in-kind. If funding agencies persist with conditions set and judged by external entities rather than by Northern community members themselves, the foodscape in the North will likely be skewed towards the creation of food-related projects which are more reflective of Westernized perspectives than Indigenous perspectives and which further undermine food sovereignty. Moreover, as Indigenous people are unlikely to participate in projects that, while designed to 'help' them, are perceived as colonizing – such projects will likely be short-lived and doomed to fail.

Some participants were interested in sourcing better food from elsewhere, which would help mitigate barriers to food security including poor soil conditions and a short growing season. This arguably could contribute to food sovereignty perspectives if Northern community members felt a sense of control over solutions and how they operated. Other Indigenous communities facing food insecurity are also exploring this option, while seeking to mitigate any risks of further 'food colonization'

(Kuhnlein et al. 2006). However, it is difficult to develop this solution within a food sovereignty framework as it inherently involves relationships with outsiders based on a negotiated arrangement.

One alternative that might facilitate regional food sovereignty and reflect long-standing traditions of trade would be for Northern Indigenous communities to exchange food with those from the South. Residents from MCN and Grand Rapids visited Muskoday First Nation in Saskatchewan, which is the location of a highly successful Indigenous agricultural cooperative. Discussion focused on potential trading relationships with potatoes, corn and other vegetables being exchanged for country foods including moose and fish. This relationship may be explored in the future. This Nation-to-Nation trading was much less problematic for participants than settler-Indigenous relationships, which undermined the idea of food sovereignty for some. If successful, these initiatives would enable food sovereignty at local and regional scales and mitigate the impacts of the GAFS.

5.8.2 Defining Priorities for Food Action in the North

In general, the research outcomes indicate that participants evaluate responses to the Northern food crisis according to a list of priorities that reflected across all four solution categories. *Education* on nutrition, particularly Indigenous nutrition and its connections to health and healing (Power 2008) was identified as a priority. *Skills and knowledge exchange and capacity building* around caring for and developing agricultural soils, gardening, greenhouse operations, and storing perishable goods through canning, pickling and cold storage were also identified as being very important. A major priority for many community members was to *communicate practices around spiritual and cultural ways of interacting with land and food,* especially to youth and children and future generations. Thus, rather than any one solution being strongly prioritized by community members, participants generally indicated that any food-related initiative that was locally designed and controlled, and which facilitate these outcomes, would be useful and well-received. Solutions that emphasize food security over food sovereignty are

unlikely to be adopted and will thus do little to resolve the Northern food crisis. A simple 'lack of food' is not the primary issue – instead, the issue is a generations-long and community-level experience with a wide array of colonizing forces that have undermined and continue to undermine local food culture and food-related knowledge.

Yet, dominant society did have a role to play in addressing these priorities – particularly around *skills and knowledge exchange and capacity building*. Even today, many non-Indigenous people urge for the 'protection' of 'vulnerable' Indigenous communities from exposure to non-Indigenous worldviews and individuals as a way of reducing any risk of further colonization. I encountered this perspective frequently through interactions with other students and other Southern food activists. This perspective is partriarchal in nature; it seeks to 'save' Indigenous cultures by removing their right to choose who they wish to interact with and assumes that these communities can only retain their 'Indigenousness' through their segregation from dominant society. In contrast to this perspective, Northern Indigenous residents assured me repeatedly that their people were very welcoming and would be happy to host Southerners who were there to exchange information and knowledge.

5.9 Conclusion

Participants had ready solutions to many of the food-related problems confronting their communities. Importantly, they identified strongly with options that were both realistic in terms of time and energy commitments and which also facilitated their knowledge and control over the chosen alternatives. Solutions to the Northern food crisis are likely to be multiple and varied. All of the options currently being explored and those not yet imagined need financial and political support. The crisis in the North is political in nature, yet is also very real and urgent. However, control over all elements of solutions to the Northern food crisis needs to be located within Northern communities in order to be successful – and currently very few of them are.

The solutions to the food crisis as they are being implemented in the North are problematic for several reasons. The gardening initiatives favoured and celebrated by many mainstream food-related NGOs and agencies, while extremely beneficial for other reasons, are labour intensive and unlikely to produce enough food to solve the crisis. While gardening initiatives should be implemented for many other reasons, they will not in and of themselves alleviate the Northern food crisis, which is real, desperate and resulting in depression and other ill health affects which further disable Northern capacity to respond to the numerous other challenges facing Northern communities.

A majority of actors in Northern food security are government funded and affiliated. These affiliations are also of concern. Agencies and NGOs funded by these same agencies tend to be apolitical and uncritical of the dominant paradigm from which solutions to the Northern food crisis are currently derived, and can actually promote and enforce inappropriate cultural perspectives. The food crisis in the North is inherently political and at its roots is linked to land and treaty rights, colonization and self-determination. A wider diversity of alternatives are required, may of which will be explicitly political in nature. As an example, in the spring of 2005, the Mayor and Council of Grand Rapids and Chief and council of MCN set up a blockage to oppose opening the spillway of the dam. The uncleared brush in the spillway, deposited in Lake Manitoba often interferes with fishing and destroys equipment, devastating a traditional livelihood and food sovereignty every time the spillway is opened (Kulchyski et al. 2006, G. McKay, personal communication, 17 October 2009). As I discovered, it is not the solutions identified here which can be rated and ranked according to Indigenous priorities so much as the process through which they come to be and whether or not that process genuinely empowers food sovereignty perspectives.

As Guthman (2008a) and Levkoe (2011) argue, food insecurity with its roots in past injustice cannot be addressed through a supply-side emphasis, but, rather, requires a politicized approach. The discourse surrounding the Northern food crisis needs to move beyond food security to the more

important dialogue around Indigenous sovereignty (food and otherwise), land rights and the political reasons as to why local control is so essential to any genuine resolution (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011).

Indigenous priorities for education, skills development, capacity building and reconnecting to language and culture can only be facilitated if Indigenous food activists, educators with knowledge of Indigenous nutrition, hunting and trapping, traditional medicines and gardening practices are identified and empowered. Yet they can only become a part of this desperately needed resolution if they are invited to the political table – to frame the discourse surrounding the Northern food crisis and to communicate Indigenous priorities and visions surrounding food sovereignty perspectives to government, NGOs, industry and other food providers with an interest in resolving the Northern food crisis.

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6 A NORTH-SOUTH RECIPROCATIVE NETWORK CASE STUDY: IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

6.1 Abstract

A food crisis is occurring across the northern reaches of the Prairie Provinces of Canada. Associated with the destruction of Indigenous food systems and the introduction of the Globalized Agri-Food System (GAFS), this crisis underlies wide-scale food insecurity and an epidemic of diet-related disease. This study examines the degree to which rural-settler and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives can further their individual goals while strengthening their combined resistance to the GAFS through North-South collaborative networks, in which youth and youth-learning play a pivotal role. Insights derived from participant experiences with a youth-focused garden project in the South were complemented by individual and focus group interviews with youth and adults in both locations. The outcomes of this action research indicate that North-South reciprocating networks may provide effective alternatives to the GAFS in both regions. However, all intercultural alliances should be embedded within Indigenous food sovereignty principles. These principles indicate a need for deliberate social learning amongst participants engaged in intercultural collaborations. Moreover, food-related action in the North that is funded by agencies originating in the South would more appropriately occur through an intercultural learning framework.

6.2 Introduction

Increasingly, studies are exploring the interrelated issues of poverty, food insecurity and diet-related disease that are disproportionately experienced by Indigenous communities in countries such as Canada and the United States (Kuhnlein et al. 2004, Ward and Whiting 2006) and other Indigenous cultures worldwide (Carino 2006). Indigenous people often report that food insecurity in their

communities is derived from their nation's broader experience with colonization (e.g. Alkon and Norgaard 2009), and most particularly with the appropriation and degradation of land and water that was historically relied upon for both livelihood and as a source of life-sustaining nutrition (Kawamura 2004, Morrison 2011).

Across the northern reaches of the Prairie Provinces of Canada (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba), researcher, media and government attention is being directed towards what has been labeled the "Northern Food Crisis" (Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee 2003, Thompson et al. 2010). While preliminary investigations in the Prairie Provinces have focused on the high prices of fresh fruits, vegetables and other perishables in the North (e.g. Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee 2003, Population Health Unit 2011), evidence from across Northern Canada forms a more complicated picture – one associated with the decline in availability and quality of country foods and an increased reliance on highly processed, low-nutrition foods introduced by the Globalized Agri-Food System (GAFS) as traditional food systems are undermined (Damman et al. 2008, Haman et al. 2010). Aggravated by the enduring impacts of colonization in Indigenous communities (Turner et al. 2008, Partridge 2010), the Northern food crisis is creating lasting effects for Northern residents, who suffer from disproportionately high rates of diet-related disease, particularly diabetes (Martens et al. 2007).

A resistance to the GAFS is forming around the world, including the Prairie Provinces, based on grassroots coalitions of consumers and producers demanding and co-creating Alternative Food Systems (AFS) that seek to address the shortcomings of the GAFS (Anderson and McLachlan 2008). Although many of these initiatives have been criticized as catering to the palates of the privileged few (Guthman 2008a), increasing numbers are working towards food security and food sovereignty (Bell-Sheeter 2004). Food sovereignty refers to the right of communities to define their own food systems independent of market forces (Desmarais 2007), and has particular relevance for rural peoples and

peasant farmers. In the Prairie Provinces, rural communities and livelihoods were developed to provide products for the GAFS at the time of European colonization and these communities now suffer from reduced population, receding services and declining environmental and human health as the commodity-based agricultural design expands (Diaz et al. 2003).

However, little attention has been paid to the implications of food sovereignty for Indigenous communities in Western Canada or within the wider AFS discourse (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011). Indeed, food sovereignty is arguably a defining characteristic of Indigenous food systems, where diverse hunting, fishing, gathering, farming and distribution practices sustained the 98 Nations and 11 language groups distributed across the territory now known as Canada for thousands of years prior to European contact (Power 2008, Morrison 2011). Food sovereignty efforts also inform the actions of numerous Indigenous community members and projects engaged in affirming traditional harvesting practices and knowledge-sharing activities (PFPP 2010). Published studies tend to focus on the need for traditional foods to solve contemporary health problems (e.g. Milburn 2004) and the usefulness of Indigenous land practices in mitigating environmental decline (e.g. Simpson 2002, Morrison 2011).

Indigenous youth play an important role in maintaining Indigenous food sovereignty: their participation in harvesting activities and in engaging with the values and worldview that inform local relationships to land, plants and animals is a necessity for transferring Indigenous food sovereignty into future generations (Morrison 2011). Questions are now arising as to the role that non-Indigenous allies can play in Indigenous food sovereignty, as Indigenous food activists have identified the need to build respectful cross-cultural relationships and to reconcile Indigenous harvesting practices with colonial policies and laws (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011). At the same time, Indigenous food activists wish to avoid further food colonization resulting from power imbalances

(Carino 2006) and the dominance of a Western worldview that still inform many initiatives originating in the South and act to undermine Indigenous perspectives (Simpson 2002).

This study in part addresses the degree to which rural and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives can further their individual goals while combining their resistance to the GAFS through North-South collaborative networks, in which youth and youth learning play a pivotal role.

6.3 Purpose and Rationale

Shortly after the Confederation of Canada in 1867, the federal government extended Canada's sovereignty into what was then referred to as Rupert's Land – an area encompassing much of present day Manitoba, Saskatchewan and parts of Southern Alberta and administered by the Hudson's Bay Company (Daugherty 1983, Friesen 1987). The federal government pursued a series of policies that would see the rich agricultural soils of the South farmed by an influx of European settlers who would themselves be a market for the manufactured goods of Central Canada (Friesen 1987). While Canada's interest in the northern reaches of this region was not immediate, government officials anticipated that the forest and mineral resources of the territory would be made available to the Crown for future exploitation. But first, treaties needed to be signed with the Indigenous inhabitants of Rupert's Land (Daugherty 1983).

As noted by Morrison (2011), early relationships between newcomers to Western Canada and the Indigenous Peoples were often constructed around mutual aid. Indigenous peoples supported the food security – access to adequate nutritional food (WHO 2011) – of early settlers by showing them how to access many country foods (PFPP 2010). Early settler women benefited from learning the mid-wife practices and root and herbal healing knowledge of First Nations women (Tang 2003). First Nations farmers were often employed or simply helped out on settler farms (McLeod 2007),

exchanged food with their settler neighbors (Francis Alexis, personal communication, 14 August 2010) and benefited from knowledge learned through these connections (Tang 2003).

However, relationships between settlers and Indigenous Peoples developed under conditions of blatant racism and a government-mandated disregard for the autonomy, cultures and food-related practices of Indigenous Peoples (Tang 2003). This disregard began in the early fur-trade era when employees of the Hudson's Bay Company provided Indigenous fur trappers with food provisions and credit at the fort store in order to dissuade these trappers from spending time procuring food (Tough 1996) and in the South, culminated with the slaughter of the Plains Bison in response to an insatiable demand for industrial leather in Europe (Taylor 2011). These are only some of many examples of how Indigenous food sovereignty has been undermined by the extirpation of Indigenous Peoples and their resources from traditional territories (Morrison 2011). The assimilative policies of the Indian Act also contributed to a loss of Indigenous food sovereignty, as children were removed from traditional land-based practices and forced to attend residential schools (Partridge 2010). In turn, input-intensive agricultural practices were imposed on reserve farmers within a policy framework that essentially guaranteed their failure (Carter 1990). Today, settler-Indigenous relations continue to be adversarial, in large part reflecting this unaddressed colonial history and the controlling policies contained within the Indian Act (PFPP 2010, Morrison 2011).

While the farming and ranching families arriving in Western Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s surely benefited from treaty and the subsequent land availability (Epp 2008) and have developed strong identities in the land base over the past century, they, too, are beginning to question the benefits of 'rural development'. The 'settlement' of the West was predicated on the export of raw materials – including agricultural commodities – to the east and to western ports designed to facilitate international trade (Friesen 1987). These acts dismantled the long-standing regional subsistence food system and replaced it with an export oriented one based in the commodification of agriculture, and

the current outcome is that very few local foods and almost no endemic food cultures are present in the Prairie Provinces (Wiebe and Wipf 2011). As a result, rural communities in Canada are experiencing their own crisis – one based in declining rural populations and infrastructure, an aging population, and the diasporas of rural youth to urban centres (Diaz et al. 2003, Buckland 2004, NFU 2005).

Some farmers are adapting to this rural decline by exploring AFS that help facilitate local control over rural livelihoods. These AFS can take the form of direct marketing (Anderson and McLachlan 2008), holistic management (McLachlan and Yestrau 2008) and permaculture (Mollison 1988). Benefits accrue to farmers, as AFS provide an alternative income stream to the GAFS and are linked to the development of vibrant local economies and improvements in community cohesion and wellness (Desmarais et al. 2011).

However, the northern regions of the Prairie Provinces are experiencing a food crisis that is largely attributed to the high price of fresh fruits and vegetables accessed through the conventional grocery system as a result of the remoteness of northern communities from food distribution points (Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee 2003, Population Health Unit 2011). High rates of diabetes and other diet-related diseases are reported in Indigenous communities in southern Canada (Martens et al. 2007), across the United States (Ward and Whiting 2006) and, indeed, internationally (Kuhnlein et al. 2006). These results indicate that price or distance alone do not account for the food insecurity confronting these communities and the associated ill health.

In Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN), some 500 km north of Winnipeg, food insecurity is a direct result of hydro development in the 1960s (Kulchyski et al. 2006). The Swampy Cree Tribal Council, of which MCN is a member, reports some of the highest diabetes treatment rates amongst registered First Nations in Manitoba and overall, diabetes treatment rates are four times higher than for the general Manitoba population, with the greatest discrepancies actually occurring in

the South (Martens et al. 2002). Despite the prevalence of diet-related disease with its clear links to racialized poverty, northern perspectives on the root causes of this food crisis and ideal solutions remain largely unexplored (see previous chapter and Thompson et al. 2010 as important exceptions).

Yet, many initiatives are working towards Indigenous food sovereignty in Northern Canada, including groceries that bring culturally significant foods into urban centres and gardens where Elders transfer knowledge to youth (PFPP 2010). Introducing youth to the harvest of traditional foods is also important (PFPP 2010), as is engaging Indigenous youth with experiential, hands-on learning opportunities in order for them to learn land-based skills and the cultural philosophy that will enable them to steward traditional lands in the future (Simpson 2002, O'Conner 2009). Indeed, several Supreme Court decisions in Canada have criticized long-standing barriers to the ability of Indigenous People to harvest land-based foods within traditional territories (Morrison 2011). Both traditional and new food procurement strategies, some working in partnership with NGOs, academia and government extension officers, can act as useful interventions in the conventional food system (Kuhnlein et al. 2006).

Despite these localized successes, Indigenous food sovereignty perspectives and initiatives remain under-reported in the literature, particularly in comparison to the attention paid to initiatives taking place in rural and urban communities (e.g. Riches 1999, Buckland 2004). It is also clear that food sovereignty initiatives based in rural farming communities are largely disengaged from the parallel efforts of Indigenous communities to survive and resist the impacts of the GAFS (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty 2011). It remains to be seen whether these rural and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives are best served by remaining independent of one another; or, can rural and Indigenous communities further their own individual goals while supporting one another and their combined resistance to the GAFS through collaborative North-South networks of support and exchange?

Critiques of AFS suggest that cross-cultural projects within the food movement often fail to address social justice issues and that the ostensible alternatives act to recreate existing power hierarchies in society (Allen 2008, Levkoe 2011). Morrison (2011) reports that cross-cultural alliances require a shared understanding of the colonizing nature of the relationship between Indigenous people and colonial governments – a relationship that hinders Indigenous food sovereignty today (PFPP 2010). Genuine alliances between Indigenous communities and members of Western society are the most difficult to establish as a result of the long history of 'oppression, inequality and authoritarian divide and rule strategies' (Childs 1998). In some situations, coalitions can be problematic: in the case of the Grassy Narrows logging blockade (Wallace 2010) and within the international peasant's organization La Vía Campesina (Desmarais 2007), grassroots organizers reported their experiences with participating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as paternalistic and demobilizing. Thus, associations may be more harmful than helpful, depending on the situation: "to stand aside, if requested to do so by a community, can be just as important as being directly involved… such disengagement is especially important if the "outsider", no matter how well intentioned, come from the dominant sector of society" (Childs 1998; p. 69).

However, there may also be important benefits to intercultural initiatives that manage to create politically transformative partnerships. Indigenous People's systems of knowledge provide alternatives that can offer information and direction to non-Indigenous food initiatives seeking to escape industrialized patterns of thinking (PFPP 2010). As one of the major criticisms of the GAFS is its contribution to political disempowerment and structural inequality, alternatives to the GAFS must become politically transformative, diverse in approach, and sensitive to difference in order to be genuine and lasting (Levkoe 2011).

Indeed, cross-cultural alliances between rural communities and Indigenous communities have successfully resisted unwanted government and industry-initiated developments in the past, as in the

case of the Grassy Narrows logging blockade in Northwestern Ontario (Wallace 2010) and the more recent Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement (IPSM 2011). Likewise, there have been a number of alliances in the United States, including action on the part of Lakota leaders working with rural neighbors to collectively resist development while confronting racism and educating participants on First Nations sovereignty and Treaty (Grossman 2003 and 2005). From these results, in may be inferred that intercultural alliances around AFS may facilitate collective resistance to the GAFS that transcends what either group can achieve alone.

Trusting, face-to-face relationships form the basis of successful intercultural alliances (Wallace 2010). Shared practical action on a common problem can be a medium for developing this trust (Childs 1998). Work that crosses cultural boundaries both necessitates and results in transformative social learning – learning which transforms an individual's worldview into one that is knowledgeable of the 'other' and capable of responding to needs and perspectives that were formerly unknown (Mezirow 2003, Morrison 2011). There is a substantial need for 'connectors' in intercultural alliances – individuals who can cross cultural boundaries without losing sight of their own place-based identities (Childs 1998, Dobbie and Richards-Schuster 2008). Interestingly, youth are often the most effective connectors, as they are able to work across these boundaries more comfortably (Dobbie and Richards-Schuster 2008).

6.4 Research Objectives

The overall goal of this research is to explore the role of cross-regional reciprocative networks in addressing the Northern food crisis. This project will thus offer potential solutions to the Northern food crisis as well as adding to the discourse on cross-cultural alliances within a food sovereignty framework. This case study approach, consisting of Northern youth learning about and benefiting from growing food in a gardening project in the South, prompted this action and the exploration of these areas of inquiry.

The specific objectives of this case study are to:

- Identify attitudes towards a North-South collaboration around food on the part of Northern Indigenous community members and Southern farming community members;
- Identify the potential for and implications of a North-South collaborative garden project in mitigating food insecurity in the North;
- Explore how intercultural alliances in AFS can contribute to Indigenous food sovereignty; and
- Identify the role that youth can play in North-South collaborations.

6.5 Study Background

6.5.1 Study Area

Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) and the Town of Grand Rapids

Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) and Grand Rapids are located 480 km North of Winnipeg in Northern Manitoba and are situated within the territory governed by Treaty 5, which was concluded in 1875 (Coates and Morrison 1986). Community members who wished to take Treaty were forced to move to the east side of the Saskatchewan River – immediately resulting in a bifurcated community with full status Cree living on the Reserve and a largely non-status but Indigenous (Métis) population residing in the town of Grant Rapids, on the west side of the river.

At that time, residents of Grand Rapids and MCN were fortunate in having access to a vibrant fisheries in Lake Winnipeg and to the rich hunting and trapping grounds of Summerberry Marsh, located some 50 km upstream. The construction of the Grand Rapids Dam and Generating Station, beginning in 1961, changed this situation for the worse: mercury release from flooded lands devastated the Lake Winnipeg fishery and the Dam floodwaters permanently submerged Summerberry Marsh (Loney 1987, Kulchyski et al. 2006). Moreover, a third and largely divisive

community was created with the addition of Hibord – a town constructed for largely non-Indigenous employees of Manitoba Hydro. The environmental, economic and social ills conceived by this event perpetuate into the current day and clearly illustrate the link between environmental and food injustice (MCN 2010).

The Town of Pilot Mound and the Town of Clearwater

The town of Pilot Mound was incorporated in 1904, after relocating a mile south of the original town site on 'Old Mound' to be in closer proximity to the newly constructed CPR railway (Pilot Mound and District Chamber of Commerce 2000). The "Old Mound" is a site of historic significance to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In the 1850s, a battle between Métis buffalo hunters and Sioux tribal members resulted in the slaughter and burial of 597 Sioux on the west slope. And, in 1885, Canada's first Prime Minister John A. McDonald addressed an audience on the slope of the Mound during his only journey west (Pilot Mound and District Chamber of Commerce 2000).

6.5.2 Study Participants

Research participants from Grand Rapids include Betty Calym, an Elder and retired nurse, Eileen Einarson, a community Elder and Sarah Dumas, a community Elder and also a former meat cutter and manager at one of Grand Rapid's earliest commercial grocery stores; and Jim Sangster, a long-time resident and former teacher and principal at Grand Rapids School. Participants from MCN include Alice Cook, a community Elder and former Chief of MCN, Annie Ballantyne, Band member and principal at Grand Rapids School and Bernard Beardy, Band member and the current manager at the Band-owned grocery store *MCN Foods*.

A number of participants were involved in food related activism. These included Gerald McKay, a Band member, and an Indigenous fisherman and advocate for the Northern fisheries; Heidi Cook, a

resident of Grand Rapids and Manager of the Traditional Lands and Waters Office for the MCN Band and Kim Izzard, a resident of MCN with expertise in gardening for community wellness.

Other participants not residing in Grand Rapids, but having an interest in and knowledge of Northern Indigenous food sovereignty included Blaine Klippenstein, a food activist, teacher and long-time Northern resident; Brenda Gaudry, an member of the Norway House Band who grew up in Wabowden, and who has expertise in Indigenous food activities; Joe Munroe, a Cree food activist, a member of Muskoday First Nation, of the River Cree People, and the Indigenous Peoples Food Coordinator for Heifer Project International Canada; and Byron Beardy, the Food Security Coordinator for the Island Lake communities in Northeastern Manitoba through Four Arrows Regional Health Authority, and a member of Wasagamack First Nation.

To the South, Pam and Clint Cavers own and operate Harbourside Farms within sight of the Mound, where they raise and direct market grass-raised beef, poultry and pork. University-community research affiliations in this part of Manitoba are extensive – the Harvest Moon Local Food Initiative, of which Pam and Clint Cavers are members, is associated with the Harvest Moon Society in the nearby community of Clearwater (Anderson and McLachlan 2008). The Cavers and their three children, in addition to Wian Prinsloo, were employed by the project to manage the Southern garden plot.

6.6 Methodology

6.6.1 Philosophical Foundations – PAR as a Methodological Approach

Participatory action research (PAR) (Fals Borda 2001) is a suitable methodological approach for projects that seek to connect participants with diverse perspectives, as PAR projects often involve coalition-based approaches in which diverse stakeholders address shared problems through action (Fuller-Rowell 2009). The relationships built, particularly amongst project partners with diverse

backgrounds and goals, are both an important element and goal of action research. Reiterative cycles of discussion and shared action are essential characteristics of action research that builds trust (Kildea et al. 2009) and solidarity surrounding the topic at hand (Genat 2009). The use of trust-based relationships, multiple forms of communication and the creation of common ground for action facilitate progress and social change (Bodorkós and Pataki 2009).

6.6.2 Research Design and Research Methods

The emerging action was treated as an instance of intensity sampling, involving a singular information-rich case study to strongly demonstrate and investigate the phenomenon of a North-South connection over food (Patton 2002). Singular case studies are particularly useful for the purposes of evaluation (Wilson 1979, Patton 2002) and are often used as a primary method in PAR (McTaggart 1998). Case study approaches are used to gather in-depth and particularistic information (Patton 2002). The sample size was limited in this research project due to the great depth and exploratory nature of the undertaking (Patton 2002). However, insight into the nature of Indigenous-settler relationships over food and an understanding of the potentials of a regional food network between the North and South may be applied more broadly within a Western Canadian context.

Southern family farmers Pam and Clint Cavers, having identified a desire to connect with Northern community members on the issue of local food, initiated the project by approaching Dr. Stéphane McLachlan at the Environmental Conservation Lab in fall of 2009 with the idea of using Southern land to grow food for a Northern community. Peter Kulchyski connected our lab with Gerald McKay from Grand Rapids, who became a point of entry into Grand Rapids and MCN. I began interacting with community members from Grand Rapids and MCN in order to discuss the possibility of locating a community garden project on Southern land in October 2009. Gerald McKay saw great potential in a North-South connection in terms of exploring the merits of a reciprocal food network and addressing

food security in the North. Furthermore, he believed that Grand Rapids and MCN would be ideal locations to experiment in because they are accessible by road and are comparatively close to the South, two factors that would keep costs relatively low in the first year. Success in Grand Rapids and MCN, Gerald believed, would enable the overall project concept to expand to more northerly and remote locations in the future, where the food crisis is worse.

Gerald directed me towards Alice Cook, who suggested that youth from Grand Rapids School would benefit from visiting a Southern garden and learning from experienced growers. After conversations with Annie Ballantyne, Principal at Grand Rapids School, it was concluded that interested youth would make weekend trips to the farm near Pilot Mound over the course of the growing season. Five teacher volunteers facilitated the youth visits. From June until October 2010, youth aged 13-18 made nine trips to the farm near Pilot Mound with their teachers and grew a five-acre garden containing corn, potatoes, carrots, beets, Swiss chard, onions, cucumbers and pumpkins. In the fall, the youth took the produce (over 1500 pounds of fresh vegetables and fruits) north and distributed it amongst community members in the town and on the Reserve.

Pamela and Clinton Cavers conducted a workshop on pickling using cucumbers and onions from the garden and I worked with several students in Grand Rapids to blanch and freeze Swiss chard and corn in addition to helping a number of students and community members set up small raised-bed gardens in their yards. The entire Cavers family, including daughters Mika, Tawny and Autumn contributed approximately 140 volunteer hours to the project. The Indigenous youth were tremendously motivated throughout the project, continually willing to visit the Southern farm and work on this ambitious project as volunteers. The project was unable to find funding for an additional season in 2011, and while Grand Rapids youth made one trip South in June of 2011 with financial support from Grand Rapids School and the Environmental Conservation Laboratory in order to maintain the relationship, this

lack of funding and a wet spring which prevented youth from having access to even a small land base resulting in the North-South project closing.

Participatory video was used to document the activities throughout the case study and these methods are complemented by individual interviews (n=19), adult and youth-centered focus group interviews (n=5), recorded field notes and collected written materials that reflect upon the usefulness of a North-South connection in addressing food security within a food sovereignty framework.

6.6.3 Data Interpretation

The results of this research project are compiled in this chapter and will be presented for publication to refereed journals. Other research outcomes may include public forum presentations, and other publications online and in magazines. Project participants were involved in its framing through a series of focus group discussions and through the involvement of Gerald McKay, Annie Ballantyne, Pam Cavers and Clint Cavers on my Masters thesis committee. My own personal reflections on the transcriptions, field notes and other materials were strengthened through the use of Atlas.ti, a software suite for qualitative data analysis that helped me identify and categorize emergent themes (Muhr 1991, Creswell and Clark 2007).

6.7 Results

6.7.1 Southern Benefits and Reasons for Participating

Pamela and Clinton Cavers had originally conceived the project as a win-win situation that would deliver a large quantity of healthy food into a northern community while potentially providing Southern farmers with alternatives to their dependence on the GAFS. They became aware of the Northern food crisis from a discussion with a conferences attendee from a northern Métis community. This garden would represent a first step towards creating this alternative and project participants from the South

could envision a future in which northern food needs could be met entirely through direct connections with small-scale farmers from the South, in ways that were mutually supportive:

> "We've been trying to brainstorm ways to take [this land] out of conventional agricultural production and affect the food system in a bigger way than we could by just sowing it down and raising more animals on it. That's the whole focus of our farm here and everything we do – changing the food system. If all of a sudden, all the Northern communities in Manitoba decided they wanted to seek a farmer, the repercussions could be huge – health-wise for everybody involved. You would probably start seeing conventional farms taken out of conventional production to grow food."
>
> *Clinton Cavers, Pilot Mound, MB*

The Cavers were compensated for the rent of the five acres used by the Northern youth and the use of their farm equipment. The project also covered the cost to convert the remaining 85 acres in the field to hay. This income allowed the Cavers to replace the rent they were formerly paid by their tenant and to remove the entire field from conventional production.

6.7.2 Northern Responses

Just Getting Started

For northern residents, the southern garden project was perceived as an opportunity to expose Indigenous youth to an intense, hands-on learning experience in growing food. Residents of Grand Rapids and MCN reported an increase in consumption of processed convenience foods, a lack of physical activity and decreased consumption of healthy country foods as contributing to an epidemic of diabetes and other diet-related diseases within their community. Bringing back community traditions in gardening was seen as an essential step in creating healthy food options and lifestyles in the community and community members agreed that youth should be the sector of the community engaged with garden projects, as adults were far less likely to alter their habits. The Southern garden project also

complemented other gardening and healthy-eating initiatives already taking place through Frontier School Division.

> "That's why we're so interested in [gardening projects] – the eating part and also the physical labour part because a lot of our kids are not doing a lot of physical activity. So, the gardening would give them that opportunity to be physically active."
>
> *Annie Ballantyne, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

Inspiration and Demonstrating Possibilities

Community members and the youth participants felt that the success and fun they experienced in the garden at Pilot Mound gave them the inspiration they needed to garden in the more challenging climate and soils of the North:

> "The purpose of me going to Pilot Mound was just to go and learn about something I always wanted to do when I was still a kid. I always wanted to have a garden when I was a little kid. So it was a really good experience just going out to Pilot Mound and gardening and harvesting. It was fun."
>
> *Cheyenne Azule, youth, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

> "The kids went there. They loved just to be outdoors and to be planting and learning new things. And from there, they just kept wanting to go back more and more. They also got a love for gardening and it made it easier here in Grand Rapids to start up our gardening project and to get them gardening at their houses here."
>
> *Sarah Hanniman, Grand Rapids, MB*

A Success Story to be Proud of

Even more important to many community leaders and youth was the pride that the youth experienced in having successfully brought the project to its conclusion and having shared healthy food with Elders, their family members and others within the community. This sense of pride is often rare in these communities:

> "There is within [the young Northern Indigenous] generation a sense of despair and hopelessness, that if you give them a sense of purpose, a sense of accomplishment, they are just dedicated to it."
>
> *Brian Hunt, MAFRI, MB*

Gaining Knowledge and Skills for the Future

Northern participants agreed that another growing season in Pilot Mound would be beneficial, but also wanted to focus on learning-intensive workshops that would see youth building skills in seeding, weeding, harvesting, storing, preserving and cooking fresh fruits and vegetables, and simultaneously transferring these skills into their Northern gardens. While Southern perspectives remained focused on supplying an abundance of food to the North, these participants also recognized the advantage the project was providing to gardening projects in the North, regardless of the actual quantity of food being harvested:

> "I see the excitement of the youth and the possibilities of what could happen in future years here and in future years in their own community – the change that's going to come out of that, whether it's directly related to this project or whether it's something that happens ten years down the road because somebody has been floating something around in their head because of being here."
>
> *Clint Cavers, Pilot Mound, MB*

6.7.3 Northern Food Security: Is Southern Land Necessary?

It is still unclear whether it is desirable or even possible for the North to be self-sufficient in food production. Brian Hunt, from Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, stated that only 25% of the communities in the North have tillable soil, as many are located on Canadian Shield (granite) or on glacial till lacking an A horizon. The growing season is too short to bring some desired crops such as corn to maturity. Some participants felt that these challenges would limit long-term community interest in gardening initiatives in the North, a sentiment echoed by Pamela Cavers and by Betty Calym, a resident and avid gardener in Grand Rapids since 1968:

> "They couldn't feed their community with gardens or greenhouses up there. It's just not something that would happen very easily at all. I think there's a definite need for relationships that work in circular ways."
>
> *Pamela Cavers, Pilot Mound, MB*

> "I can see people starting off gun-ho, but… three years from now, that will all disperse. It will be disbanded because it's so difficult under the circumstances."
>
> *Betty Calym, Grand Rapids, MB*

However, it is also very clear that Northern residents are keen to grow local food as much as possible before relying on imported food – even food coming from as near as Southern Manitoba.

> "There is no reason why we can't be doing potatoes and some other vegetables here. And then, if there's still something that we may need or may have further interest in, I don't think it hurts to have that kind of support and that type of partnership out there to access and further that. We need to spark that interest at the local level first and then look at establishing that relationship with the South. But, we need to build, or start, right here in our community."
>
> *Kym Izzard, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

Some participants felt that Indigenous-rural alliances were unlikely to succeed and that any project located in the South would ultimately work to undermine local, sovereignty-based initiatives. Indeed, one founding member of the project withdrew, wanting to focus her energy and resources on local food projects and finding herself disinterested in initiatives that would see trade established between the two regions. Others felt that North-South alliances would be more viable, at least in the short-term, if they were established between Northern and Southern Indigenous communities. Responding to this perspective, the project facilitated a journey of residents of Grand Rapids and MCN to Muskoday First Nation in October 2010 to discuss the potential of trading fish and other hunted meats and wild-crafted foods from Grand Rapids and MCN for garden products, particularly potatoes, from Muskoday Organic Growers Co-op:

> “There was a feast last month in Muskoday. People from Grand Rapids attended and talked with the co-op board and they're talking about reestablishing pre-contact trade routes and adding modern or current-day food to what's being traded. They want to trade for fish in Grand Rapids and I support them because the people of Grand Rapids have quotas placed on them by Crown governments on what they can sell or trade. But the Supreme Court of Canada said if you can establish that there were trade routes before contact, they fall outside of these restrictive laws. The communities of Muskoday and Grand Rapids are on the same river system. That was the natural highway for trade before contact.”
>
> *Joe Munroe, Muskoday First Nation*

For this participant, the role of non-Indigenous Canadians in supporting Indigenous food sovereignty was located in educating themselves on treaty relationships and urging their governments to remove restrictive policies affecting Indigenous food sovereignty. While North-South alliances held possibilities for addressing Northern food security and food sovereignty, they would be more appropriately established through Nation-to-Nation relationships.

These same discussions were taking place among the youth involved in this project, some of whom felt that the ease of gardening on a large scale in the south made sense, whereas others were concerned about developing local capacity:

> “I think the community would agree with… well, I think they should agree with growing food somewhere else to bring it here because it would be a lot more accessible than what they’re getting already and there’s clearly not enough fresh produce in Grand Rapids. The town could always use more and I think people should really always try and agree with it. If someone’s offering you a hand and giving you an opportunity to get more of what you need, then, I think you should do it.”
>
> *Thomas Fleury, youth, Grand Rapids, MB*

> “I say no. I say as a community we should all work together and make a big garden. And help support it.”
>
> *Zabrena Fourrier, youth, Grand Rapids, MB*

> “But what if the people aren’t willing to? That’s why it has to go down South.”
>
> *Cheyenne Azule, youth, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

> “Zabrina does have a point. Why go down south for farming when you could build your own farmland here? But there’s one catch to that. For a town like Grand Rapids, where are you going to find a whole big space and use it for farmland? A lot of the places we’ve got around here are marsh, so…”
>
> *Hunter Stoneman, youth, Grand Rapids, MB*

> You buy dirt.
>
> *Zabrena Fourrier, youth, Grand Rapids, MB*

> Why buy dirt when you could just go south and you don’t even have to worry about buying dirt and all that? All the equipment is there and everything. It’s not like you’re really paying your way to Pilot Mound either, when you go.
>
> *Cheyenne Azule, youth, Misipawistik Cree Nation*

Of all the participants from the North, the youth were the most interested in continuing the project and were extremely disappointed when I could not access funds or land for the 2011 growing season. Many had envisioned a relationship that would extend into the future and which would see Southern youth coming into their communities to learn about forest foods and the Lake Winnipeg fishery.

6.7.4 The Northern Food Crisis and the Need for Skills and Knowledge

It was clear that the Northern youth benefited deeply from North-South collaboration as they gained knowledge and skills about larger scale gardening. Northerners indicated that skills regarding planting, preserving and even cooking have been completely lost from many communities, particularly those which were deeply affected by the compounding issues of colonization and the residential school experience. They also had an interest in using newer technical solutions such as greenhouses to address the food crisis, but recognized they would need support from experienced growers who would be willing to help transfer these skills to a Northern setting. To this end, MCN was working in partnership with the provincial government and a non-profit organization towards establishing a commercial greenhouse on MCN land. This greenhouse would provide food locally and also export to other Northern locations.

Several research participants were critical of current attempts to address the Northern food crisis, citing inadequate knowledge translation:

> "With all due respect to whoever's involved here – I don't think any of them have ever grown a weed! There has to be other people behind it, getting the money and getting the funding, but I believe somebody has got to have a heart for that earth."
>
> *Jim Sangster, Grand Rapids, MB*

Others were frustrated with the ongoing exclusion of Northern residents and appropriate insights and skills from food-related organizations:

> "The Northern Alliance of Community Councils has an employee who came to our community to implement local food initiatives. The unfortunate element to it was that this person had very limited, if any, knowledge of gardening, livestock, greenhouses and Northern realities. They were keen but we need practical and hands on information on food production. We need practical hands on help and knowledge to push the local food initiatives forward. I think that it would be a benefit to advertize this position in the communities that it serves, not simply hire someone from the city."
>
> *Blaine Klippenstein, Barrows, MB*

While on-site agricultural and gardening projects in Northern communities are desirable, they are inadequate when appropriate skill sets are not transferred along with the physical materials. Community members indicated that the most detrimental activities taking place in Northern communities were initiatives – food-related or otherwise – that failed as a result of this lack of attendant skills and knowledge transfer. They felt that their communities had been burdened by a sense of failure arising from a long history of unsuccessful government-sponsored projects that had been initiated in the North, particularly in Indigenous communities. Thus, while the Pilot Mound Gardening Project was useful to Northern residents in terms of the food produced, any increase in food security arising from the project was eclipsed by the youth accessing knowledge and skills through hands-on learning and the feelings of success youth experienced as a result of that learning:

> "I think the main purpose of going to Pilot Mound was being able to learn how to garden and learning it with your peer group, which makes things more interesting and makes you want to go back and just farm some more. So, the purpose was learning and also bringing back food on a wide scale into town to distribute to everyone, including the people who farmed. I've heard from a few people that, even someone who didn't truly like carrots, those were the best carrots he's ever tasted and he's waiting for a chance to have them again from the same place."
>
> *Hunter Stoneman, youth, Grand Rapids, MB*

> "I think the point for me was just going and learning how to do certain things like growing and planting. Just learning how to make my own produce in general, I guess, and it's a good experience and I learned a lot."
>
> *Thomas Fleury, youth, Grand Rapids, MB*

6.7.5 Avoiding a Charity of Model and Escaping Cycles of Dependency

While North-South partnerships may offer invaluable learning experiences that would be otherwise difficult to obtain in the North, Northern residents wanted to derive food from initiatives located within their own territory as much as possible. Northerners were not supportive of Southern gardening projects that built capacity and skills in youth that were not applicable in the North, or which did not simultaneously engage with healthy food opportunities available in the North:

> "I think it's really, really good that [the youth] go and they learn those skills, but for long-term, unless those people down there are getting some benefit from up here too, I don't see how it can last."
>
> *Heidi Cook, Grand Rapids, MB*

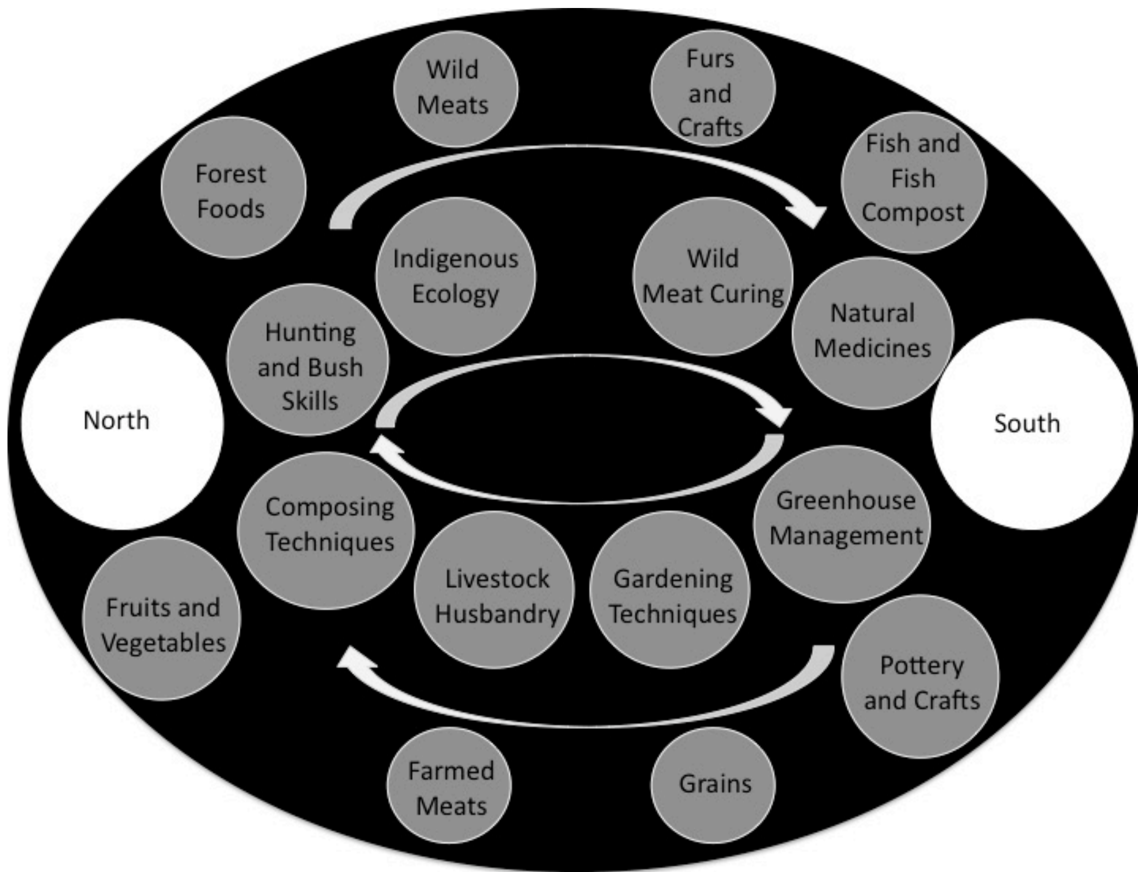
They were also critical of food arriving from the South that would inadvertently undermine the need and desire of Northern residents to reengage with local land-based foods or gardens. Northern residents were particularly critical of charity-based projects that originated in the South; they viewed longstanding cycles of dependency that continue today as a major source of dysfunction in their communities.

> "Our Aboriginal people… they're getting so used to everybody giving, giving. They figure it's a right, you know? Show us how to do it and look after it so we show more pride and work towards improving it."
>
> *Brenda Gaudry, Barrows, MB*

6.7.6 Developing Reciprocity: A Recipe for Success?

Northern residents felt that vegetables could be grown in abundance in their community – Elders remembered when there were many gardens in Grand Rapids and MCN. However, some residents could see great potential in direct North-South relationships over food, as they would facilitate trading locally abundant goods that were otherwise unavailable to the trading partner. Southerners expressed interest in accessing wild teas and fish from MCN and the possibility of creating a direct market for fish in the South was discussed many times over the duration of the project, both for food and for organic fertilizer. Selling products directly to Southerners in collaborative and mutually beneficial ways could supplement the sparse monetary incomes available in the North. In fact, a major source of excitement for both Northerners and Southerners in exploring this connection was the possibility of creating reciprocal food networks which would identify areas of connection, where the exchange of skills and knowledge could occur, and where there would be immediate and emerging opportunities for trade (*figure 1*).

Figure 1 **North-South Reciprocative Networks of Exchange**



At least some Northerners see these North-South collaborations as useful – on the condition that they are self-sustaining and do not rely on external funding and provided they benefit the North in meaningful ways.

Pamela Cavers expressed her disappointment when the project did not continue in 2011, stating that if the relationship could have continued, many avenues of mutually beneficial interactions could have developed:

> "So many things could have been even more figured out if we could have went further. I'm not sad, just disappointed that it didn't happen this year so we could have explored it some more. The more open-minded you are, the more you respect and learn from one another, the more you can make different plans."
> *Pamela Cavers, Pilot Mound, MB*

However, for at least some of the teachers at Grand Rapids School who facilitated the Southern garden project, the time and energy the Southern garden required confirmed for them the need to focus on local responses:

> "As much as we love going to the farm and learning new things, I think we really need to bring that back to our community. In the end, our goal is to have Grand Rapids feeding themselves: having all the fruits and vegetables that we need grown right here in Grand Rapids. We can't go somewhere else and bring the food back here all the time."
>
> *Sarah Hanniman, teacher, Grand Rapids School*

6.7.7 Intercultural Alliances and Land-Based Resources

While reciprocal relationships with Southern landholders may relieve some Northerner's concerns with North-South collaborations around food, self-sufficiency within Indigenous communities has deep connection to Nationhood, and, by an obvious extension, to food sovereignty. Participants reported that when their ancestors first signed the treaties that would relinquish much of the traditional territory to the Crown and to incoming settlers, they understood the Crown had made long-standing commitments to First Nations regarding their livelihoods:

> "In the Treaty it was negotiated that we would have the means to take care of ourselves, which never really came. It was never really fulfilled. Four or five years after the Treaty was signed, our people were depending on subsistence handouts from the Government of Canada. In the absence of [the means to take care of ourselves], they had to feed us. They're still feeding us today, with the welfare – not very well – but feeding us today."
>
> *Joe Munroe, Muskoday First Nation*

The expectation that the Crown would honour these treaty obligations combined with the destructive legacy of the welfare system in reserve communities contextualize concerns about local control and self-sufficiency and help explain why food sovereignty is so important for many Indigenous people. Thus, to have to pay money – either for access to land held by Southerners or for food produced by Southerners – works in opposition to the types of relationships First Nations would like to have with

new-comers and very different from the relationship First Nations hoped would emerge at the time of treaties.

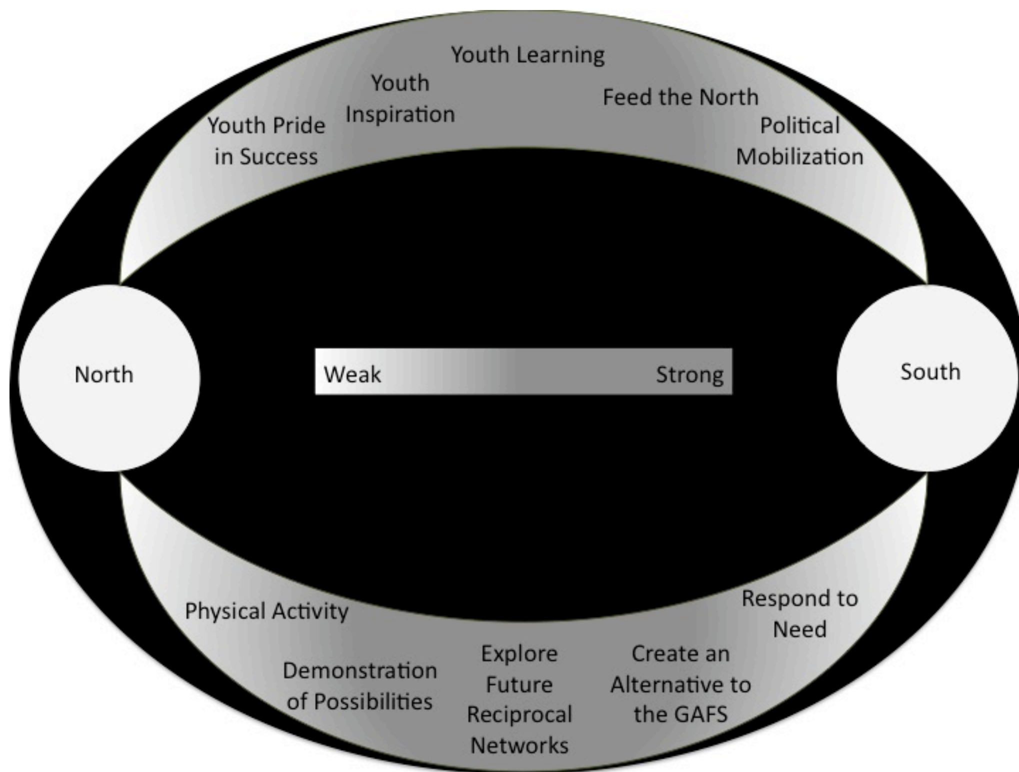
Ongoing food justice, with its connections to colonization, land appropriation and the ongoing degradation of traditional territories through mining, forestry and hydro development undermine any solution based in the South, particularly when northern communities have not yet explored their full potential in addressing the issue locally. Having access to an adequate land base to meet food needs is an important component of Indigenous resistance to colonization and a first step towards holding the Government of Canada accountable to treaty commitments. These concerns are tremendously difficult for Southerners to understand, much less affirm. Pamela and Clinton Cavers maintained that a direct connection with the South would immediately provide a source of affordable, healthy foods to Northern communities:

> "For me, it's still as simple as food. I wouldn't want to be disrespectful, you know? There's so much that I would have to learn and I wouldn't want to be disrespectful. That's the parts I would have to learn. It maybe isn't as simple as good food. But I just feel that it should be."
>
> *Pamela Cavers, Pilot Mound, MB*

> "Regardless of how you look at it, with food being what it is right now, we all have to buy food from somewhere. So, somewhere you're paying for somebody's land and somebody's time. So for me [these issues surrounding settler-Indigenous relationships] are not valid reasons not to do it."
>
> *Clint Cavers, Pilot Mound, MB*

There were thus many complex tensions and differences in priority between Northern Indigenous and Southern rural perspectives on the role of the Southern garden, ones that would need to be resolved if North-South intercultural alliances were to become viable (*figure 2*).

Figure 2 **Overlap of Perspectives Regarding Role of Southern Garden**



6.7.1 Unexplored Options

Research partners envisioned a number of additional solutions during this project. The first of these was a Southern Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) venture. In this scenario, rather than Northern communities renting land from a Southern landholder and travelling South to farm it themselves, they would employ a Southern farmer who would farm on their behalf. Northern residents would determine the amount of produce grown and which vegetables and fruits they would like to access, with the relationship being renegotiated every year. Such a relationship would provide Southern farmers with an alterative to the GAFS and also provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the North. However, the skills and knowledge-sharing benefits of closer collaborations would largely be lost, as would any potential for social learning brought about by trusting relationships and this option was largely unattractive to both Southern and Northern participants for these reasons.

A second alternative would see a Northern farm established in Grand Rapids and MCN. While the on-site soils are not ideal, it is possible to import appropriate soils from the South and there are many open spaces surrounding Grand Rapids and MCN as a result of the massive construction project that established the dam and generating station in the 1960s. In addition, the large supply of fish waste generated by the Lake Winnipeg fishery off the shores of MCN would provide an immediately available source of organic fertilizer, which could be used to maintain soil health, after the soil was established. This alternative was attractive to some, as it could supply an abundant supply of local vegetables and even meats:

> "Maybe in the future, we might be able to do a larger scale project such as a 2 acre… even 5 acre farm here in Grand Rapids. More than anything, that needs to happen here. We can't go somewhere else and bring the food back here all the time."
>
> *Sarah Hanniman, teacher, Grand Rapids*

> "I've often said we ought to be grazing the hydro lines. They're wide open. There's lots of grass. Sheep would do well on that. And, you know, there's no reason we couldn't have our own beef here – the important things here."
>
> *Jim Sangster, resident, Grand Rapids*

Many Northern residents would find the initiation of this solution quite contentious, as it would potentially introduce new animal and plant species into the North and would also truly redirect residents' activities toward solutions based in agriculture, rather than those based in land foods. Moreover, a tremendous degree of skills and knowledge transfer from Southern farmers would need to take place in order for this solution to succeed.

A final alternative largely unexplored in Northern communities may lie in establishing permaculture food forests. Permaculture designs facilitate the abundant growth of indigenous vegetation that has value as a source of food, fibre or fuel, while introducing additional desirable plants to the existing forest within a polyculture design (Mollison 1988). Permaculture relies heavily on beneficial

associations between plants, animals and soil organisms and has been identified by Indigenous food activists as a suitable approach to evolving ecological food systems (Morrison 2011) and perceived by some as simply a revival of pre-contact Indigenous food harvesting practices (A. Logan, personal communication, 15 June 2011).

> "I wish that the community would be harvesting more of the local resources that are available. We have wild berries, strawberries, raspberries and different mossberries that they could be harvesting. Not a lot of people are doing that and they need to be getting back to that kind of stuff. Because, that's stuff that keeps them out on the land."
>
> *Annie Ballantyne, School Principal, Grand Rapids*

Thus, permaculture food forests may offer a valuable coalition between the knowledge Northern Elders hold with respect to medicinal and nutritionally beneficial plants already existing in the territory and the immediate need for abundant produce that can meet demands for adequate food security. While Stroink and Nelson (2009) did not identify their observations of forest gardens in Northern Ontario within the context of permaculture, the project described in their study may offer insight into permaculture food forests in Northern locations. This solution is extremely labour and knowledge intensive, factors that may limit its initiation without the integrated participation of experienced permaculture practitioners.

6.8 Discussion

6.8.1 Risks, Benefits and Alternatives to Cross-Cultural Collaborations

These results speak deeply to the dilemma that confronts most northern Indigenous communities. Many are no longer able to meet their nutritional requirements from their traditional territories, are largely settled onto non-agricultural soils and have few economic opportunities that are not themselves based in resource exploitation (which then further undermine the ability of the community to derive food

from land). Yet, they are also deeply distrustful of solutions that are designed by outsiders since they might undermine Indigenous food systems further, or contribute to a sense of failure and inadequacy.

Production focused initiatives will not resolve the Northern food crisis. Indeed, Southern First Nations also suffer from disproportionately high rates of diet-related diseases – rates that are often actually higher than what is reported in the North (Martens et al. 2007). The Northern food crisis, with its basis in long-standing colonization and food and environmental injustice, will only be resolved through initiatives that fit within food sovereignty perspectives and that address the deeper issues that underlie Northern food insecurity.

Properly constructed, North-South collaborations could provide a large supply of healthy and fresh fruits and vegetables to the North. Such relationships are anything but new: prior to colonization an extensive trade network for goods extended across North America (J. Munroe, personal communication, 27 August 2010). For these to function effectively, however, they would need to complement – if not strengthen – local food projects, be reciprocative rather than charity-based, work towards food-sovereignty and be under the control of the Northern proponent. These collaborations would be especially relevant for remote fly-in communities, where soils and the growing seasons are inadequate, the population is large, and all fresh produce is brought in by helicopter.

An alternative to rural-Indigenous alliances that could be politically transformative for Indigenous communities in both the North and the South would see Nation-to-Nation trade established between reserve communities located in geographically diverse territories. This project explored this alternative through facilitating the evolving connection between Grand Rapids and MCN and Muskoday First Nation. As identified by Carter (1990) and Tang (2003), reserve communities in the South have faced difficulties in using their land for agriculture, often as a result of governmental restrictions. One Earth Farms, a corporate entity that leases land from reserve communities and employs First Nations people as employees is a recent exception to First Nations disengagement from agriculture – but the business and

biological strategies employed by One Earth Farms are quite clearly embedded within the GAFS (Magnan 2011). Thus, establishing Nation-to-Nation trade between Northern and Southern reserves would offer Southern reserve farmers an alternative to the GAFS (embodied by One Earth Farms) while developing reciprocal food networks that would help alleviate the Northern food crisis. This solution speaks very clearly to Smith's (1999) prioritization of Indigenous peoples collaborating with one another and offering one another alternatives when they engage with any type of mobilization towards change. Nation-to-Nation North-South collaborations will ideally expand from the preliminary actions associated with this project and these types of collaborations could fill gaps in Indigenous food security and sovereignty that are difficult to obtain locally or through Indigenous-rural associations.

Outcomes of our study show that the garden project was supported strongly by the Southern partners, which is perhaps not a surprise since these farmers had been the leading advocates of the project since its inception. If collaborations between Northern Indigenous and Southern rural communities do take place, they should offer an opportunity for small-scale farmers to escape their financial dependence on the export-oriented GAFS. Despite the tensions such alliances are bound to encounter, there are good reasons beyond these material benefits for Northern and Southern communities to communicate around land and food. Through intercultural alliances, Indigenous communities can benefit from public support when challenging the hegemony of colonial governments (Grossman 2003). Such support would evolve through social learning (Perry and Shotwell 2009, Morrison 2011) and can only be facilitated by relationships of mutual trust and face-to-face communication (Childs 1998).

A shared practical action, like the one initiated through this action research project, is an important first step towards creating the trusting relationships that allow transformative learning to take place (Childs 1998). Perhaps inevitably, areas of tension and overlap can serve as the sites of constructive conflict, an essential element of transcommunal action and one that acknowledges and negotiates

difference while moving forward (Childs 1998). It is clear that Southern participants (including this researcher) developed a deeper understanding of Indigenous food sovereignty perspectives than they previously had and that Northern participants gained insight into the sometimes familiar forces at play in agriculture-dependent rural communities. Emerging Northern Indigenous-Southern settler reciprocative networks would ideally contain specific efforts towards confronting racism and exploring treaty rights and obligations (Epp 2008). The youth involved in this project saw cross-cultural relationships as a highly desirable outcome of the project, and, growing up with world-opening technology such as the Internet and mobile phones, seemed open to playing a lead and ultimately affirming role in navigating some of the tension-laden boundaries between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Although this project failed to generate a long-standing reciprocal food network between Indigenous communities in the North and agriculture-dependent communities in the South, these connections created capacity and knowledge sharing between both regions. Many northern communities members want the opportunity to visit farms in the South and welcome those with useful skills who are willing to visit the North and to share this knowledge, form friendships and in return become more aware of Indigenous perspectives and cultures. These face-to-face, long-term connections are essential: 'hands-off' and charity-based approaches that introduce Southern perspectives, skills or knowledge without any reciprocal exchange are deeply paternalistic and ultimately ill fated. Moreover, as explored through this case study, relationship-based exchanges and experiential, hands-on learning are important components of Indigenous education (Simpson 2002) and community-based environmental education as a whole (Walter 2009). The learning opportunity is why the youth and teachers received the Southern garden so enthusiastically, and why the project so successfully facilitated the exchange of skills and knowledge. Future food-related projects in the North would benefit from an experiential learning approach.

The tensions surrounding this project resulted from its origins in Southern, non-Indigenous perspectives (that of university researchers and the Cavers family) on how to address a Northern problem. Retrospectively, more care and time could have been taken in designing project priorities according to Northern perspectives and anticipating some of these Northern Indigenous sensitivities and concerns. Partnering from the beginning with Indigenous leaders who could structure the project activities according to Indigenous food sovereignty principles would have resulted in a more useful project from a Northern perspective and would ostensibly have explored the North-South relationship within a treaty framework, contributing to more deliberate and meaningful transformative learning for all participants.

6.9 Conclusion

Youth have a fundamental role to play in developing Northern food security and food sovereignty: they want access to skills and knowledge located outside of their homes, want to engage with all the potential options available to them and want to be of service to their communities. They are fully aware of the need for change in the food system of the North and want to travel, communicate with a diversity of people and have access to as many ideas and skills as possible. They are capable of bridging intercultural divides and exploring cross-cultural solutions that can complement local responses to the food crisis. Strong connections between youth and accompanying Elders will help ensure that these innovative responses reflect community values and worldviews.

North-South collaboration as explored through this action research project can still play an important role in the future of Northern food security and emergent AFS in the Prairie Provinces. If Northern residents help shape these solutions from the outset, concerns related to the colonial legacy of North-South relations can be mitigated and outcomes will reflect community priorities. The exact nature of the connection will depend on its capacity for political transformation: reciprocal regionalized food

networks will emerge from those connections that establish politically transformative relationships, but a CSA-style approach, based in a simple monetary transaction, might also be useful in provisioning fresh fruits and vegetables to the North and would simultaneously provide employment to a Southern farmer – Indigenous or otherwise. In either scenario, it is essential that Northern residents are involved in its design and implementation. Other potential responses that emerged from this project, including Northern farms, Nation-to-Nation trade and a permaculture food forest are worth exploring in a collaborative way. Importantly, all these responses would help address the existing gaps in technical capacity and provide for knowledge exchange in a face-to-face setting that enables sharing.

All projects occurring in the North to address the food crisis require ongoing support. While solutions may be complex, the fact remains that most Northern communities face tremendous challenges that are aggravated by a GAFS that remains unresponsive to these needs. In addition to the North-South tensions reflected in this action research project, it is important to remember that Northern communities are diverse and often segmented as a result of long-standing factions between status First Nations, non-status Indigenous people and those who have relocated to the North for work. If purveyors of food security projects only support those projects or groups with whom they interact easily, it is likely that any proposed responses will be deeply skewed towards non-Indigenous perspectives. Thus, it is likely that a multiplicity of solutions that engage across the diversity of the North will be required to successfully address this crisis.

It is useful to recognize that all of the initiatives with implications for First Nations that are initiated by actors from the South – be they NGO, government or researchers – are ultimately cross-cultural ones. However, they occur in a context where those participants who are non-Indigenous also represent the agency – typically government or industry – that provides funds to the initiative. This situation is inappropriate as it places these cross-cultural relationships within an unequal power dynamic. Thus, these initiatives remain depoliticized and oblivious to how food security projects in Indigenous

communities interact with First Nations sovereignty, culture and land rights. Food security initiatives in the North that seek to avoid these uncomfortable cross-cultural tensions will be limited in their ability to address food security and, especially, food sovereignty. In short, the issues underlying politicized inequality ultimately need to be addressed in order for these initiatives to be successful (Levkoe 2011).

This North-South garden project and all of the additional options identified through this study (i.e. Nation-to-Nation trade, Southern CSAs, Northern farms and permaculture food forests) have greater potential to address food security and food sovereignty than the local scale community gardens currently favoured by many agencies working towards Northern food security. They engage directly with Indigenous sovereignty issues with respect to land access and Treaty rights and at least require cross-cultural interactions in order to function. Cross-cultural engagement occurs most successfully at the grassroots level (Grossman 2003) – thus, initiatives that require a cross-cultural element should ideally support the engagement of non-Indigenous lay people in their design and provide these coalitions with the opportunity to engage and discuss amongst themselves, within a Treaty relationship framework (Epp 2008).

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7 THESIS DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

I arrived at the University of Manitoba in the fall of 2009 committed to engaging in a Masters degree program that work with rural communities to initiate their priorities for making changes to the global food system. I was committed to this goal for several reasons: my own experiences being raised on a family farm in Southwestern Saskatchewan combined with academic training in environmental and soil science and an influential trip to Ethiopia had convinced me that changes needed to be made in the global food system, by merit of its destructive influences on rural communities, on the environment and towards nations in the Global South.

I had very few experiences with Indigenous communities or Indigenous people prior to my time in Grand Rapids and MCN. I remember having a pen pal from northern Saskatchewan who wrote to me, telling me about her experiences with grandmother and grandfather spirits and how the Elders told her that when she was older, she would understand. Her words confused and frightened me as I had no familiarity with Indigenous spirituality at age 15 and I never wrote her back. My maternal grandmother spent one year teaching at Gordon Indian Residential School in the late 1940s. She told my sister and I a collection of ghost stories from the school – most centering on little children separated from their families dying of tuberculosis and haunting the school grounds thereafter. I cannot remember my grandmother, who is now passed, ever giving us any other details of the school or her job there, but if it wasn't for her experiences at Gordon Indian Residential School, chances are I would have never come to be: she met my grandfather at the wedding of a co-worker who she became fast friends with during that year at the school.

Aside from these limited narratives, I had no idea what to expect in Grand Rapids and MCN. Fortunately, relationships forged with Northern community members, my own research and reflection and the experiences of the southern garden have opened my eyes and heart. Living in an Indigenous

community is in itself a learning experience. Many cultural codes and appropriate ways of behaving were different from those of the rural community I grew up in and also different from those of the cities I've inhabited. I have reflected on these cultural differences over the past two years and what those differences imply with respect to worldview and cultural ways of interacting with others and the surrounding environment. I truly believe Western society would learn valuable and helpful information through deep engagement with knowledgeable Elders and traditional people. It now amazes me that so many of my generation spend thousands of dollars on plane rides, hotels and travel gear in order to interact with other cultures – when within Canada we are so busy either suppressing unique cultural entities or pretending they don't exist. The recent revival within many Indigenous communities of traditional ceremonies and land-based practices is really exciting to see. Participating in these activities was a highlight for me and also helped me learn more than I ever could have by reading a book.

Books have their uses though. One influential book I read in the fall of 2009 was 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles C. Mann. I was completely mystified by all the information about pre-contact societies it contained, as it was the complete opposite of everything I had been told in school and what had been communicated to me within my own cultural framework. I realized what had been eradicated and lost as a result of the colonization of the 'new world' and it was devastating – a tragedy for all of humanity to never know what *would* had happened if the multiple and diverse development trajectories of the Americas had continued uninterrupted (Mann 2005). I wondered where all that false and misleading information had come from. I found out from Indigenous friends that many Indigenous people believe these myths around "backwards" and "starving" pre-contact societies have been fabricated and spread by non-Indigenous people in order to excuse and erase our colonial past and avoid feelings of guilt and responsibility.

I could handle these revelations easily but the next book I picked up really affected me. This was The Other Side of Eden by Hugh Brody. When I read this book, plans were already in full swing with

respect to creating the Southern garden and engaging Northern youth with this hands-on, labour-intensive agricultural project, 600 km south of their home territory. Brody's thesis speaks to the issue of societies based in agriculture, being unstable users of resources, eventually invading and colonizing Indigenous communities elsewhere. These Indigenous communities are largely engaged with a stable (if migratory) pattern of land use based in hunting and gathering (Brody 2000). I began to question whether or not this project was at all appropriate or if it was simply contributing to further colonization through the food system.

During the drive back from a visit to my mom and dad's farm in June of 2010, when the southern garden project was in full swing, I listened to a radio program that I could just barely pick up on the FM station. This program was about Africa and how the people in that country currently engaged as hunter/gatherers should become farmers, because farmers are superior to those who live by 'just subsistence', as they provide for many people, not only for themselves. I was horrified – both to hear Brody's thesis so thoroughly confirmed on public radio and also by the blatant misrepresentation of Indigenous food systems based on migratory land use. I had learned more about traditional food systems by this time and knew that 'subsistence' systems are based on sharing foods and resources and caring for land: people did not go hungry, were certainly not selfish and were definitely not miserable!

Despite the stress I experienced as a result of this first instance of transformative learning (Mezirow 2003), I persisted with initiating the project. This was largely a result of the community support I received in Grand Rapids and MCN and particularly because of the repeated reassurances of a trusted Elder that the youth were learning, that it was a good experience for them and that I did not need to worry. At the end of the season, I had many compliments from the community, from Chief and Council, from teachers and from the youth themselves as to how useful and fulfilling the program had been. While there are many contentions around agricultural solutions, particularly those initiated within Indigenous territory (see Chapter 6), I ultimately realized that Northerners have the right to decide for

themselves what solutions they want to engage with. The last thing Indigenous people need is Southerners initiating actions (or reactions) in order to protect the North from colonization. Such a perspective is ultimately paternalistic as it seeks to 'protect' these 'vulnerable' communities and thereby removes from Indigenous communities their right to change and to decide for themselves which changes and influences are desirable and which are not.

I encountered many criticisms of this project throughout its duration. These concerns were based on perceived colonizing influences through North-South relationships and questions regarding whether or not renting land from a Southern farmer was simply a new form of dependence being created for the North – a dependence that southern farmers would (again) benefit from. I understood that because rural farmers can own land and profit from that ownership through rent or sale (Tang 2003), there is an unequal playing field between southern reserve farmers and southern rural farmers. These reflections contributed in part to the idea of Nation-to-Nation trade as one alternative to the North-South relationship (see Chapter 7). However, I soon realized that something else was upsetting me with respect to the criticisms of the southern garden project. It was then that I realized that the majority of these critiques were derived from white, privileged urban 'foodies' and several comments led me to suspect their concerns were based in a disbelief regarding the ability of rural farmers to be effective and trust-worthy intercultural workers.

A quick perusal of the literature revealed something else surprising. Rural people and particularly rural landowners are held as more accountable than urbanites for the colonization of Indigenous lands and cultures! Cariou (2006), in his analysis of prairie literature quite clearly defines 'settlers' as those who reside in rural locations and own land. He reports on the guilt these 'settlers' reveal through their literature and does not connect these newcomers in any way with non-Indigenous Canadians residing in urban areas. As someone rural, I interpret Cariou's research very differently. I would suggest that our literature reports on 'Aboriginal ghosts' because we are more familiar with Aboriginal communities,

past and present. We see evidence of Indigenous lives, habitations and spiritual practices within our pasture lands in a way that constantly reminds us that we were not here first and that helps us remain cognizant of the historical events that resulted in the extirpation of First Peoples from rural landscapes – a reminder not available to urban dwellers who continue to cover the archeological evidence of First Peoples with concrete.

Thus, while rural people may indeed experience greater feelings of guilt, feeling guilt more keenly does not by extension make one more culpable! I wondered if this oversight on the part of Cariou (2006) and these criticisms of the North-South project could be indicative of urban patterns of disconnection from land and from responsibility in constructing and upholding the GAFS. I would argue that while rural peoples have benefited from colonization of the prairies and the associated construction of the GAFS, privileged urban people have benefited even more so. While we can safely establish that rural people, with their patterns of land use reinforced through the GAFS, are not more culpable that urban settlers, this exploration does not address accusations regarding rural people's ability to work cross-culturally.

I am all too familiar with the accusations launched against rural communities and rural people and need not cite them here. However, if our communities are indeed insular, ignorant, incapable of engaging with difference and unreceptive to outside knowledge and the perspectives of 'others', perhaps it would be useful to identify barriers to adult social learning in rural communities. A quick perusal of any report measuring indicators of well-being in rural communities will reveal that we are losing our young people, that we are traveling great distances to access even basic rights such as health care and that rates of obesity, breast cancer, depression and suicide are high. Noting these structural inequalities within rural communities and their links to agri-industrialization (Diaz et al. 2003), it is easy to recognize that opportunities to travel, to develop intercultural skills and to obtain liberal education are themselves located in privilege – privilege rural people are either excluded from or that they never return

from. However, nothing here indicates that rural people are less capable of transformative social learning through trusting intercultural relationships, when such a connection is facilitated.

While societal perceptions of rural communities continue to frustrate me, I have also realized that these concerns are utterly pale compared to the everyday experiences of Indigenous people. The many racialized remarks towards Indigenous people that I was privy to throughout this project were horrifying. Indigenous leaders describe the Indian Act and government conservation programs limiting wild harvests as 'monsters' within their communities. Elders state that the relationship currently maintained between the Government of Canada and the First Nations was not part of treaty and that policies outlined in the Indian Act are a recipe for cultural genocide. Realizing that we are all treaty people in this country (Epp 2008) and have a role to play in holding our own governments accountable to treaty was another step in transformative social learning for me (Mezirow 2003). In fact, it is my government's adherence to Treaty 6 that legitimizes my family's presence on the land. Rather than acknowledging treaties as living documents and educating non-Indigenous Canadians on the role they have to play in upholding treaty, Canada has instead never disavowed its official policy of assimilation towards First Nations – despite clear evidence that government policies are the ultimate source of illness in many First Nation communities and that Nationhood and sovereignty are pathways out of poverty and despair (J. Munroe, personal communication, 27 August 2010).

Even now, I struggle with the fractured nature of First Nations communities and the tensions between traditional people, local elites, Chief and Council and the poor majority. Knowing these are the contours of power and division in many Reserve communities, it is possible to realize that outsiders who initiate projects through the segments of a community that they find easy to work with will contribute to conditions that are more reflective of dominant societal views – yet another "Ah Hah!" moment. Food is a particularly touchy issue for Indigenous communities because of its connections to environment, land, treaty rights and Aboriginal Title. Court trials are being held now to address these claims (Morrison

2011) and any action a reserve community takes on food could potentially affect the outcome of these trials. Politically active Indigenous people can navigate these tensions with wisdom and this is one of the main reasons such a person is so essential to intercultural alliances in Indigenous communities (see Chapter 7).

Overall, this research experience confirmed to me the usefulness of the PAR method in addressing interdisciplinary problems. Even when a project does not solve a problem, it acts as an experimental ground that reveals information about the nature of the problem and what ways a proposed solution will or will not work, and for what reasons. An additional benefit to the PAR process is its ability to sponsor transformative learning in its participants (Guthman 2008a). As is clear from the preceding discussion, I experienced several 'Ah Hah!' moments that altered my worldview as I became aware of perspectives I had never before encountered. I later placed these moments within the framework of transformative learning. While I was familiar with the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 2003) prior to this research project, it was only through the processes of an experiential participatory action project that I myself realized transformative learning. This is exactly the nature of transformative learning through alternative food action as reported by Guthman (2008a). A final benefit to the PAR process is the life-long friendships and associations formed across barriers that would not normally be crossed (Childs 1998). These relationships may play out in the future in ways we cannot currently imagine.

Even with what I know now, I would repeat this project. In an ideal design, the North-South alliance would be reciprocative and holistic, involving the engagement of both Northern and Southern youth and adults in multiple foods and ways of procuring or growing food. Moreover, the education element would focus equally on growing, harvesting, storing, preparing, cooking and eating healthy foods. Most importantly, the connection would facilitate direct connections between Southerners and Indigenous people who can explain Indigenous experiences and the nature of reconciliation, treaty rights and obligations and other current concerns. Meanwhile, Northerners would connect with individuals

from the South to learn about rural Southern experiences with food, the challenges of the GAFS for farm families and communities and other concerns.

I would say thank you, but in Cree those words mean nothing or else mean a person must be going away. I don't want to say goodbye to any of the communities or individuals I have been privileged to spend time with over these past two years. So, I will only say you have brought excitement, joy, laughter, learning and kindness into my life. I hope we meet again soon.

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Appendix 1 Interview Consent Form

Department of
Environment and Geography

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9667
Fax (204) 474-7699
environment_geography@umanitoba.ca

Informed Consent Form (Semi-Directed Interview)

Research Project Title: Close to the Land: Connecting Northern and Rural Communities Through Food Sovereignty

Researchers: Karlah Rae Rudolph (MEnv Candidate) and Dr. Stephane McLachlan (Graduate Student Advisor), University of Manitoba.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about anything mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

We would like to invite you to participate in a research project being conducted as part of my work as a graduate student researcher at the Environmental Conservation Lab at the University of Manitoba. We are interested in learning about your views on the past and present availability of nutritious and culturally appropriate food in northern communities and explore any ideas you and other interested individuals (government, health authorities etc.) have for the future of food in northern communities. In addition, this project will explore potential connections between rural communities in the south and Indigenous communities in the north that can be made with respect to food products.

We are interested in interviewing community members from both the north and the south for no more than an hour to seek their opinions and experiences on this subject. Research participants will be compensated $40.00 for this interview and we would like to invite you to participate in subsequent interviews and other research activities as well.

A video recording device will be used while the interview is being conducted. Should you wish not to be audio or video recorded, we will accommodate your wishes, and you may be audio-recorded instead, or we can simply take notes.

All of the information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored in a locked cabinet, accessible only by the researchers on this project, for the duration of the project. All audio and originally written records will be destroyed after being stored in a locked laboratory for up to five years.

In order to celebrate the importance of your voice and experiences, we will normally identify people by name in any research outcomes that arise from these interviews. However, you will always be able to choose to remain anonymous, if you so wish and we will confirm with you before using any direct quotes or information that could reveal your identity. The information given to us in this interview will not be shared with anyone else before you have a chance to review it and decide what, if anything, you are prepared to share publically. Indeed, you will be free to withdraw at any point in the research.

The final results of this project will include a video documentary, which you will have the opportunity to help create, edit and finalize. Other outcomes include a graduate thesis and peer-reviewed published papers, content on university and affiliated websites, reports to funders and newsletters. The results will be put on file in a publically available location in your community and all research participants will be notified of this central location.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above-name person or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204.474.7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Karlah Rudolph (__________) or Dr. Stephane McLachlan (__________) at the numbers provided, or at their respective email addresses, ___________@cc.umanitoba.ca and __________@cc.umanitoba.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

In conclusion, please indicate in the check-off boxes below which of the following you consent to:

☐ Permission to videotape-record for research purposes, which will later be analyzed
or
☐ Permission to audio-record for research purposes, which will later be analyzed
or
☐ No permission to either audio or videotape-record for research purposes

And

☐ Yes, I would like to participate further in the research (e.g. follow-up interviews, community meeting etc.)

or

☐ No, I would not like to participate further in the research (e.g. follow-up interviews, community meeting etc.)

Please provide your contact information below.

Name ____

Address ____

Phone Number ________________ Email Address ______________________________

______________________________________ ________________________________

Participant's Signature Date

______________________________________ ________________________________

Researcher's Signature Date

Appendix 2 Focus Group Consent Form

Department of
Environment and Geography

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9667
Fax (204) 474-7699
environment_geography@umanitoba.ca

<u>Informed Consent Form (Semi-Directed Focus Group)</u>

Research Project Title: Close to the Land: Connecting Northern and Rural Communities Through Food Sovereignty

Researchers: Karlah Rae Rudolph (MEnv Candidate) and Dr. Stephane McLachlan (Student Advisor), University of Manitoba.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about anything mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

We would like to invite you to participate in a research project being conducted as part of my work as a graduate student researcher at the Environmental Conservation Lab at the University of Manitoba. We are interested in learning about your views on the past and present availability of nutritious and culturally appropriate food in northern communities and explore any ideas you and other interested individuals (government, health authorities etc.) have for the future of food in northern communities. In addition, this project will explore potential connections between rural communities in the south and Indigenous communities in the north that can be made with respect to food products.

You are here because you've expressed interest in engaging in a collective focus group activity with other members of your community, on the topic of food. In this meeting, you will be asked to brainstorm as a group and identify the past and present of nutritious and culturally appropriate foods in your community. After this introductory discussion, we will spend the majority of this time together identifying and rating opportunities for the future. This meeting is designed to create an occasion for community members to collectively discuss and make plans for action on addressing food security and sovereignty in this community. I will post your responses on flip chart paper to help all of us track the conversation.

A video recording device will be used while this community meeting/focus group activity is being conducted. The original recording of this meeting will be kept in a locked cabinet, accessible only

by the researchers on this project, for the duration of the project. All audio, video and originally written records will be destroyed after a five-year period.

In order to celebrate the importance of your voice and experiences, we will normally identify people by name in any research outcomes that arise from this and subsequent community meetings. However, you will always be able to choose to remain anonymous, if you so wish. The information given to me in this meeting will not be shared with anyone else before you have a chance to review it together and decide what, if anything, you are prepared to share publically. Indeed, you will be free to withdraw at any point in the research.

The final results of this project will include a video documentary, which you will have the opportunity to help create, edit and finalize. Other outcomes include a graduate thesis and peer-reviewed published papers. The results will be put on file in a publically available location in your community and all research participants will be notified of this central location. Also, outcomes will likely be posted on the university website.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above-name person or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204.474.7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Karlah Rudolph (__________) or Dr. Stephane McLachlan (__________) at the numbers provided, or at their respective email addresses, __________@cc.umanitoba.ca and _________@cc.umanitoba.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

In conclusion, please indicate in the check-off boxes below which of the following you consent to:

☐ Permission to videotape-record for research purposes, which will later be analyzed
or
☐ Permission to audio-record for research purposes, which will later be analyzed
or
☐ No permission to either audio or videotape-record for research purposes

And

☐ Yes, I would like to participate further in the research (e.g. follow-up interviews, community meeting etc.)
or

☐ No, I would not like to participate further in the research (e.g. follow-up interviews, community meeting etc.)

Please provide your contact information below.

Name ____

Address ____

Phone Number _________________ Email Address ________________________________

____ ___________________________________

Participant's Signature Date

____ ___________________________________

Researcher's Signature Date

Appendix 3 Youth Participation Consent Form (a)

Department of
Environment and Geography

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9667
Fax (204) 474-7699
environment_geography@umanitoba.ca

Youth Participation Consent Form (a)

Research Project Title: Close to the Land: Connecting Northern and Rural Communities Through Food Sovereignty

Researchers: Karlah Rae Rudolph (MEnv Candidate) and Dr. Stephane McLachlan (Student Advisor), University of Manitoba.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Your child has been invited to participate in a southern farm project that will see them travelling to a farm near the community of Pilot Mound in southwestern Manitoba. While at this farm, they will engage in gardening activities and learn about raising fruits, vegetables and livestock. In the fall, the harvest from this garden will return to your community and be distributed however the youth see fit. As part of my research as a Masters of the Environment Candidate at the Environmental Conservation Lab at the University of Manitoba I would like to video-record their activities on this farm and any food-related activities they are part of in the community of Grand Rapids, for example, while fishing, visiting the culture camp or taking part in elder-led, food-related workshops on cooking and storing food in the fall. This work is being done in close collaboration with teachers from Grand Rapids School, who are administering and overseeing the trips south. As a parent and community member, you are also invited to participate in any way you like.

In addition, I would like to invite your child to be part of a focus group activity along with other students and a community Elder, who will act as a cultural advisor. During this activity, we will discuss the youth's experiences on the southern farm and their opinions and ideas as to what opportunities there are for food and food-related activities in Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation. This focus group activity will also normally be video-recorded.

The final results of this project will include a video documentary, which your child will have the opportunity to help create, edit and finalize. Other outcomes include a graduate thesis and papers published in scientific journals. A copy of all outcomes will be made available to community members in a central location and you will be notified of this location. Also, outcomes will likely be posted on the university and associated websites.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and consent to having your child participate in the ways outlined above. In no way does this waive your and your child's legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their

legal and professional responsibilities. Your child is free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Please feel free to ask for clarification or new information at any time during this research project.

The Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above-name person or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204.474.7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Karlah Rudolph (________) or Dr. Stephane McLachlan (________) at the numbers provided, or at their respective email addresses, ________@cc.umanitoba.ca and __________@cc.umanitoba.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

In conclusion, please indicate in the check-off boxes below which of the following you consent to:

☐ Permission for my child to be videotape-recorded for research purposes, which will later be analyzed?

or

☐ No permission for my child to be videotape-recorded for research purposes, which will later be analyzed?

And

☐ Permission for my child to be part of a focus group activity discussing food in their community and their experiences on a southern farm

or

☐ No permission for my child to be part of a focus group activity discussing food in their community and their experiences on a southern farm

Please provide your contact information below.

Name ____

Name of Child ____

Address ____

Phone Number _________________ Email Address _________________________________

_____________________________________ _________________________________

Participant's Signature Date

_____________________________________ _________________________________

Researcher's Signature Date

Appendix 4 Youth Participation Consent Form (b)

Department of
Environment and Geography

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9667
Fax (204) 474-7699
environment_geography@umanitoba.ca

Youth Participation Assent Form (b)

Research Project Title: Close to the Land: Connecting Northern and Rural Communities Through Food Sovereignty

Researchers: Karlah Rae Rudolph (MEnv Candidate) and Dr. Stephane McLachlan (Student Advisor), University of Manitoba.

Dear Student,

You have recently heard from myself and from your teachers all about a farm in Pilot Mound in southwestern Manitoba. You already know that you have been invited to visit this farm and to spend time this summer raising your own vegetables and fruits so that in the fall, you can take this harvest back to Grand Rapids and Misipawistik Cree Nation. You will get to decide if and how often you want to visit the farm and will also get to decide how the harvest gets distributed in your community. I am involved in this farm because of the work that I'm doing as a university student at the University of Manitoba. I hope we can be students together and learn from one another this year.

As part of this farm project, I would like to video-record you, other students and myself working together on the farm. You will have an opportunity to use the video-recorder if you want and to help put the final video together into a film that will show your family and community what you have been up to this year. I would also like to video-record things that are happening around food in Grand Rapids, for example, fishing, visiting the culture camp or elder-led, food-related workshops on cooking and storing food this fall.

I would also like to invite you to participate in a workshop called a focus group, where you and I and other students will sit down together and discuss our activities so far this year and what your ideas are for the future of food in your community. This will take place later in the fall.

I want to let you know that you are under no pressure to participate in any way you don't want to. This form, if you sign it, will give me your permission to work on this project with you in the ways mentioned above. However, even if you sign this, you can decide you don't want to participate any more at any time and you can decide in what ways you want to participate and what things you are interested in talking to me about. Please ask me at any time if you have any questions or are worried about something.

In conclusion, please check the boxes that apply to you below and sign the form at the bottom:

☐ Yes, I am willing to be video-recorded during this project.
or
☐ No, I don't want to be video-recorded during this project.

And

☐ Yes, I would like to be part of the focus group activity where I will discuss food in my community and my experiences on the southern farm along with other students.
or
☐ No, I do not want to be part of the focus group activity where I will discuss food in my community and my experiences on the southern farm along with other students.

Please sign here:

______________________________________ _________________________________

Participant's Signature Date

______________________________________ _________________________________

Researcher's Signature Date