

THESIS

FOOD SYSTEMS AMONG NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES IN OAKLAND,
CALIFORNIA: AN EXAMINATION OF CONNECTION AND HEALTH

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

FOOD SYSTEMS AMONG NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: AN EXAMINATION OF CONNECTION AND HEALTH

This thesis is a critical engagement with Indigenous communities and the reclamation of food sovereignty as a movement that heals Indigenous populations. The Indigenous food sovereignty movement stands in opposition to a history of colonialism and disenfranchisement that sought to deny Indigenous people of their autonomy by creating dependency on Western institutions. Reclamation of a food system stands to signify the healing of community through the honoring of relationships and interdependence.

Contemporary scholarship and policy efforts addressing health disparities have focused the debate on Indigenous food and health around personal accountability, and personal choice in eating and exercising. Although these behaviors improve health for communities, and individuals, they do not account for systemic disparities forged out of a history of colonialism and current institutional racism. Moreover, this focus is deeply engrained in Western models of health, rather than promoting the power of communities to forge their own culturally appropriate solutions. These mainstream attempts by Western institutions are singular in nature, denying the complex interaction at multiple points of colonialism and racism. This thesis focuses on Indigenous food sovereignty, and in particular attempts at urban community production, to address the emancipatory act of reclaiming traditional knowledge and the right to feed oneself and one's community. Food sovereignty is an ideological, cultural, and political act that can

transform Indigenous communities that are “dying to survive” and transform them into thriving communities. This Indigenous food justice movement honors native peoples as visionary survivors of catastrophe.

Using Indigenous methodology and photovoice I provide an analysis of one urban community in Oakland California where participants have been engaged in reclaiming their food system since 2010. This project allows us to understand how empowerment (of self and community) as well as relationships are strengthened because of such projects.

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There are many to thank for providing help along this journey. I give thanks to all involved in this process, from my fellow students, to my teachers, to the community that graciously allowed me to do my work. I want to thank my cohort at Colorado State University, in particular Joseph Morrison and Karla Garcia Gonzalez, for providing both emotional and intellectual support through this process. My program and school for providing great teachers that helped to truly formulate my thesis, such as Karina Cespedes, Caridad Souza, Joon Kim, and Kathleen Sherman. I want to thank the very helpful Oakland library staff and IFH for opening its doors to me and to this project.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for providing the emotional support and patience that allowed me to finish this project. I want to thank Bill Stewart and Kalima Rose for allowing me to live at their house while I conducted my research. And lastly I want to thank my roommate Megan Matonis and my parents Irene and Ed Vernon for taking care of my dog Charm when she was diagnosed with cancer during my initial research trip.

PROLOGUE

I was born to a Caucasian Father and a mother of Mexican, Apache, and Yaqui descent. I honor all of these people for creating my understanding of the world: I am light skinned yet culturally identify with Natives and Mexicans more so than with my Caucasian ancestry. However, my light skinned status will always in my lifetime afford me more privilege than many of my friends and family. I also come from an economically diverse family that includes both poor and rich. Although I personally have very little economic means, even having a few family members that do provides me a level of security that is above that of many Americans. On top of all this I grew up for the majority of my life in a canyon, half-an-hour from the nearest town. Throughout my childhood, loss of electricity and water was a normal occurrence at least once during winters. A wood-burning stove heated the winter months throughout my childhood. These experiences, although very different and even privileged from other aspects of rural reservation life, has always fostered a connection for me with reservation people. It is also an experience on some level that has distanced me from understanding urban life.

I have always been active in social justice. From the young age of 7 I was concerned with issues of justice and equity. I attended Stanford University as an undergraduate and this experience further complicated my identity. I now have an education that sets me apart, in the top 5% of the U.S population, it also further separates me from the communities I care about and wish to serve. However, I understand my place in the larger movement for justice, as a fighter, amplifier, and sharer (of resources and knowledge). I struggle alongside with my peers to illuminate all

that is missing from mainstream colonial analysis and world view, and I strive to amplify the struggles of the communities I serve, and work to use my connections and networks as a means to make their struggles more visible. I consider it my duty to share the skills I have been taught, as well as the resources I have access too, as an educated middle class woman.

My identity, has had an immense effect on the development of my politics and beliefs. I believe this is true for all of us; our identities and experiences mold what we believe and how we lead our lives in the future. It is with all this in mind, that I find myself in an interesting space, a perceived conflict between ‘traditions’ and ‘contemporary’ life. I have perceived throughout my work, as a student, activist, and community member that on some level there is a tension between Indigenous traditional ways and the contemporary realities in which we as Indigenous people find ourselves. I will not get into the full extent of this tension, but I will share with you where I lie on this continuum.

I believe that our ancestors developed wisdom that can guide our journey through this new world. However, that wisdom I believe was created in such a different world that we must also push to adapt that knowledge to present day. I believe action is needed to change the world, new warriors are needed- because war is no longer on the battle-field, but rather all around us, where we live, what we eat, and how we live. Our survival is dependent on how we advocate for change. It is with this in mind that I advocate for analysis and action. I hope that this thesis can serve as both inspiration and a reality check.

I believe that how people heal from colonialism and racism is important work to both document and to understand. My interest in food came through intellectual and professional pursuits. I spent several years after college in an environmental justice organization where I learned more about the impending climate crisis, and how race and racialization could potentially intersect with this crisis. I also learned about the inspiring history of the Environmental Justice movement. Simultaneously, I was beginning to work at the Intertribal Friendship House, aiding the community in fundraising efforts. These experiences deeply affected the way in which I approached this thesis, as well as my interest in the topic.

I share my story as a means of initiating an introduction, but also to establish a means for a relationship. In line with Indigenous epistemologies it is important to introduce myself as I would in a human-to-human interaction. All of the above information is important to my identity and sense of self, and would be communicated through speech and story throughout my relationships. I hope to set a stage, for the reader of this thesis to understand me, as they would if we were to meet in person.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all marginalized people fighting for a world in which they themselves, their families, and their loved ones can realize their full potential. This labor of love is dedicated to all who strive for a world free of oppression.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis showcases the emancipatory work being done by Indigenous people and organizations regarding health, both individually and collectively, through the reclamation of Indigenous owned food systems. This project illuminates the ways in which Indigenous people are challenging the myth of individual choices around food and consumption, and envisioning and creating solutions for communities rather than just individuals.

Currently, dominant institutions focus the debate around health outcomes (obesity, hypertension, diabetes etc.) within the realm of personal responsibility. This claim to personal responsibility is in addition to a claim to 'biological weakness'. With Indigenous groups the claim that there is an "innate" biological weakness has intensified with time. The discovery of the 'thrifty gene'; exemplifies this claim for Indigenous biological weakness; this gene was blamed for 'why' Indigenous communities were sicker than the general population. Winona La Duke discusses the effect of the "thrifty gene" on Indigenous peoples in her book *Recovering the Sacred*. The "thrifty gene" enabled the government to blame inequalities in obesity and diabetes on Native American genes rather than on the historical reality of an insecure food system.¹

The mainstream insistence on personal accountability and personal choice in eating and exercise behavior is problematic because it denies a legacy of colonialism and institutional racism, instead placing accountability on the individual. One such example of this is the experience of the Karuk people in Northern California whom

¹ Winona La Duke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Massachusetts: South End Press, 2005), 198.

experience poverty and hunger as a result of denied access to traditional foods.² The analysis that focuses only on the individual inhibits productive solutions for Indigenous people when addressing these problems. The analysis generated utilizing the ‘thrifty gene’ is one of personal responsibility, a sort of argument that says ‘you’re different so you have to take better care of yourself,’ rather than an argument that says, ‘we need to provide institutions that enable communities to have power and autonomy over their processes and way of life while receiving the best opportunities and care that is possible’.

There are a number of food related health problems in Indian country that affect the Indigenous community at astronomically higher rates than their white counterparts.³ These problems, such as heart disease, obesity, and diabetes can be understood beyond issues of consumption and exercise. For example, this inequity in health could also be understood as an issue of access, an issue of cultural dislocation from food, and/or as a an epistemological and physical rupturing from a relationship to food for Indigenous peoples.

Being disconnected from food marks U.S society. As a nation of immigrants, the integration of food into culture is a more recent advent (only having the 500 years after contact to develop). The United States is not the place where the dominant population, descendent of Europe, has co-evolved with the environment and the natural food resources of the land. This is not to say that food does not have special meaning for

² Kari Marie Norgaard, Ron Reed, and Carolina Van Horn, “A Continuing Legacy: Institutional Racism, Hunger, and Nutritional Justice on the Klamath in Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class and Sustainability,” in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race Class and Sustainability*, eds. Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 26.

³ First Nations Development Institute, “Native Food and Health Fact Sheets” Health Sheet #4-7 accessed February 23, 2014, <http://firstnations.org/knowledge-center/foods-health/resources/fact-sheets>.

American people. However, even at a time such as Thanksgiving, where specific cultural types of food are eaten, there is not a deep connection to those foods in the way they are acquired, for example there are not cultural standards around the proper way and with whom you should kill a Turkey, rather a turkey is bought at the store.

For Indigenous people, the relationship to food is subject to the relationship illustrated above because of the history of colonialism. But at the same time, Indigenous people have a deep and long lasting relationships to this land and the food it produces as a result of being on their homelands. Contemporary Indigenous people are subject to many of the same cultural notions around food that all Americans are, but there are still ways the relationship to food differs from the Anglo population even after 500 years of colonization. To understand this difference, it is important to understand food's cultural location. Rather than understanding food in abstraction, I work to ground food as an intricate part of Indigenous people's relationships to health that includes individual health as well as community health.

Food systems, which consist of the production, distribution, and consumption of food, hold immense potential for healing Indigenous communities in the United States. The enormous changes these food systems experienced were caused by colonization and racism.⁴ Healing this ruptured relationship holds immense potential for Indigenous communities. This is an aspect of racism and colonization that until recently has been almost completely ignored. Often in tribal communities, discussions around healing are also discussions about 'returning' to traditional beliefs and practices, yet traditionally Indigenous people were a sovereign people, in control of the way they lived their lives

⁴ Ian Mosby, "Transforming Indigenous Foodways," *Activehistory.ca*, January 28, 2014 accessed January 31, 2014, <http://activehistory.ca/2014/01/transforming-indigenous-foodways/>.

as well as their political processes. Winona La Duke cites Paul Sugarbear as saying “I don’t think we can call ourselves sovereign if we can’t feed ourselves”.⁵ I heard Winona La Duke say this at a speech in Oakland in 2011, and it began my intellectual curiosity about the healing and emancipatory effect of community-owned food systems, as well as the irony of sovereignty not included such a basic and intimate part of human life. It also began my curiosity about how to integrate traditional beliefs into the current system Indigenous people live in. How do we regain sovereignty, how do we regain the ability to feed ourselves in this ‘modern’ world? It is through this curiosity I discovered the struggle for food sovereignty and the meaningful way that it integrates tradition with the current experience of many Indigenous people.

This thesis centers food because the subject of food, which is so crucial for Indigenous populations, is so often ignored. And yet it is food, and the access to it, that holds power and the potential for power for communities able to secure its access. The ability to feed oneself and one’s community is true self-determination, without it, dependence on others is inevitable.⁶ This means that empowerment is contained within the individual and community’s ability to secure food. It is through relationships to food that we are able to examine relationships between and among community members, between them and the land, as well as the experience of the individual within a collective process of generating, eating, and sharing food.

One of the main goals of this study is to contribute to a growing body of literature on Indigenous activism and strategies of food justice. The project responds to

⁵ Winona LaDuke, “Economics for the Seventh Generation—Part I,” *RSF Social Finance*, October 30, 2013, accessed January 31, 2014, <http://rsfsocialfinance.org/2013/10/economics-seventh-generation-part/>.

⁶ LaDuke, “Economics for the Seventh Generation”.

hegemonic narratives of the U.S. where individuals are blamed for the results of systemic failures. It is also a response to the insistence that solving the food crisis on an individual level will create change for broad sections of the population.

In light of the failure of current dominant institutions in framing these health issues, I turn to the struggles, journeys, and visions of Indigenous people forging community-orientated solutions. Here, I highlight the alternative vision of health and wellness that these communities create, not through a focus on western conceptions about the lack of health, but rather the creation of a holistic understanding of well-being that includes of the individual and the community. This thesis removes food from the realm of the individual and their 'choice' and places it within the realm of systemic realities and structural inequalities as well as community relationships. Here, I draw attention to the potential for empowerment of Indigenous communities through these struggles to regain, reclaim, and reassert ownership over their food systems.⁷

It is through this lens that I engaged in research at the Intertribal Friendship house (IFH) in Oakland, California. IFH provides a place where diverse sets of Indigenous people are able to find cultural similarities, and similarities of experience such as that of being far from your traditional land and community. This particular history and complexity that the community encompasses makes the vision and work of intertribal urban communities paramount in understanding what it means to heal as individuals and as a community from colonization. The IFH community brings certain innovations to this study that have been developed within an urban environment and answers questions that a study on a reservation community could not address. For

⁷ First Nations Development Institute, "Reclaiming Native Food Systems: Part 1 Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation for Supporting Health and Food Sovereignty," accessed February 23, 2014, http://firstnations.org/system/files/2013_Reclaiming_Native_Food_Systems_Part_1.pdf, 2.

example, the question of sovereignty is hard to grapple with an urban community. What does self-determination and sovereignty look like for this urban community? The solutions envisioned by the Oakland Indigenous community values community survival and self-determination for Indigenous people.

Urban, intertribal communities are the last stop on the colonization highway. They are the ultimate realization of the colonial projects. These communities are separated from much of their family, culture, and lands, while simultaneously being thrust into the blight of the urban experience where they join other people of color. They are forced to integrate and survive with none of the support systems that reservation Indigenous communities are afforded. Even though they are on their ancestral continent due to the history of forced removal of Indigenous people, they experience integration into urban areas in much the same way that immigrants experience integration. In this thesis I assert that all removal to urban areas is forced, regardless of whether a person moved because of actual U.S. policies, or choose to move because of lack of opportunities in their home communities. I consider both types of movements to be examples of forced removals because survival is not a choice. This history of removal brings together tribal peoples that are culturally and geographically distinct.

In highlighting the struggles and solutions of IFH, we can better comprehend the issues at hand for other communities. Solutions are particularly complex and varied, and by no means do I mean to say that this urban intertribal community's solutions will stand as solutions for all Indigenous or marginalized communities. But, finding solutions for those that have been most affected by the consequences of colonization can help to

vision solutions for other communities, and at the very least provides an alternative to mainstream U.S. conceptions of how to solve food consumption problems.

It is important to also acknowledge the diversity contained within the term “Indigenous”. Indigenous people in the United States come from 566 federally recognized tribes,⁸ several state recognized tribes, and many tribes that are unrecognized by their states or the federal government. It is impossible to truly contend with the complexity and diversity of perspectives, concerns and voices of all Indigenous people present in the United States. However, there is a generally accepted ‘difference’ between Indigenous and Western European cultures. Included in these cultural differences, are basic epistemological differences. However, it is also true that each tribe has a distinctive epistemological understanding of the world that varies from the other tribes present in the United States. Here, I choose to focus on the similarities between tribes as more cohesive and similar to each other than to Western European culture, such as the conception of knowledge. Knowledge in Western society is strict, immutable, and often considered to be truth with a capital “T”. It is institutionalized; in the United States one acquires knowledge from books, schools, and teachers. Knowledge is also intricately tied to access, success, and stability. Those who hold knowledge are successful while those that do not are not successful. When knowledge operates in this fashion in a society, it is individualistic in nature and used in competitive ways with other community members rather than conceived as each person contribution to a larger good.

⁸ Gale Courey Toensing, “Updated Federally Recognized Tribes List Published,” *Indian Country Today* Media Network.com, February 10, 2014, accessed February 15 2014, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/02/10/updated-federally-recognized-tribes-list-published-153459?page=0%2C0>.

I have chosen a pan-Indigenous approach because there were over ten tribes represented in this study and it is not appropriate to choose one Indigenous epistemology over the others, nor is it plausible to do justice to all ten in the same project. I attempt to understand Indigenous epistemologies while at the same time giving careful attention to not producing essentialized or over simplified, notions of Indigeneity.⁹

This map (figure 1) represents the breadth of tribes that participated in this study. The blue dots represent tribal affiliations in which the participants are not personally from that geographic area, such as being raised in California from a tribe in Arizona. The red dots are home communities that signify a relationship with both that tribal community (descendants) as well as with the land (have lived there). The one place that shows purple has a combination of both present in its location. It is this great migration, and mixing of different Indigenous groups into an Urban landscape, informed by dominant U.S society that in part makes this place a meaningful place to understand, and its community member's relationship to food significant.

⁹ It is difficult to do this, to draw a binary difference while simultaneously trying to express nothing is hard and true, but I will try my best.

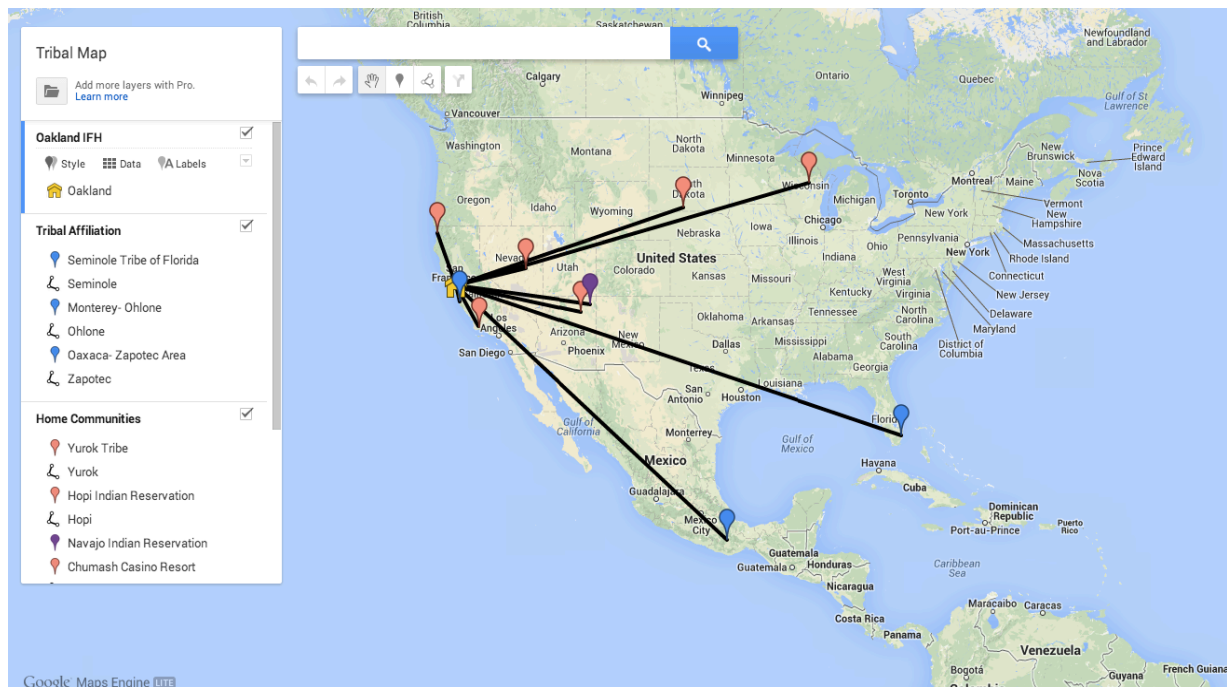


Figure 1: Made using Google maps

This qualitative study employs Indigenous methodologies to examine the narratives of Indigenous peoples participating in various food projects at IFH. Indigenous Methodologies, which value Indigenous knowledge, relationships, and the process of decolonization, guide my research. The methods used were photovoice and an IFH community focus group. As part of the photovoice exercise, participants were asked to take photos of their relationships with food- production, distribution, and consumption. The participants were then provided an opportunity to reflect on the pictures they took. After this reflection time, the group came together and discussed the photovoice outcomes, later the group came together as a focus group to reflect on other questions. It is through this exploration of the visionary work being done in Oakland that I aim to highlight contemporary Indigenous relationships to food, and the ways that Indigenous people can envision healthy futures for themselves by nurturing relationships.

In this thesis I begin with an introduction to the literature and activist movements that inform today's food world/reality in the United States. Chapter two discusses the literature and movements that have informed the development of Indigenous owned food systems. I argue the International Food Sovereignty movement and local Environmental/Food Justice movements have informed the development of Indigenous movements in regards to food, but also lack the very specific realities that Indigenous people face unique to this community. I assert that it is important to understand the epistemological differences that make interactions with food, more meaningful than just a physical consumption relationship. Indigenous epistemologies inform food-human relationships as an important cultural pillar that informs much about Indigenous reality and culture.

In Chapter three, I discuss methodology and the specific reasons why I chose to use Indigenous methodologies and photovoice. I examine the history of misunderstanding and harm by the academia to Indigenous people, to establish the specific reasons why Indigenous Methodologies are valid and meaningful methodology for understanding the issues that Indigenous people face in the contemporary world.

In Chapter four, I turn to an in depth understanding of the local and historical context that created IFH. This chapter illuminates how Oakland became a divested space, as well as the way that people of color were treated in this space. This chapter then turns to understanding IFH's creation, as well as the changing focus of its program as it transitioned from Quaker leadership to Indigenous leadership.

In Chapter five, I discuss my findings and analysis. I use the photos and narratives to weave into a discussion of wellness that is different from the mainstream

discussions around health. While trying to honor the voices and images of the participants, I also use the narratives to point out the holistic conception of health that the participants experience.

Each of these chapter's titles are a quote from one of the participants. By highlighting their words I aim to illuminate the depth and breadth of the conversation, but also to situate this thesis as much as possible in their own words.

CHAPTER 2

“ALL OF US OUT HERE ARE JUST LOCKED INTO THE SYSTEM THAT WAS CREATED FOR US”: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Charlotte, Hopi Tewa

There is an overwhelming feeling in Indigenous communities that the problems our communities face were imposed upon us because of the disruption caused by colonization. Indigenous communities are now faced with managing healing from different points of crisis, and food is one of these points of crisis. Food insecurity is a real problem for Indigenous communities; Indigenous communities are lacking access to culturally appropriate and nutritious food.¹⁰ To illustrate the situation that Indigenous people face, this chapter explores the literature that has established Indigenous connections with knowledge and food, while also simultaneously exploring the importance of experiential relationships through this literature. I will also explore the history of food activism through environmental justice literature, food justice literature, and Indigenous literature on food activism.

Mainstream analysis around food insists that food exists only within the realm of individual consumption. Food is often analyzed along with health as a means of understanding consumption (over and under) as well as the ills caused by diet. Food, or rather weight and health, began to get attention in the U.S imagination in the 1970's. Recently however it began getting attention on television, with the advent of reality

¹⁰ Valarie Blue Bird Jernigan, et al., “Addressing Food Insecurity in a Native American Reservation Using Community-Based Participatory Research,” *Health Education Research* 27, no. 4 (2012): 645; Norgaard, Reed and Van Horn, “A Continuing Legacy,” 23; and LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred*, 193-196.

shows around weight loss, such as *The Biggest Loser* in 2004.¹¹ The viability of such shows was predicated on a historical understanding around food that had been changing since the 70's, and a changing television consumption of Americans toward reality television. The contemporary relationship with food can also be seen through books and literature around health. In the literature that crosses over between popular culture and academia, such as Michael Pollen's *In Defense of Food*,¹² American consumption of food is described as unhealthy since so much of what is eaten is not actually food but is processed beyond what is 'real' food.¹³ Pollen simultaneously situates this interaction and consumption of food as one that can be confronted by individuals whom are informed and can also *choose* to modify their consumption patterns.¹⁴ Pollen encourages paying more and eating less.¹⁵ While Pollen situates the production and consumption of food within a structural and historical analysis, within popular media shows like 'The Biggest Loser' food consumption is situated within an emotional analysis. Both the popular culture literature and the media representations of excess eating converge by suggesting that individuals have the power, through awareness, to choose a life informed by better consumption decisions. Neither analysis truly grapples with questions of access, racism, or discrimination which have informed food choices for most Americans and have historically shaped food realities for Indigenous people. Pollen does not stand-alone. Other mainstream authors grapple with the lack of health in the American food system such as Barbara Kingslover and Marion Nestle. Kingslover writes about moving her family to live off the land in *Animal*,

¹¹ "The Biggest Loser." Prod. Benjamin Silverman, 2004-2012.

¹² Michael Pollen, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (United States: Penguin Press, 2008).

¹³ Michael Pollen, *In Defense of Food*, 19-20

¹⁴ Michael Pollen, *In Defense of Food*, 146-161.

¹⁵ Michael Pollen, *In Defense of Food*, 161, 188.

*Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*¹⁶ (2008) and she focuses on her family's struggle to provide for themselves with their own food. Marion Nestle writes in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition, and Health, Revised and Expanded Edition*¹⁷ (2002) about the influence of corporations and politics on the food industry that has informed the way Americans eat and choose food. This book illustrates how our "choices" may in fact be a false one because of corporate control of the food system. In many ways all these books acknowledge the larger institutional and systemic issues present in the American food system. These authors acknowledge the lack of individual choice because of corporate power, how corporate regimes decide what is available and for how much. However this analysis focuses on the individual's relationship to food: an individual garden, an individual choice of better food, what an individual knows about how bad the food is, how individuals do not have access. What is missing from this account is the community's relationship to food, a relationship that for Indigenous people informs cultural standards for human relationships. Another problem is the lack of focus on how communities do not have access to food, and how some communities have a forced and tumultuous relationship to food.

This focus on the individual consumer lacks consideration of other complicating factors regarding culture, race, access, history, power and marginalization. People's food realities in the U.S are far more complex than individual choices around consumption, there are definitive barriers that keep *certain* people from having the power to choose what they eat. Indigenous peoples experience a deep and complex

¹⁶ Barbara Kingsolver, Camille Kingslover and Steven L. Hopp, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (New York: First Harper Perennial Edition, 2008).

¹⁷ Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition, and Health, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

relationship to food since an important outcome of the colonial experience was the rupturing of Indigenous food systems.¹⁸ These ruptures, such as a changed hunting relationship, changed physical landscape altering the types of food eaten, the imposition of the commodity food system, boarding schools changing the knowledge held by community members in regards to their land and culture as well as the deeply impoverished reality many communities find themselves in have physically changed the way Indigenous communities across the U.S. interacted with food.

To understand Indigenous community's ruptured relationship with food, I turn to examine Indigenous epistemologies, the history of activism that informs food struggles, and their historical relationship to food, and the way food informed community relationships for Indigenous people.

Epistemology

Epistemologically speaking Indigenous communities historically have valued knowledge in the opposite manner from Western society. For Indigenous folks, all knowledge holders are important and knowledge is experiential and spiritual (not learned in books but learned on the land through a multitude of experiences).¹⁹ Although these conflicting world-views are important in discussions about food, the scholarly literature has yet to really address these differences. One field that has provided work around these differences has come out of natural resource management, especially the literature on the practice of co-management of natural resources. Co-management of resources refers to a venture started in the last few decades that acknowledges how Indigenous Americans with their knowledge of land should have

¹⁸ Mosby, "Transforming Indigenous Foodways."

¹⁹ Anne Ross, et al., *Indigenous Peoples and the Collaborative Stewardship of Nature: Knowledge Binds and Institutional Conflicts* (California: Left Coast Press, 2011), 100.

input in the management of resources in the United States. However, turning this belief into a reality has proven much more difficult. The literature in this field has had to contend with the concept of knowledge in a meaningful way because of the differences between “what” and “how” we ‘know’. This difference informs how we interact with the earth, and even what “management” looks like. Anne Ross et al. (2011) illuminates this tension when highlighting co-management conflicts centering around the ‘translation’ of Indigenous knowledge into Western terms and the ‘cherry picking’ that scientists often do in trying to understand Indigenous knowledge.²⁰ These authors explain that an insistence on ‘validating’ Indigenous knowledge “often results in an overemphasis on facts and on ‘what people know’ (Agrawal 1995) rather than on ‘how people know’ (Phoenix-O’Brien 2002). Consequently this de-emphasizes the spiritual framework for knowledge that lies at the heart of much Indigenous knowledge (Ross 2011)”.²¹ Emphasizing how and what people know illustrates the difference between experiential knowledge and knowledge acquired in school. This important distinction regarding food demonstrates the difference between food as consumption and food as part of culture and community. It also illuminates the disjuncture between mainstream analysis of food consumption and Indigenous conceptions of food. Knowing that food causes obesity, or that processed foods contribute to illnesses’ such as diabetes exemplifies a relationship around knowledge of food that is focused on ‘what’ one knows. Yet, regarding food as an interrelated and important part of many community activities (such as community gatherings and ceremonies) is an example of ‘how’ one can know food in relation to the experiences it is a part of. This particular ‘how’ is a vital element in this study.

²⁰ Ross, et al., *Indigenous Peoples*, 101

²¹ Ross, et al., *Indigenous Peoples*, 101.

Understanding the role that food plays in communities today, after 500 years of Western colonization and 300 of U.S. control that seriously disrupted traditional relationships to food, demonstrate how colonization has affected these relationships, as well as how communities cope and heal from colonization. Understanding food in this way also illuminates the reasons for consumption rather than just focusing on consumption.

Understanding ‘how’ Indigenous people ‘know’ food illuminates the experiential relationship that Indigenous people have with food, and how this knowledge is grounded in spiritual understandings that ultimately address why food is so important to individual and community health. The spiritual relationship that Indigenous people have with the earth and food (plants, animals, land) is one that can inform the way that Indigenous people conduct themselves when ‘getting’ food, preparing and consuming food. Gregory Cajete (2000) details this relationship by describing how, “among some Indian herbalists, plants are referred to as ‘the hair of the Earth Mother.’ There is a widespread traditional Native belief that the Earth feels the pull every time a plant is taken from the soil. Therefore, humans must always make a proper offering and prayers”.²² Cajete’s observation supports understanding food as relational (whether that be intentionally grown, foraged, or hunted). In particular, it supports the relationship of gathering food as one intricately connected to respect, privilege, and gratefulness. This connection to respect, privilege and gratefulness informs the way food influences community and culture.

Another key book by Paul Nadasdy (2003) showcases this mutually respectful relationship by arguing; “They [Indigenous people of the Yukon] see success in hunting both as evidence that they have properly maintained these relations and as an

²² Cajete, *Native Science*, 111.

indication of their obligation to continue doing so”.²³ This spiritual connection to food informs the way in which Indigenous people treated and engaged with food. Today, Indigenous people actively participate in the ‘modern’ world, or rather engage with food the way many Americans do, at grocery stores and fast food restaurants etc. Despite this ‘modern’ American interaction there is still a spiritual connection to food. To be clear, a cultural and historically supported spiritual connection to food does not mean that every time contemporary Indigenous people engage with food, it is spiritual. Yet, this important cultural and historical reality informs the way that Indigenous people value and engage with food in particular places, spaces, and times. It also informs the relationship of sharing food with others as meaningful because the food itself is significant and therefore the act of sharing it is meaningful.

Spiritual connection to food creates much of the meaning assigned to food, yet simultaneously it is culture that teaches and supports this spiritual connection. Teaching and passing on knowledge around food is a vital part of community and cultural health. Nadasdy (2003) discusses the generational differences between the elders in the village and the young people who were forced to go to school. He states “as far as the elders were concerned, students had learned nothing in the years they had been away (about animals, hunting, respect, language or any of the other things that were important to a life on the land)”.²⁴ This speaks both to the lack of knowledge that elders felt young people had, but also to the knowledge present in the community and on the land that cannot be taught elsewhere. Nadasdy explores knowledge that can be passed on by older community members to someone who is ‘young’. This method of transference is

²³ Paul Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2003), 94.

²⁴ Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 46.

known as experiential knowledge, knowledge learned through practice rather than through books or lecturing. Experiential knowledge is something that is practiced continuously while a more experienced person guides and watches the 'new' learner. Nadasdy shares a story told by some young Indigenous women about their experience learning to do bead work well. The young women do hours of beadwork only to have an elder undo it all, taking them back to a mistake they had made, the women shared that this experience taught them patience and how to do things correctly.²⁵ He uses the story of women learning to do beadwork to illustrate the ways in which people are taught to value the experience of learning, rather than just being abstractly told how to do something.

This type of learning and teaching style establishes food production, distribution, and consumption as an important part of community relationships rather than just something that everyone consumes to survive. It places food in a web of relationships, and the person that acquired the food as a learner and teacher of their trade (hunting, foraging, growing, preparing). In addition the animal and plant that gave their life as an independent life force that must be learned about and respected in order to consume it. Knowledge about food informs an Indigenous person's relationships to food and community in a meaningful way. This type of relationship to food not only supported community health in the past but also ecosystem health and spiritual health. To disconnect food from this intricate relationship is to cause damage to Indigenous communities. It is the reconnection and the rebuilding of these bonds with food at the center that is compelling about food research.

²⁵ Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 99.

Interdependent Relationships

The transference of knowledge from generation to generation is an example of the interdependent relationships that inform many Indigenous communities, both the relationships of humans to one another as well as their relationships with the natural world. This worldview operates in contrast to something like Western ‘individualism’ which promotes ideologies that assert an independent individual who can do it all by themselves. Often communities with strong histories and worldviews tied to interdependence do not believe in ‘independence’. Surviving and thriving in the world is tied to balance and dependence on other things (be those humans, animals, or plants). Interdependence functions to maintain a healthy community. Interdependence as a philosophy guiding Indigenous people asserts that all members of the community are needed, and must participate in order to make a healthy and effective community. In many ways, this can also be seen in regards to issues of gender. For the food sovereignty movement issues of gender have been at the forefront along with food, for Indigenous people this has not been as much the case but re-evaluating a sense of interdependence also requires reconciling issues of inequality in other facets of life. It would require another thesis to fully grapple with issues of gender and food, as this very important relationship was also altered. But I will mention that author’s such as Grace Ouellete²⁶ and Elizabeth Kalbfleisch²⁷, grapple with Indigenous feminism in a way that would expand discussions of food and community.

²⁶ Grace Ouellete, *The Fourth World: An Indigenous Perspective on Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Activism* (Indiana University: Fernwood Publishing Company, 2002).

²⁷ Elizabeth Kalbfleisch, “Bordering on Feminism: Space, Solidarity, and Transnationalism in Rebecca Belmore’s *Vigil*” in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* eds. Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman (Canada: UBC Press, 2010).

This Indigenous sense of interdependence extends beyond human relationships. The sense of interdependence is formed out of the idea that humans, animals, plants, and the land work together to create a balanced well-functioning world. This ideology is captured in the Sioux saying, “All my relations” signifying the human connection to all life on the planet, and the inherent responsibility one has to its kin.

The interrelated nature in which food informs relationships, values, and time takes on intense meaning when considering the deep alteration of Indigenous relationships to food. Most Indigenous people no longer subsist on wild meat or local plants. Interaction with the land has changed dramatically, what was once a subsistence relationship is now more of an occasional relationship, with knowledge holders (about the land) being more infrequent than they were in the past. Many Indigenous people, have either been forcibly removed from their land base altogether, forcibly moved to a smaller land base, or been removed because of a lack of opportunity, all causing Indigenous people to live far from their homelands and decreasing their interaction with their homelands. This changes the way that Indigenous people relate not only to food, but also to each other.

The relationship that many Indigenous people had with food; also informed other aspects of culture. Nadasdy (2003) talks about for the Kluane of Alaska and that for them the existence and integration of hunting as part of culture is not about killing the animal but eating the animal and sharing the meat.²⁸ This is in contrast to some American celebrations around hunting that creates a sense of competition, a game of sorts. In contrast when killing animals is because of the need to eat, there is more

²⁸ Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 94.

respect given to the animal, as a provider of sustenance. In this way hunting informs all aspects of culture for the Kluane people. It is this respect and relationship that informs a relationship with food that respects the inter-related nature that humans and the environment.

Interdependent relationships also inform the ways in which items such as food are disseminated. Keith Basso (1996) explores how knowledge, wisdom, and language are different for Apache people and largely informed by place²⁹. One place is named for a story, “Shades of Shit”³⁰, this story and place speak to the cultural requirement to share, and the bad luck that befalls those who do not. Cultural requirements such as sharing come from ideologies of interdependence—having this sort of ideology in terms of food also informs the social and cultural uses of food. Food is largely considered something that is used in a social way, and there is always enough for everyone, and always more for those that ‘might’ show up. This is important to understand when trying to understand foods relationship to community and culture and the ensuing situations it creates.

Nadasdy best sums up the intricate and lasting effect that acquiring food had on Indigenous culture when speaking about the Kluane in the Yukon, “If they were to stop eating wild meat, then their entire way of life would change fundamentally. Their relation to land and animals, how they spend their time, how they relate to one another, what they think about, their values – all would necessarily lose their current meaning and undergo dramatic change”.³¹ This speaks to the drastic life changing experience that an

²⁹ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

³⁰ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 24.

³¹ Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 76.

altered relationship has on a people who are culturally so intricately tied to relationships with the land. Understanding this reality illuminates why it is so important to understand 'how' Indigenous people know food, rather than 'why'. It illuminates the importance of relationships, which are more complex than consumption.

Activism

The activist literature along with a quick look at activist organizations illuminates the evolution and frame of the food justice movement for Indigenous people. It is important to understand both Indigenous informed activism around food as well as the local and globally informed activism that inspired a more active field of social justice engagement around food because this informs our situational understanding of the Indigenous food movement. Although, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to do a detailed analysis of the activism in this field, I will provide short summaries and analysis of the different movements informing Indigenous activism. The activism on the ground informs much of the literature written about food, rather than the other way around. It is for this reason that having a clear view of the work on the ground enables a clear view of the Indigenous movement.

Within the activist literature there are two movements to understand when looking at food sovereignty: 1) Global activism often referred to as Food Sovereignty and 2) Local activism meaning domestic activism in the United States referred to as the Food Justice movement. Neither of these movements fully encompasses Indigenous activism around food, yet both inform a better understanding of the Indigenous movements regarding food. In order to situate Indigenous food struggles we must understand the activism that has helped influence and shape these struggles.

Food Sovereignty centers the solutions to the food crisis experienced by Indigenous people, as something that must come from the visioning and investment of the communities it effects, primarily Indigenous communities in South America. These communities are responding to a global food reality that is largely run by corporate food regimes.³² This reality creates a world in which food security is linked to individual purchase power, rather than availability or access to food.³³ Yet, people remain hungry. This stark reality has deeply affected the world's poor, and in particular Indigenous and land-based worker communities, which results in leading to food sovereignty activism.

Food sovereignty advocates focus on the inability of the market to solve hunger, and state that the market actually perpetuates and worsens hunger for the global poor. Food sovereignty is the first movement around food on an international level that has been led by those most affected by hunger. The literature on the Food Sovereignty movement contends that the food sovereignty movement originally started with La Via Campesina, an international peasant worker and Indigenous movement. That has now spread throughout the world. This movement claims that national, state, and local peoples have a right to produce and consume culturally appropriate, sustainable, and local foods. It asserts the right of life and survival, but also of autonomy and control of food resources on a national, state, and local (community) level. The movement requests equal trade relationships between nations, and for the creation of local markets with local products. It takes a strong stand against industrial agriculture, promoting agro-ecology. Largely, this stand against industrial agriculture is based in the

³² Madeleine Fairbairn, "Framing Resistance: International Food Regimes and the Roots of Food Sovereignty" in *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*, eds. Hanna Wittman, Annette Aurelie Desmarais, and Nettie Wiebe (California: Food First Books, 2010) 15-31.

³³ Madeleine Fairbairn, "Framing Resistance", 24.

harm industrial agricultural is causing to the planet; heavy on water, oil and pesticides. The movement also takes a strong stance on women's equality stating that violence towards women contributes to food insecurity because women are largely the ones providing food for their families. Food sovereignty as a movement strongly situates food as a human right, and the commodification of food in the global market as the commodification of the right to life.

Food Justice activism shares commonalities with food sovereignty, especially the self-determining aspects of both movements. However, the real lived situations of these peoples are vastly different. The environmental justice (EJ) literature emerging out of the U.S contends that food justice in the United States has its roots in the EJ movement. EJ, which originally was known as environmental racism, has its roots in the civil rights movement.³⁴ The EJ movement analyzes the ways in which class and race have disproportionately affected marginalized communities by overburdening them with toxics-- such as from refineries, diesel trucks, waste disposal facilities, and factories dispossessing them of land and disproportionately affecting their health. The Food Justice Movement extends this reality beyond EJ through understanding food as racialized. It now explores access to production and consumption; and pursues an alternative to the mainstream food movement. The mainstream food movement is produced in a way that makes many consider it a 'white space',³⁵ through participation in farmers markets, community supported agricultures (CSA) and overall healthy and organic foods. It is a movement thoroughly situated in personal choice and action that

³⁴ Luke W. Cole and Shiela Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 20.

³⁵ Julie Guthman, " 'If They Only Knew': The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food" in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race Class and Sustainability*, eds. Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 266.

denies how not all peoples have the same access to these choices and actions. The Food Justice Movement, in contrast, takes time to explore the overall evolution and current reality of food in the United States to more thoroughly understand its effects on low income, people of color. This movement is informed by the activism of organizations that support grassroots power such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and Southwest Organizing Project among many others.

In 1991 many of these organizations formed at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit that solidified the Environmental Justice Movement. At this conference participants asserted that ‘the environment is where we live, work, and play’. This assertion was in part a response to environmental activism in the United States that had situated environmental activism as something that people who had access to ‘wild’ spaces partook in. Environmental activism was as a ‘white thing’. The conference sought to engage with environmental activism in a way that acknowledged that communities of color experience many negative realities from environmental degradation. It also sought to engage with the reality that marginalized communities are most at risk as environments are continually degraded, the marginalized will have the least access to diminishing resources.³⁶

From this Environmental Justice Movement came activism around food. For marginalized communities in the U.S the food movements were forged because of a lack of access to healthy foods because of transportation, costs, and food deserts. This reality is one situated firmly within the capitalist experience in the United States.

³⁶ These organizations were influential in creating the ideological underpinnings and work of the Environmental Justice movement, by fully situation the environment as a part of peoples lives, even poor people. However, these organizations are not engaged in Indigenous food issues but I mention them because they informed the movement by setting the stage for Indigenous food movements.

Communities of color, with the exception of Indigenous people, are in a country and climate that does not necessarily provide the food that they co-evolved with as a people. As a result discussions around healthy foods have centered on access to fresh foods rather than culturally appropriate foods (as it does in the case of food sovereignty activists).

Indigenous Activism

The Indigenous engagement with food as a movement is less cohesive in its existence. There was not a nation wide Indigenous call to activism around food. Predominately, the literature about food justice for Indigenous communities comes from 'activist intellectuals' whom have drawn attention to the lack of access to food for Indigenous people. One such author, Winona LaDuke, began making the connection between food and sovereignty in the early 2000's and there have been many innovative food projects across Indian country that engage Indigenous communities with food in a way that promotes cultural and community healing as well as seeking to change the systemic ways that Indigenous communities interact with food. Indigenous activism around food has centered food both within the realm of access (the way food justice does) and the right to culturally appropriate interactions with food (the way that food sovereignty does). This reality is in many ways easy to understand, since Indigenous people in America are subject to the general racism that communities of color experience, but are also in their country of colonization.

The Indigenous activism around food is mostly a series of disjointed activities that center on getting people fed along with reviving cultural traditions. However, in the last few years the Native Food Sovereignty Alliance (2013) was started as a means of

fighting for food sovereignty for Indigenous people in the United States, this is a step in the direction of a more cohesive movement, but in no ways fully encompasses Indigenous food activism into one movement. Food activism for Indigenous people encompasses movements that span cultural projects (cultural revitalization through food) to projects protecting against GMO seeds, to access (ensuring healthy food access), to addressing climate change. I will shortly highlight a few of these to give a picture of the realm.

Winona LaDuke, one of the first Indigenous authors to start writing about food, created a nonprofit called White Earth Land Recovery Project. The stated mission of this organization is, “to facilitate the recovery of the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation while preserving and restoring traditional practices of sound land stewardship, language fluency, community development, and strengthening our spiritual and cultural heritage”.³⁷ In this mission statement we can see the deep connection between land, cultural recovery, and food. For indigenous activists food does not live in a silo. It is an interconnected part of what it means to have a healthy and thriving community.

Similarly, there is a project with the Mvskoke Creek that similarly situates a successful movement around food. The Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative, states its mission as, “works to enable the Mvskoke people and their neighbors to provide for their food and health needs now and in the future through sustainable agriculture, economic

³⁷ White Earth Land Recovery Project, “White Earth Land Recovery Project: Facilitating the recovery of the original land base of the White Earth Reservation” *White Earth Land Recovery Project*, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://welrp.org/>.

development, community involvement, cultural and educational programs”.³⁸ A close reading of this mission statement similarly reveals the connection between people and food. Relationships and overall community health is at the center of these movements toward community owned food systems.

There are many more projects across Indian country such as canning projects in Oneida, buffalo projects in Sioux country, and homesteader projects on Native Hawaiian lands. Although diverse in form and substance, what these projects hold similar is a desire to heal from colonization in a way that honors Indigenous people and promotes thriving communities in the future that are community driven and controlled.

Healing

The literature on healing has not historically focused on food thus it is important to bring into the discussion about food sovereignty because the food movements are largely about healing. In the same way that the environmental justice movement informed but did not create food justice, healing movements in Indian country are very important in the development of all movements that address healing. It is this reconnection to culture, and control that is envisioned as an important part of healing for Indigenous people. There have been a number of pieces that can be argued to be a literature on healing. Healing is often explored as something that happens when one reconnects with their culture and has ownership/community control. In many ways a change in the interaction with food exemplifies this means of healing, by solidifying community control over food systems, and making and creating foods that are culturally meaningful, and support cultural and community relationships.

³⁸ Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative, “MFSI” Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.mvskokefood.org/>.

Scholars Chino and DeBruyn (2006) establish the importance of healing for Indigenous people in an Indigenous way. They specifically say that Western models of healing do not help Indigenous people. Healing has to be driven from an Indigenous epistemology in order to be effective for Indigenous people.³⁹ They rely on a relationship based healing, holistic healing, and also pay respect to the need to heal from racism and colonization as a vital part of the Indigenous healing experience. This type of healing is the type of healing that food system control supports. It reframes community health and control in meaningful ways.

There have also been integrations of Indigenous ways of healing into 'modern' problems, such as alcoholism and youth truancy. In a similar way to food struggles, these problems were 'created' by colonialism and lack of community control over the lives of its members. Coyhis and Simonelli (2008) focus on healing from addiction.⁴⁰ Their healing model is very similar to the 12 step program used for alcohol but with an Indigenous twist. This piece at its core is still a Euro-American healing model, because the Indigenous cultural pieces are more additional than core. In this way it is reminiscent of the programs that focus on diabetes. Most programs aimed at healing this illness in Indigenous communities focus on food consumption. The programs may add some Indigenous foods, however, the focus is on consumption rather than changing community control and relationships which the Indigenous food movements attempt to do.

³⁹ Michelle Chino and Lemrya DeBruyn, "Building True Capacity: Indigenous Models for Indigenous Communities" *American Journal of Public Health* 96, no. 4 (2006): 596.

⁴⁰ Don Coyhis and Richard Simonelli, "The Native American Healing Experience" *Substance Use and Misuse* 43 (2008): 1927-1949.

However, in the same way that EJ evolved into the food movement, healing experiences that use an additive approach with Indigenous culture rather than as core, inform praxis and development of healing as a movement. Janelle et al. (2009) use a more Indigenous core approach to healing. In this study they altered physical locations for youth. The Indigenous youth moved from a First Nations reserve environment to a more wilderness setting to encourage healing relationships and building empowerment⁴¹. Youth were forced to spend many days with each other in the wilderness, thereby creating several positive effects on the youth. This approach removes the youth from day to day life, and attempts to restructure and restore relationships to the earth and to community that inform healthy habits. In many ways this is more like the healing food movements. However, not all people can be removed from their communities in order to heal. They must also envision ways to heal from their homes. In this sense a holistic approach of healing for food systems requires Indigenous epistemologies and restructuring control over food systems that allow healing.

Conclusion

It is through the examination of Indigenous epistemologies that we are able to see the way that food historically interacted and informed many important cultural traditions for Indigenous peoples. It is through this understanding that we can envision healing as a process that honors these epistemologies and histories in relationship with food. It is also through understanding this that we can view food struggles as a community issue rather than an individual issue. Envisioning food struggles and an

⁴¹ Alain Janelle, Arlene Laliberte and Ulric Ottawa, "Promoting Traditions: An Evaluation of a Wilderness Activity Among First Nations of Canada," *Australasian Psychiatry* 17, no 1, Supplement (2009): S108-111.

interrelated struggle one that engages, housing, transportation, food, culture, community and access allows for more complex institutional and structural analysis of the problems that communities face, rather than limiting discussion to the experience of individuals. It is also through understanding the history of activism both in environmental justice and in food sovereignty that we are able to understand the way that Indigenous food struggles were influence and informed.

An analysis that allows us to account for and respect peoples epistemological and cultural realities while grappling with the systemic and historical experiences that their community had, allows the envisioning of real, community supported and created solutions to 'problems' such as food and health. I hope that this thesis is able to illuminate some of these issues and honor the voices of the visionary community struggling with these realities each day.

CHAPTER 3

“FOOD IS LIFE”: EMPLOYING INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGIES

Jeff, Navajo

Introduction and Overview

“Our questions are important. Research helps us to answer them.” - Linda Tuhiwai Smith

This study is guided by Indigenous methodology; a methodology that focuses on the voices and epistemologies of Indigenous people rather than being subjects to be framed by non-Indigenous thought and practice. This study incorporates photovoice and focus groups as methods to further understand the relationship Indigenous communities have to food, and how that relationship enables healthy and vibrant communities. The visual representations and conversations documented in this study explore the role that food plays in community and individual health and its potential to aid in the struggle towards decolonization, self-determination and empowerment.

Indigenous Methodologies answer the questions, ‘how do we do research in Indigenous communities responsibly?’ How do we, as scholars, and as Indigenous people, not replicate the colonial models of knowledge that have historically worked against Indigenous epistemologies? How do we maintain a responsibility in creating healthy communities? Largely, this has been answered in the literature on Indigenous methodology, scholars such as Smith, Wilson and Kovach insist that scholars do research with an Indigenous foundation and adhere to cultural standards of knowledge, communication, and respect.⁴² It is for this reason that I embark upon research that

⁴² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2d ed. (London & New York: Zed Books, 2012); Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*

utilizes Indigenous methodology as a guiding principle to then be able to address what is happening in the Indigenous community of Oakland California around food, all the while honoring the knowledge that is shared by the community.

Epistemological Concerns: Knowledge Informed by Culture

Community control of research is crucial for Indigenous populations. When a community controls its research they also control what and how questions are answered. Linda Smith, arguably the premier scholar in Indigenous Methodologies, ends the second edition of her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* with the statement that began this chapter. Her sentiment can clearly be seen in the struggle to understand the way in which food informs and affects communities. The struggle between personal versus systemic understandings of how food exemplifies the difference that occurs when non-Indigenous versus Indigenous communities ask questions about food. Smith's quote is an assertion of the inherent value of Indigenous people: the value of our thoughts, our lives, and quality of our lives, traditions, cultures, and ability to be self-determining. The mere need to validate the importance of a community's questions implies that their value has long since been denied. I speak of Indigenous knowledge in a way that attempts to include, but not homogenize, the diverse sets of Indigenous knowledge's that come from Indigenous tribes. Previously, attempts by U.S. society to speak about Indigenous knowledge have failed to A) grapple with diverse knowledge sets of the over 500 tribal communities in the United States but also B) to grapple with the reality that oppression of Indigenous knowledge has happened on a National and institutional level throughout the history of

(Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008); and Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

the United States. The denial that Indigenous knowledge has value has been thoroughly investigated and affirmed through many Indigenous authors. In order to fully inform the discussion on food, it is important to understand this history utilizing Indigenous methodologies. An Indigenous methodology both informs the research while simultaneously making a political statement that Indigenous thought and research is of the utmost importance.

The best place to examine the devaluation of Indigenous knowledge is the academy, which assumes it produces the most valuable knowledge. It has been a long and arduous journey for many Indigenous scholars to find a 'home' in academia—because of academia's insistence on devaluing Indigenous communities. Mihesuah and Wilson (2004) document the multi-varied attack that academia and Western society has levied on Indigenous peoples and scholars. Authors within this edited volume discuss the importance of recovering from colonialism through upholding Indigenous ideologies and creating change and space in the academy for Indigenous epistemologies. The struggle to elevate Indigenous epistemologies illuminates the reason that Indigenous Methodologies exists.

Indigenous scholars assert that academia assisted and perpetuated intellectual and philosophical violence against Indigenous peoples. Authors in this volume converge on three critical junctures. 1) Western academia perpetuates epistemological harm against Native peoples. 2) decolonization has yet to be achieved. 3) the goal for Native scholarship is the visioning of healthy autonomous communities. All of these areas are of importance for Indigenous scholars, although not explicitly about methodology, they have greatly informed and added to what can be described as Indigenous

Methodologies. Indigenous scholars have situated their methodologies as both a necessary tool in retrieving research that values Indigenous realities and as a political act that stands in resistance to 500 years of colonization and oppression. In order to understand this complex approach, we must understand the reality that formed and continues to inform Indigenous Methodologies.

Western academy has historically, devalued Indigenous knowledge, while simultaneously appropriating it. Both experiences have led to the perpetuation of notions of Indigenous existence that are incongruent with Indigenous life. A number of Indigenous scholars speak to this reality and to the ways that Indigenous knowledge is considered invalid or nonexistent in many Western narratives⁴³. Smith (2001) points to the fact that the culture and power relations in which concepts are located legitimize ideas as 'real'⁴⁴. This 'legitimization' is the difference between how and what we know, which was discussed earlier. How Indigenous people know, through a multitude of experiences, is not considered legitimate. There has been a struggle to get Indigenous Methodologies accepted as a legitimate conceptual framework. This struggle illuminates the differences in culture, power relationships, and conceptions of knowledge that Smith discusses⁴⁵. The struggle to get Indigenous Methodologies 'accepted' illuminates the invalidation of Indigenous methods by Western Academia. However there are also examples of appropriation, which additionally subjugate Indigenous knowledge.

⁴³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 92; Angela Cavender Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge," in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, eds. Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela C. Wilson, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 69; and Taiaiake Alfred, "Warrior Scholarship: Seeing the University as a Ground of Contention," in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, eds. Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela C. Wilson, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 88.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 95-96.

⁴⁵ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 95-96.

Angela Wilson speaks to this threat of appropriation, when addressing the wide variety and in depth knowledge that many Indigenous communities possess about ecosystems, medicine, and healing; she warns however that this knowledge can be stolen and lead to exploitation of Indigenous communities.⁴⁶ This theft of knowledge is harmful to Indigenous communities because once Indigenous knowledge has been brought into Western Hegemony, access by and for Indigenous people, even for their own uses will be limited. The combination of devaluation and appropriation of knowledge, both emerge from a similar core process, which removes Indigenous knowledge from Indigenous control, power, and processes of evaluation. Western European culture deems itself the only people capable of evaluating, controlling, and possessing knowledge. This perpetuates notions of Indigenous communities as incapable of thinking/creating and incapable to hold/be responsible with knowledge. Largely, these notions stem from an imagined 'Indigenous' person/life that is described by power holders to be 'incompetent'. Wilson (2004) makes a similar argument stating that

...many have assisted in our colonization and the perpetuation of our oppression in myriad ways, including celebrating the myth of Manifest Destiny, making light of the genocide and terrorism experienced by our people, and holding firm to a progressive notion of history that forever locks our people's past and our 'primitive' existence into a hierarchy where we occupy the bottom.⁴⁷

Added to this historical oppression Wilson includes the more recent, and almost exclusive focus by historians on "... the resiliency of Indigenous people while refusing to offer an honest and critical indictment of state and federal governments, leaders, and all

⁴⁶ Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity", 83.

⁴⁷ Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity", 79.

the citizens of America who have been complicit in our bodily extermination, cultural eradication, and assaults on our lands and resources”⁴⁸. It is clear that Wilson believes that only ‘part’ of the story about Indigenous history has been explored. The insistence of excluding the voices and realities of Indigenous people while simultaneously purporting Western superiority, creates lived realities for Indigenous communities that were and continue to be detrimental and intellectually dishonest. This insistence of Western superiority stems from colonialism.

Colonialism as a system of oppression, as Indigenous populations have experienced it, has thrived on knowledge theft and appropriation. Colonialism can best be understood as a system that forces Indigenous people to make choices and live lives that are incongruent with their culture, knowledge, and desires. Colonialism for many has ended, but for Indigenous populations it continues. In fact scholar Taiaiake Alfred refers to it as, “a total existence, a way of thinking about oneself and others always in terms of domination and submission that has come to form the very foundation of our individual and collective lives”.⁴⁹ Understanding this continuation of colonialism, in what would be argued to be a post-colonial era, is important to fully understand as part of understanding Indigenous relationships to food. Indigenous relationships to food have completely changed because of the colonial relationship. Currently communities are trying to recreate and refashion healthy relationships to food because they have to. Colonization completely altered relationships too food, as a result eating habits changed for the worse, healing from this trauma has been difficult. Indigenous voices, stories and

⁴⁸ Wilson, “Reclaiming Our Humanity”, 79.

⁴⁹ Alfred, “Warrior Scholarship”, 89.

assertions of power where Indigenous peoples are the creators rather than simply the receivers of knowledge supports Indigenous control over food.

Decolonization continues to be a crucial part of Indigenous empowerment and self-determination because to decolonize is to change our *foundation*. Alfred (2004) refers to this foundation as being totally created by colonization. However, this is not to be confused with some desire to return to a romanticized past. Rather it is a project determined to honor our past and be critical of the current situations that Indigenous people face.⁵⁰ In fact Wilson goes on to describe just exactly what she believes decolonization will entail. She states that, "... Decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage. Decolonization is about empowerment—a belief and trust in our own peoples' values and abilities, and a willingness to make change"⁵¹. Decolonization has been incorporated into Indigenous methodologies as a necessary step toward changing the *foundation* from which we understand the world and research, but also to contribute to the empowerment of communities by trusting and believing in Indigenous knowledge. In this way Indigenous methodologies are a movement, an action, a step, and an achievement towards the Indigenous goal of decolonization. Lastly, Alfred speaks to this responsibility and power in doing and achieving. Alfred discusses what it means to be Indigenous and refers to the power of language in shaping how we live, he writes that, "In the European way of seeing the world a name is a title and symbolizes *being*. In the Indigenous way a name is a responsibility and implies *doing*".⁵² In this way, Indigenous methodologies are about how research is done rather than simply what it is. Indigenous methodologies act upon

⁵⁰ Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity," 75.

⁵¹ Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity," 71.

⁵² Alfred, "Warrior Scholarship", 98.

decolonization by resituating research into a culturally congruent mechanism that honors Indigenous peoples. Similarly, re-asserting control over Indigenous food systems requires the action of also re-asserting the relationships that made them strong, viable, and important to Indigenous people before colonization.

The lack of regard and intellectual integrity shown towards Indigenous people is a thematic thread that is found throughout many criticisms against Western academia.⁵³ To ameliorate this lack of voice many Indigenous authors point to an additional responsibility toward community on the part of Indigenous scholars as a way to rectify the wrongs perpetuated via academia and as a requirement to honor Indigenous peoples. This responsibility includes helping to envision and work towards redefining what a healthy community looks like. Author Daniel Justice (2004) points out that, “Autonomy of community and self-within-community—as opposed to postmodern individualism—requires at least two things to sustain it: a community from which memory is spoken, and a sovereignty of mind and body, both the body politic and the physical body.”⁵⁴ Here Justice includes within sovereignty the decolonization of the physical body and the restoration of physical health as these are connected to the health of systems of governance and the valuing of experience. It also values voice and memory as a means towards autonomy— while simultaneously positioning the health of an Indigenous community as something different than the health of a Western community. Envisioning what healthy communities look like enables us to understand

⁵³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavendar Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

⁵⁴ Daniel Heath Justice’ “Seeing (and Reading) Red: Indian Outlaws in the Ivory Tower,” in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, eds. Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela C. Wilson (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 117.

the immense responsibility that Indigenous scholars hold as visionaries entrusted to help achieve and bring forth that health. It also helps to imagine what a healthy food system looks like, one that contains the physical body, governance, and experience. This highlights the incongruence that arises when Western society speaks about health and food for Indigenous communities, rather than Indigenous communities speaking for themselves.

The responsibility many Indigenous scholars chronicle within the literature toward peoples and communities is something that is seldom seen within the Western/hegemonic academy. It is this responsibility that motivates Gone (2004) to try and decolonize the discipline of psychology. Here Gone states, “my vision for a pragmatically beneficial professional psychology assumes that it will remain Western in essence, albeit tailored to appreciate and engage the local epistemologies and ethnopsychologies of Native communities in substantive, supportive, respectful, and constructive ways.”⁵⁵ Taking the scholarship on Indigenous methodology into consideration as a whole we can see the complexity of Indigenous realities, and the multiple ways in which Indigenous communities are always figuring out what must be modified and what must be scraped or abandoned in order to achieve justice and autonomy for Indigenous communities.

Currently, food justice scholars and communities engaged in food sovereignty have to contend with the mainstream hegemonic environmental justice approach which firmly situates food decisions, and the resultant health ramifications as merely bad

⁵⁵ Joseph P Gone, “Keeping Culture in Mind: Transforming Academic Training in Professional Psychology for Indian Country,” in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, eds. Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela C. Wilson, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 140.

'personal choices'⁵⁶ that can be 'educated' away.⁵⁷ Such an analysis when applied to Indigenous communities is devoid of Indigenous voice and analysis, and simultaneously rejects Indigenous humanity by replicating colonialism.

Indigenous scholars have situated Indigenous Methodology as a means to answer questions from an Indigenous perspective, rather than to apply a lens that does not fit our communities. This is accomplished by adhering to Indigenous means of understanding the world, although there has been a variety of ways that Indigenous authors have understood Indigenous methodologies there has been agreement around three key areas. Indigenous methodology is relationally respectful, honors Indigenous stories/voice, and has a responsibility to contribute to and help heal Indigenous communities.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith began the field of Indigenous Methodologies with her influential book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* in 2001, with a second edition published in 2012. In 2008 Shawn Wilson wrote *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* and Margaret Kovach wrote *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics Conversations, and Contexts* in 2009. Although each book centered on Indigenous methodologies they also have very different focuses and goals. Smith's research focused on why an Indigenous methodology is needed by illustrating the historic relationship Indigenous communities have with academia and simultaneously point out the enormous potential to have healthy successful Indigenous

⁵⁶ This ideology is pervasive when analyzing society- This ideology can be seen in programming such as 'Extreme Weight Lose' or articles about how people got fit through changing their habits. **Their** being the operative word. It can also be seen through popular authors such as Michael Pollen- who address food security in the realm of personal consumption (and on occasion an issue with corporations, with a minor focus and relatively non critical focus on capitalisms role in perpetuating the actions of corporations).

⁵⁷ Guthman, " 'If They Only Knew'", 268.

communities. Wilson and Kovach both addressed how to integrate Indigenous methodologies into research. Wilson focuses more on the internal processes of making research congruent with cultural beliefs and making it sacred. Kovach, on the other hand, delves into praxis, centering her research in the belief that an Indigenous methodology must be tribally driven, rather than focusing on the essentialized nature of Indigeneity.

For the purpose of this thesis I will focus on where these books connect, and how their connection establishes the field of Indigenous methodologies. In order to expand the conversation on food I will focus on how the three perspectives converge on relationality, honoring voice and story, as well as maintaining cultural appropriate research interactions and writings with community towards an Indigenous methodology.

Indigenous methodologies seek to honor the interdependence that many Indigenous epistemologies honor. This relationality is expressed through honoring relationships with participants, communities, and other scholars. It is this honoring of relationships that marks Indigenous methods. Relationality gets articulated in the research process in two ways: one with the writer's mentors and advisors (advisors could be tribal members and elders rather than just academic mentors) and also with the research participants themselves. Smith connects this relationality to empowering people and writes that, "To imagine self-determination, however, is also to imagine a world in which indigenous peoples become active participants, and to prepare for the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead".⁵⁸ This firmly sets research within the realm of responsibility to community, honoring this relationship is core to Indigenous research. All of the authors echo this sentiment. Kovach states, "Giving back involves know[ing]

⁵⁸ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 213.

what 'useful' means, and so having a relationship with the community, so that the community can identify what is relevant, is key".⁵⁹ These sentiments truly center the work within Indigenous communities. Wilson discusses the conflict present in purporting 'objectivity' and honoring relationships with community (which are not objective).⁶⁰ Responsibility more than objectivity is the core of Indigenous research. Objectivity, it seems, developed from a worldview that honored the individual more than the community. For Indigenous methodologies since the community is honored over the individual, relationships are honored over objectivity. The level of responsibility devoted to the people the researcher is researching motivates the search for 'truth'.

The next convergence for these three authors is the honoring of voice/story. Western academia honors the written document. As a result, all the people in the United States who could not read or write, are not fully accounted for or included in historical accounts of the Nation's history. The authors writing about Indigenous methodologies recognize this but also recognize that writing is an imposed method of story collection on Indigenous peoples. Honoring oral stories is to honor a different and complex manner of communication. Kovach states:

In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon. Oral stories are born of connections within the world, and are thus recounted relationally. They tie us with our past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations⁶¹

Oral stories and their relational format are a difficult reality to reconcile with the methods that are utilized by Western Academia in research. Relying on written documents from a singular position, the author of these documents is sometimes contextualized and

⁵⁹ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 82.

⁶⁰ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 101.

⁶¹ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 94.

sometimes not. Smith also expresses that story telling is a vital part of passing on culture from generation to generation, connecting the people to the land, and connecting the people to those in the story.⁶² In this way story telling functions as a binding agent for Indigenous communities. For this reason it is important to integrate Indigenous voice into research, valuing and honoring the lessons that Indigenous people can impart.

Lastly, the three authors converge on the need for researchers to conduct themselves within the appropriate cultural standards of the community. Kovach strongly believes pan-Indianism should be avoided. She stresses the need to identify oneself within a tribal tradition.⁶³ In this sense Kovach, requires that the research be born from a tribal epistemology and guided from that point, honoring the relationships that must be honored while following the cultural protocols of a specific tribe. This is not a particularly useful approach to research for this thesis, which grapples with the inter-tribal experience, being a unique experience that is separate from Western realities. However, both Wilson and Smith also talk about locating the research within appropriate cultural standards, without necessarily defining that as tribal location. Indigenous methodologies honor the knowledge of community members while employing research methodologies that are culturally congruent. This approach also honors cultural standards of reciprocity and culturally appropriate ways of conducting oneself as the researcher.

⁶² Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 242.

⁶³ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 110.

Approaches to Research

Utilizing methods of analysis that have been developed as a part of Indigenous methodologies to examine the current food debate is crucial to this project, because these approaches incorporate Indigenous communities and generate an Indigenous articulation about what is important rather than hegemonic Western definitions of the issue.

Thus, I have decided to use Indigenous methodologies as a guiding epistemology on this journey. Indigenous methodologies value Indigenous thought and ways of doing, placing Indigenous culture and knowledge in high regard. I also utilized focus groups and a photovoice project. I begin with the orienting understanding that the world is colonized, and that there is no going back from this point, only going forward. With that in mind it is important to understand that this study is an attempt to honor the past, present, and future through qualitative methods such as focus groups and photovoice, guided by Indigenous methodologies.

Photovoice in conjunction with a small focus group was employed to center the research within the community in order to amplify the participant's voices and contributions and Burris (1997) the developers of photovoice state that photovoice "entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for change, in their own communities"⁶⁴ This emancipatory vision of research stands apart from other methods as a process that values the *creation of research by* the participant. The use of this method also seeks to empower by placing the means of investigation in the hands of research participants. Historically, research

⁶⁴ C. Wang and Mary Ann Burris, "Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment," *Health Education & Behavior* 24, no. 3 (1997), 369.

coming out of educational institutions in the United States had led many marginalized communities to have a negative perception of what research means for their communities. Specifically for Indigenous communities in the United States, this history has been marked by the dehumanization of Native populations, and has functioned as the extension of a multitude of acts that have historically taken advantage of the community and is generally regarded as disempowering.⁶⁵ The methods I am utilizing here maintain power within the community by giving the community a more central role in shaping the research through their stories, visions, and actions.

My primary data and subsequent analysis emerges from the participant's engagement in photovoice. Photovoice, although not considered an "Indigenous" method, is useful for this project because as a method it can be easily understood within Indigenous epistemologies. Photovoice has developed as a method that honors the voice of the marginalized, "theoretical and practical underpinnings [are] from Freire's empowerment education for critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), feminist theory (Reinharz, 1992), and participatory documentary photography (Ewald, 1996; Wang & Burris, 1994)".⁶⁶ None of these theories come out of the struggle of Indigenous people. However it does come out of people who share a marginalization by Western epistemology, the same system that oppresses Indigenous people albeit in different ways. It is because of this shared marginalization—and acknowledgement that this particular Indigenous population participating in this study is an urban community,⁶⁷ that

⁶⁵ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; and Mihesuah and Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy*.

⁶⁶ Ellen D.S Lopez, Naomi Robinson and Eugenia Eng, "Photovoice as a CBPR Method: A Case Study with African American Breast Cancer Survivors in Rural Eastern North Carolina," in *Methods for Community-Based Participatory Research for Health*, 2d., eds Barbara Israel, Eugenia Eng, Amy Schulz, and Edith Parker (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 492.

⁶⁷ This is important to note because the experiences of Urban Indigenous communities are that of a mixed people. The day-to-day experience of an Urban Indigenous person has many similarities to the

photovoice becomes a meaningful way to engage with the stories of this Indigenous population.

Photovoice, as a method, has been deployed to empower vulnerable communities and as such has a set of goals attached to it “to enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns”.⁶⁸ This first goal is incredibly formidable because it situates the power of representation with the community itself. Due to a commitment to community representation, photovoice resonates with Indigenous methodology in valuing the voices of Indigenous people about their experiences and community. This stands in contrast to the history of Indigenous populations constantly being scrutinized by researchers where they were rendered disempowered and voiceless.⁶⁹ Western researchers often focused on weakness, or the ‘bad’ things about Indigenous communities. Photovoice resonates with the desire of Indigenous people to honor the strength rather than the weaknesses of their communities. My project situates the community as simultaneous creators of this research, rather than subjects of my research. This sharing of power and creation falls in line with honoring the strengths and wisdom within Indigenous communities.

The second goal of photovoice is “to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs”.⁷⁰ The photos create dialogue, enabling conversations on the importance of food within the community that would not otherwise be possible. Additionally, it

experiences described by the marginalized Urban Black, Latino and Asian populations. Yet, the cultural-racial experience may be more similar to reservation communities. This complexity I believe has to be acknowledged, there is not ‘essential’ Indian.

⁶⁸ Wang and Burris, “Photovoice”, 370.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 207.

⁷⁰ Wang and Burris, “Photovoice”, 68.

allows the inclusion of space and place, allowing the participants to see one another's homes, families, and foods in a way that verbal description can often fail. The use of photographs of items, people, and places in relation to food transforms food from the realm of merely an idea, or a part of a separate action, and squarely places it within its interdependent relationships. Photovoice also enables discussion around the politics of geography and the importance of place, allowing the discussion to situate itself within Indigenous ways of knowing. As Basso (1996) discusses, places serve to tell stories, lessons, and wisdom.⁷¹ The pictures incorporated into this research allow all participants to travel in their minds to a place while listening to the stories of the picture taker, enabling a richer and more vibrant story.

The third, and last goal of utilizing photovoice is to "reach policymakers"⁷². At the beginning of this project I spoke with the Executive Director of the Intertribal Friendship House to ensure that the project would be useful to the community and to the organization. At the beginning this visioning with the director centered around potential funding possibilities in order to ensure the continuance of the work.

I also used focus groups in this study. In researching focus groups I utilized research by Sue Wilkinson (1999), on using focus groups for feminist research.⁷³ Although feminist literature is not the same as research on Indigenous populations, the concerns of feminist literature are similar. Wilkinson focuses her research on addressing three main problems through focus groups, artificiality, decontextualization and exploitation. Indigenous people have experienced all three of these problems at the

⁷¹ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, xv.

⁷² Wang and Burris, "Photovoice", 68.

⁷³ Sue Wilkinson, "Focus Groups: A Feminist Method," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1999): 221-244.

hands of Western researchers, artificiality representing the 'objectification' of Indigenous bodies and thought, decontextualization exemplified through the epistemological battles Indigenous communities have had with Western researchers and society, as well as exploitation. Beyond addressing these issues, what was ideal for this research project was the communal nature of a focus group. The focus group allows for communal interaction in a way that the photo journals did not.

Description of Methods

The research inquiry I explore is the connection between self/community empowerment and food systems at the Intertribal Friendship House in Oakland, California with self identified Indigenous people. In order to assess this very personal and community perception, I engage in critical discussion and exploration of narrative by the participants. To elicit responses from this community I have gathered photo journals from participants, written journaling reflections. I also conducted a focus group.

Site

The Intertribal Friendship house located in Oakland, California is an urban environment, located in a city of about 400,740 (U.S Census Bureau). This city is popularly portrayed in media as a 'violent' city, plagued with crime, murder, and poverty.⁷⁴ This is a city predominately comprised of people of color. Almost 20% of people in Oakland live below the federal poverty line; this is 5% more than the entire state of California and the United States as a whole.⁷⁵ This elevated level of poverty signifies a city that struggles

⁷⁴ One only has to look at the media portrayals after Oscar Grant's death- to see the rampant reporting of Oakland as a violent city. Beyond this however, Oakland has historically had a high mortality rate from gun violence that has contributed to this defamation of the city.

⁷⁵ "State & County QuickFacts: Oakland (city), California." U.S. Department of Commerce: United States Census Bureau, January 7, 2014, accessed January 17, 2014, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0653000.html>.

to provide opportunities and a good quality of life for its residents. High levels of poverty lead to a number of other problems in urban areas.

Oakland has also been described as an urban food desert. The lack of access to food because of infrastructure, poverty, over abundance of liquor stores coupled with poverty and a history of segregation leads to a food insecure city.⁷⁶ This establishes the city as a place with a large number of poor residents and an inability to support those poor residents through its infrastructure. The food crisis in Oakland lends itself to a systemic analysis rather than one restricted to an analysis that contributes health and eating selections to individual choices. Oakland has been studied widely because of the limited number of grocery stores and the inaccessibility to food stores in comparison to their overly abundant convenient stores with unhealthy processed foods.

The Intertribal Friendship house (IFH), located in Oakland on the west side of Lake Merit, on International Boulevard was established in 1955. The Quakers founded the organization as a community resource for relocated Native peoples. Relocation was one of several policies aimed at getting Indigenous people to ‘civilize’ and one of the many policy’s guided by the U.S governments attempt at “killing the Indian and saving the man” throughout the 20th century. Many Indigenous people where relocated to cities with little to no economic or educational opportunities and some but not many resources.⁷⁷ While a number of the IFH members experienced forced relocation; others came to the Bay Area for other reasons and then decided to stay. The members of IFH vary in age, and many have been born and raised in Oakland and know no other home.

⁷⁶ McClintock, Nathan. “From Industrial Garden to Food Desert: Demarcated Devaluation in the Flatlands of Oakland, California,” in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race Class and Sustainability*, eds. Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).

⁷⁷ Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 136.

This community disproportionately suffers from poverty, low-income wages, and low educational attainment. However, this does not mean that they do not have leaders and powerful community members. Often, there is an assumption that peoples facing such adversity are not leaders in their communities. This is categorically untrue and proven false at IFH. However the city, in which this community is located and the racial grouping they are a part of does render the whole community food insecure and marginalized.

Sample

The sample in this study consists of self-identified Indigenous people that participate in a food projects at the Intertribal Friendship House. These participants vary in age from the mid 20's to about the mid 50's. Some of the members were born and raised on their reservations while others have only visited their reservations, making their connections to their tribal people's varied. This makes their resultant relationships to food varied as well. There is a significant amount of tribal diversity in the group with no more than 2 people belonging to any one tribe. This makes choosing a single tribal epistemology impossible. Instead, for this study, I focus on an overarching Indigenous philosophy as a guiding principle.

Data Collection

I utilized photo journaling, written journaling, and a focus group. I recorded the focus groups on a tape recorder, and the participants were given cameras for the photo journaling. For the photo journal the participants were given cameras and asked to take pictures according to several prompts, designed to illicit an illustration of their relationship to food. These prompts were:

1. What do you eat, regularly?
2. How do you prepare your food? Buy, Cook, Grow?
3. Who do you eat/grow/cook with?
4. What does food represent/mean to you? Does it have a special meaning to you?
5. Are there foods that are sacred to you or your community?
6. Does anything keep you from eating what you want to?

The photo journal is designed to allow participant control over production of knowledge as well as provide something the organization finds useful. It also allows a visual reflection on the participants' relationships with food, allowing space and place to have a more meaningful part in the research and findings. The cameras were given to them. After collection of the cameras we met for 3 hours, allowing time for a short journal reflection, time to share with the group about the more meaningful pictures for the participants, and a short focus group. The focus group was designed to illicit more of the collective experiences around food.

In the short journal reflections the participants reflected on several prompts, answering specifically the prompts they were to take pictures of as well as prompts designed to illicit personal reflections around the pictures. The prompts they were asked to reflect on were the original photo prompts as well as these:

1. How do the pictures affect you? Are there any particular reactions in looking back on the week?
2. What did you think about taking them?
3. Do you feel different when eating the food you have made or helped to make (or grow)?
4. Do you have any stories about this food?
5. Do you feel like you have strong relationships here? Has food ever strengthened/weakened those relationships?

After this process, the participants shared with the larger group 2-5 pictures that were meaningful to them and why the pictures were significant to them. This process allows the participants to be storytellers, creating the important meaning for the photos.

The facilitated group discussion is the final piece of the research process and allows the participants to collectively share knowledge and stories that build off of each other's experiences and provides a deeper understanding of the collective relationship to food. The prompts the participants reflected on in the focus group were as follows:

1. Please introduce yourself, your tribal community, if you were born here or elsewhere and if you visit your tribal home.
2. Have you built new relationships through your involvement in a food project?
3. If you have run out of food at home where do you look for food and is this place one of those places? (This question had to be revamped because no one identified with it)
4. Do you have a garden at home?
5. Are there people in the community you rely on?

This verbal discussion illuminates a different aspect of the community's relationship to food.

Coding Data

I used the line-by-line method to code my data. I analyzed the focus group line by line as well as the individual descriptions of photo's. This helped me to create several large themes with subjects underneath. After this point I tried to come up with a larger theme that encompassed many of the smaller themes. The pictures I also thematically categorized in order to understand the depth and variety of the types of pictures that were taken. However my coding focused on the focus group and descriptions, which were enabled by the photos. In the end the photos acted as a catalyst for conversation.

Limitations

In this study I faced several key limitations. I am not a member of the inter-tribal community of Oakland, although for several years I was a participant in the community. I myself am not from an urban environment, nor have I ever been food insecure. I am

also a young person; culturally this affects the ways in which the women and men spoke with me versus someone who is older. All of these are limitations of the study and I tried to minimize the effect of these differences by utilizing my relationship with Carol the Executive Director, as well as by developing and respecting my relationships with the participants.

Conclusion

I am using this project to address the complexity present in researching urban tribal communities. Using Indigenous Methodologies to honor the voices of this community I believe will provide invaluable insight into community efforts to own their food systems, and the great systemic changes that this change in ownership will bring.

CHAPTER 4

“I STAY HERE BECAUSE OF MY FATHER IN LAW”: UNDERSTANDING LOCATION

Abigail, Yurok and Seminole

A picture of Oakland, taken today, would communicate a city going through massive transition because of gentrification but still experiencing great poverty. The most recent data provided in 2013 estimates that Oakland is a city of 406,253.⁷⁸ In 2010 according to census data for Oakland⁷⁹ the population was 35% white, 28% black, 1% Native (alone), 25% Latino/Hispanic, 17% Asian alone, and about 6% claimed two or more races. Twenty percent of people from 2008-2012 in Oakland lived below the federal poverty line, which is considered to be an income of \$23,000 for a family of four.⁸⁰ The percentage of people living in poverty in Oakland is 5% more than the national average in 2010, which was 15%.⁸¹ Compounding this impoverished reality for the 20% of Oakland residents that live below the federal poverty line is the fact that the Bay Area of California is also one of the most expensive places to live in the United States.

To understand how Oakland became so impoverished when it sits right next to a wealthy city like San Francisco, recently called ‘the playground of the rich’⁸², is to understand a history of racial discrimination in the United States. McClintock (2011)

⁷⁸ “State & County QuickFacts: Oakland (city), California.”

⁷⁹ “State & County QuickFacts: Oakland (city), California.”

⁸⁰ United States Department of Health and Human Services “2012 HHS Poverty Guidelines: One Version of the US Federal Poverty Measure,” US Department of Health and Human Services, January 26, 2012, accessed June 24, 2014, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>

⁸¹ “National Poverty Center.” The University of Michigan: Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, accessed January 17, 2014, <http://www.npc.umich.edu/poverty/>.

⁸² Kevin Short. “These Two Cities are now Exclusively for Rich People.” *Huffington Post*, December 20, 2013 accessed January 17, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/20/rich-people-cities_n_4467155.html.

draws his readers through a history that set Oakland up to experience a racialized reality that devalues the property and lives of people of color. According to McClintock Oakland's status begins in the early 1900's, when industrial zoning, residential development, city planning, segregation and racist mortgage lending devalued the places that people of color occupied in Oakland, and a century later enables much of the present day poverty and food deserts of Oakland.⁸³

McClintock argues that Federal Housing Authority (FHA) loans fueled much of the home ownership in Oakland in the 1930's, however many people of color did not qualify for the loans because they could only be applied to new homes, and new homes in Oakland were not accessible to communities of color.⁸⁴ This history of racial inequality in housing and the redlining that was enforced until the later half of the 20th century provides the backdrop for the reality of racially segregated communities in Oakland. Redlining as a policy of exclusion was instrumental in maintaining racial segregation. The following map (figure 2) from 1937 demonstrates the different zones of housing in Oakland. The red areas in this map signify the redlined areas that people of color were often pushed into, seen from the legend as 'Fourth Grade' land. A quick analysis of present day Oakland would find that many people of color still live along that corridor, also known as International Blvd. McClintock argues that after 1940 redlining helped to solidify the racial segregation that the loans created. Even after 1968 when redlining was outlawed, it continued in a de facto manner.⁸⁵ McClintock argues that the

⁸³ McClintock, "From Industrial Garden to Food Desert".

⁸⁴ McClintock, "From Industrial Garden to Food Desert", 98.

⁸⁵ McClintock, "From Industrial Garden to Food Desert", 99.

key to solving this issue is the systemic understanding of how this history impacts people's choices today.⁸⁶

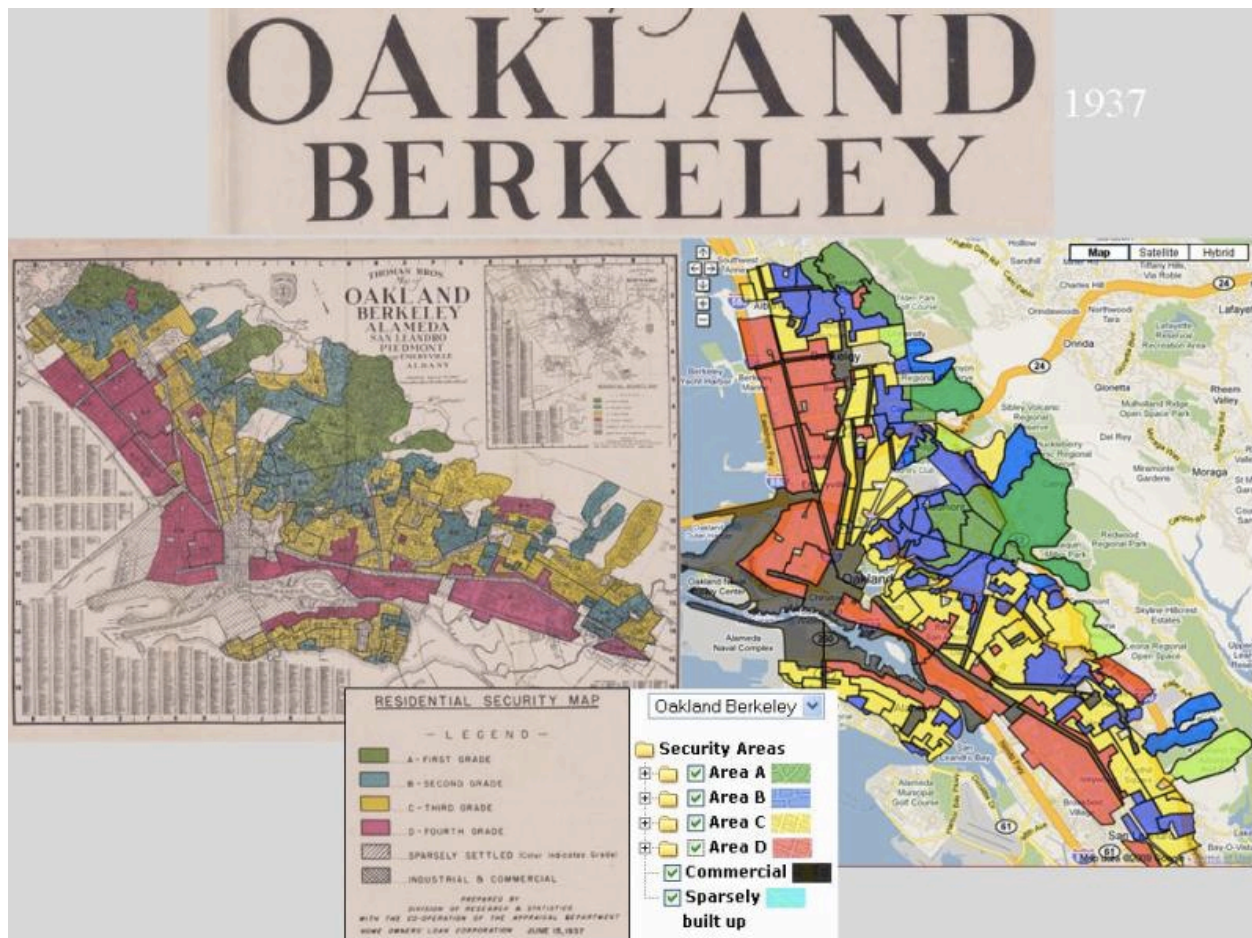


Figure 2 “Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California’s Exclusionary Spaces” accessed February 7, 2014, <http://salt.unc.edu/T-RACES/mosaic.html>.

McClintock provides the historical background and a justification for today’s snapshot of Oakland. The high rates of poverty and a majority population of color, has been created from a set of racially and economically motivated choices by city planners that influenced the lives of residents for one hundred years. McClintock outlines Oakland as a vibrant city in the early 1900’s, with booms fueled by the Transcontinental railway and World War I. The first world war created need to build ships for the wars

⁸⁶ McClintock, “From Industrial Garden to Food Desert”, 93.

which brought in numerous African American and other immigrant workers.⁸⁷ The wartime industry brought additional bodies of color to Oakland, and as the number of bodies increased so did the desire to segregate and contain these new residents. Of course, this was also influenced by larger historical forces of the time and geography; early waves of WWI African American and immigrant labor migrants entered a region where only a short 50 years before slavery was practiced on the West coast. For African American migrants from the South, the United States was still entrenched in ideologies and policies that supported the separation of the races. These Eugenicist ideologies formed and segregated the region that still define the borders of present day communities of color living in Oakland.

This is the racialized context that Indigenous people were forcibly moved in to in the 1950's when the U.S. government policy of 'relocation' was put into effect. This policy was largely based in the beliefs by the U.S government that the 'Indian problem' was encouraged by the trust and 'supervision' Indigenous people experienced by the federal government; integration into 'American' society was thought to be the answer.⁸⁸ Donald Fixico cites that "relocation took its place beside termination as the second goal of federal Indian policy in the 1950's."⁸⁹ Fixico also cites that the Oakland relocation office opened in 1954.⁹⁰ Fixico describes the experience of moving Indigenous people to the city as a highly controlled and monitored experience.⁹¹ Within this socio-political context the Quakers, through the American Friends Committee, started IFH as a paternalistic organization seeking to integrate and assimilate the newcomers.

⁸⁷ McClintock, "From Industrial Garden to Food Desert", 96.

⁸⁸ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 135.

⁸⁹ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 135.

⁹⁰ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 138.

⁹¹ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 136.

In 1958 Joan Adams and Wesley Huss published a brief on the relocation of the American Indian and the establishment of IFH, its function and activities. In that brief they state:

Intertribal Friendship House was begun on July 9, 1955, by the East Bay Indian Committee under the sponsorship of the American Friends Service Committee. Approximately two years later on October 11, 1957, Intertribal Friendship House became incorporated as a non-profit corporation under a Board of Directors, with provision for up to 25 board members, of which the East Bay Indian Committee provides 17 of the first Board. Staff appointment and general advisory functions are still provided by the American Friends Service Committee⁹².

At first glance the section of the brief quoted above could be read as evidence that there was a genuine attempt to establish an Indigenous organization, to be governed and lead by Indigenous people. This is implied by the fact that the majority of the board members are to be appointed by the East Bay Indian Committee. However, it becomes clear that this is a superficial engagement with leadership and power coming from Indigenous people. The document upholds that the American Friends Service Committee (a Quaker organization) maintains all rights to advise and hire staff. This exemplifies the paternalist attitude towards Indigenous people that was common throughout the U.S., and that was encountered in all government relations, as well as continued on by this Quaker organization.

An investigation of the newspaper articles in the "*Oakland Tribune*" that discuss Intertribal Friendship House in 1955 and 1956 reveal that there was a paternalistic mission at the heart of the establishment of the house, and towards the Indigenous people who came to it for support. On October 14, 1956 an article entitled '*Confab to*

⁹² Joan Adams and Wesley Huss, "Intertribal Friendship House" (a report, 1958), 1.

View Indian Affairs’ discusses the conference “California Indians, the Government and the Future”.⁹³ Although the description is not overtly paternalistic, it is clear that in 1956 American Friends Service Committee was the authorized voice on all affairs ‘Indian’. When placed together with another example of their approach to ‘all affairs Indian’ the paternalism emerges more clearly. An example of paternalism took place a few months earlier in May of 1956, the American Friends Service Committee, specifically, the founder of IFH, E.C. Sparver, spoke at Berkeley as an authority on Indian law and as an expert covering ‘legislation governing Indian Americans who are being relocated in a gradual program’.⁹⁴ The centering of this Quaker organization as experts on “all Indian” affairs within public descriptions of resettlement illustrates the ways in which the Quakers became a powerful force on “all affairs Indian”, and the designated authority on Indian life. It also speaks to the Quaker’s ability to create visibility for a community that was invisible between 1956 and 1957.

The only other articles published during this period that even mentioned the activities of IFH were articles about “Indian” arts and crafts. In June of 1956, the American Friends Service Committee invites people to come see ‘authentically costumed members of such Indian tribes as Navajo, Algonquin, Sioux, Jemez Pueblo, Kurok, Acoma Pueblo, Sheyenne, Pauite and Zuni Pueblo’.⁹⁵ This is clearly a fetishization of Indigenous people in order to help raise funds for IFH.

In July of 1956, IFH art is featured in the art calendar in Berkeley.⁹⁶ This is a simple insert that there will be art from IFH on display. On its own this highlight in the art

⁹³ “Confab to View Indian Affairs,” *Oakland Tribune*, October 14, 1956.

⁹⁴ “Republican BPWC of Berkeley to Hear Talk on Indian Laws,” *Oakland Tribune*, May 20, 1956.

⁹⁵ “Indian Food, Songs, Dances to Be featured at Open House”, *Oakland Tribune*, June 27, 1956.

⁹⁶ “The Art Calendar”, *Oakland Tribune*, July 29, 1956.

calendar is only a small reinforcement of the fetishization. However, a short six days later on August 5, 1956 an article covering the same art show, discusses a more racist and paternalistic side to this art show. In this article the IFH community is described as ignorant of their own cultural productions and in need of an expert in their ways. It was Betty Cummings, arts and crafts director, who has “some distance to go” in her efforts to remind “the Indians of Friendship House” of their cultural heritage. The article read,

A worthy project has been instigated under Betty Cummings, arts and crafts director who spent many years in the Southwest, to revive interest among the Indians here in their native traditions . . . The small display of tourist-type glazed pottery indicated that Betty Cummings, as she knows, has some distance to go to convince the Indians of Friendship House of the worth of their Indigenous pottery.⁹⁷

This description of the event clearly implies that Indian people need to be taught to be interested in their history. It captures how Betty felt a particular pressure to ‘teach’ this community. Not only is this write up very paternalistic, it also denied complexity or any voice from Indigenous people themselves.

These articles capture the spectacle that Indigenous people were to the general white population, and how this display was perpetuated and carried out by the American Friends Services Committee for fundraising purposes. These news articles show that at this point in Oakland’s history Indigenous people were ‘spectacles’ as well as people who needed to be cared for. This comes at a time in Oakland’s history when racial segregation is becoming entrenched. McClintock’s does not discuss Indigenous people, however it is probably safe to assume they also did not qualify for FHA loans,

⁹⁷ *Oakland Tribune*, August 5, 1956.

considering they had little equity, little understanding of urban life, and were not white. This reality also affected the way that IFH served the Indigenous population.

It becomes clear later in the Adams and Huss article that the way IFH was able to contact new arrivals and make new arrivals aware of the existence of IFH was via the Relocation Office in Oakland. Once there, employees alerted new arrivals of IFH's existence.⁹⁸ They shared the seven goals of IFH, which summarized are:

1. Provide a homelike atmosphere to relocated Indian people
2. Provide individual and family counseling
3. Demonstrate in a practical everyday fashion the Quaker Belief in the brotherhood of man
4. Help Indian people move out into the larger community
5. Provide a standard of behavior and feeling of security for newly arrived young people
6. Opportunity creation for Indian people for leadership and service
7. To encourage self-expression.

This list of activities predominantly focuses on integration and on assimilation. The assimilation was motivated by a desire to 'control' Indigenous peoples.

Adams and Huss, situate themselves as outsiders describing the 'participants of IFH'. The authors of the founding documents describe the way Indians are perceived and how diverse the tribes are⁹⁹ in language that is racist in nature, with statements on the primitive nature of Indian peoples. However, they also provided demographic information that was useful in getting a snapshot of the community in 1958 for this project. They describe that there were 2000 Indian men, women, and children that had settled in the East Bay since July 22, 1954. They also recorded the fact that people who came without their families, although hard to quantify, needed IFH even more than others. One other important piece of this early history was that the community served by

⁹⁸ *Oakland Tribune*, August 5, 1956.

⁹⁹ *Oakland Tribune*, August 5, 1956.

IFH also included the Indian community that was in the Bay Area before the Relocation Program started.¹⁰⁰ The document goes on to describe participation rates in different programs. The most important piece of information, however, is that in 1958 IFH had contact with over 400 Indian people, the majority of which were adults.¹⁰¹

This demographic information means that IFH was an incredibly salient and important part of relocatee's experience, with almost a quarter of all Indian relocatees having some contact with IFH. Interestingly, however, the house was largely geared toward new arrivals, rather than the stronger sense of community it would later embody. Huss and Adams describe that there was considerable turnover in users because the house was geared to new comers, and that there were Indian people who returned to their reservations.¹⁰² This particular piece of information drives home that originally IFH was a service organization created, supported, and run as a halfway house. In the minds of those who created it, IFH was a transitional house in which to learn about urban American peoples, within the context of the time, these pieces situate this as an 'unlearning' of being Indian.

There was little information on IFH between the 60's and the 80's. The documents in the 1980's reveal that during that time IFH was owned and operated by Indigenous people. A scan of the historical documents from the Oakland library, revealed that by the early 80's IFH became a vibrant well-funded community organization that provided a number of services to the Indigenous community. One of IFH's publications in 1980 expressed the following:

¹⁰⁰ *Oakland Tribune*, August 5, 1956.

¹⁰¹ *Oakland Tribune*, August 5, 1956.

¹⁰² *Oakland Tribune*, August 5, 1956.

For 25 years IFH has served the American Indian residents of Oakland and the East Bay. It is estimated there are currently 30,000 Native Americans in the East Bay. The philosophy of IFH is: To promote and maintain the well being of American Indian life in the modern and traditional way.¹⁰³

This publication signifies that with more Indigenous presence, goals switch greatly. In less than 30 years the Indigenous population in the Bay had increased by 28,000 growing by almost 30 times the original size documented. The documents mentioned above included calendar outline of the four programmatic areas of importance during this time for IFH: Economic Development, Social Services, Community History Project and the Trading Post. A message from then President of IFH Mary Trimble, urges people to participate in these programs designed to help Indians adapt without sacrificing our (the Trimble uses our) culture or values.¹⁰⁴ This focus on retaining culture while also learning to adapt is unlike the earlier years. It supports and maintains 'difference' while promoting the ability to succeed in the urban world. This switch signifies a difference in leadership. It is clearly no longer a Quaker organization for Indians, but an Indian organization for Indians.

As the numbers grew to 40,000, social services are incorporated into the offerings at IFH and as early as the 1980's access to nutritious foods was an important issue for the Indigenous community of the Bay Area. In a regularly published fact sheet Trimble highlights that IFH's nutrition program includes education advocacy, self-help projects (gardens) and crisis relief.¹⁰⁵ This early document points to an already food insecure community by the 1980's. The fact sheet goes on to discuss demographic/census issues, highlighting the impoverishment that this community faced

¹⁰³ Intertribal Friendship House, "Community Calendar", 1984.

¹⁰⁴ Intertribal Friendship House, "Community Calendar", 1984.

¹⁰⁵ Intertribal Friendship House, "Fact Sheet," 1980.

in the 1980s. The fact sheet points to the high percentage (75%) of the 200,000 American Indians living in California who live in Urban areas¹⁰⁶ this change in population is occurring during the same time that the Federal Relocation program is relocating Indigenous people to urban areas in the 1950's. The fact sheet goes on to highlight the enormous poverty indicators that the Indigenous community faces such as the lowest per capita income, highest unemployment rate, poorest housing, 300% higher family poverty rates than the national average, and the shortest lives.¹⁰⁷ This snapshot of the Oakland Indigenous community in the 1980's shows an image of immense struggle. The services that IFH was able to offer at this time were invaluable to the community. The fact sheet states during this time in the mid-late 80's that IFH 'served 7,000 unduplicated clients through the social services department'.¹⁰⁸ This points to the enormous need, but also to the enormous involvement in this organization by the larger Indigenous community in the Bay Area. According to the earlier statistic for this year that there were 40,000 Indigenous people or close to 18% of all Indigenous people were being served by IFH at this time, the number of Indigenous people is much larger than it was in the 1950's. The fact sheet, in reality is a tool to ask for help, it draws attention to these specific realities in order to ask for help in serving the community, through money, clothing, food or time.

Two newsletters from 1981, one from May and the other from August, provide some insight into the functioning of IFH. The May newsletter stresses two traditional programs: traditional dinner and traditional dance. It is unclear if the traditional dinner is

¹⁰⁶ Intertribal Friendship House, "Fact Sheet," 1980.

¹⁰⁷ Intertribal Friendship House, "Fact Sheet," 1980.

¹⁰⁸ Intertribal Friendship House, "Fact Sheet," 1980.

different or the same as the community dinners. These two activities signify the desire to stay in touch with Indigenous culture while also showing the transition to a community center rather than a 'halfway' house as IFH was previously conceived. In addition to the cultural events there are also programs to assist the Indigenous community such as social and educational services, sports and recreation.¹⁰⁹ These programs provide both a sense of community as well as the services that this community needs. In the newsletter, although IFH provided a number of activities, it also expresses a need for support in terms of both fundraising and volunteers.

However, the August newsletter begins with a more somber reality. The August newsletter points to the drastic loss of income for the organization and the expected continuance of this loss under the Reagan Administration. It points out an incredible amount of loss:

Budget Totals:

1979- \$528, 416.00

1980- \$471, 813.00

1981- \$185, 010.00¹¹⁰

This is an incredible deficit for any organization to deal with in just 2 short years, in the newsletter they state that, "Due to loss of federal contracts IFH has seen a 52% cut back in funding since 1979".¹¹¹ This loss may have never been fully recovered. I could not find data on the years between 1981 and the present, but the annual budget of IFH is listed at around \$320,000¹¹² in fiscal year 2013. In many ways this is an even more drastic fiscal loss. Accounting for inflation, the \$185,010.00 budget of 1981 would be

¹⁰⁹ Intertribal Friendship House, "Newsletter" (Newsletter), Vol. 1 No 2, May 1981.

¹¹⁰ Intertribal Friendship House, "Newsletter" (Newsletter), Vol 1 No 4, August 1981.

¹¹¹ Intertribal Friendship House, "Newsletter", August 1981.

¹¹² Carol Wahpepah (director) in email discussion, January 2014.

around \$484, 201.09 today.¹¹³ The newsletter presented this low budget as a means of raising an additional \$60,000 to carry out its bare minimum programs. This drastic fiscal loss shows the divestment this community experienced, and continues to experience, not only because Oakland is a poorly invested in city, but also because the marginalized within this community cannot receive the help they need from the U.S government or private funders. This is especially infuriating considering that many of the Indigenous Americans present in Oakland, were either forced to move there, tricked by the U.S. government to move there under the false promise of work and assistance and then abandoned, or moved there because of the eradication of opportunities and resources on their own reservations.

This stark reality highlights the resilient, innovative, creative, and committed nature of this community. Today, even with a dismally low budget, this community is able to offer many programs (thanks in large part to committed volunteers). A quick scan of the IFH calendar today shows that, although the community dinners are not as frequent as they once were, traditionally minded programming is still very much a part of the culture. Youth programming is vibrant and newer programming reflective of the times such as “Father” and “Two Spirit” programs, as well as having the garden part of the culture and programming. However, there is much that is also missing from this calendar:

¹¹³ “CPI Inflation Calculator.” United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed January 25, 2014, http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

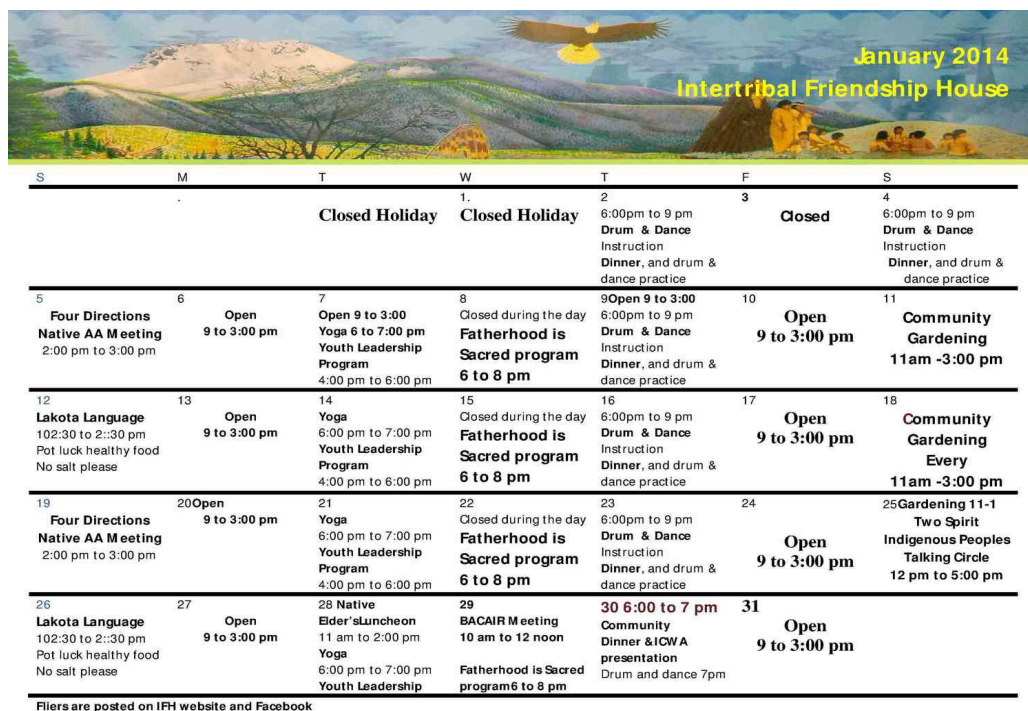


Figure 3: IFH Calendar

In a short email conversation with Carol Wahpepah, the current Executive Director of IFH, I found that the food-related programming alone is quite robust. The House is able to offer cooking classes, gardening activities, community dinners, elder's program and food giveaway, food pantry, canning classes, as well as a traditional cookbook. This large and robust programming signifies the level of volunteer involvement that IFH now has, as well as the food insecurity the community feels.

It is hard to believe that this center, operating at almost half of its budget in 1981 (a crisis year) is able to pull off one to two programs at least 5 days a week. This is an amazing feat that speaks to the strong sense of commitment and involvement of its members. This is a far cry from the 1958 publication that had large amounts of turnover in membership. Carol Wahpepah also mentioned that IFH offers women's and men's health conferences, Thursday night drum and dance classes, ceremonies, cultural events, Youth leadership programs, and the Fatherhood is Sacred program. This deep

sense of commitment and involvement the community feels speaks to the quote that began this chapter. “I stay here because of my father-in-law”, signifying the strong relational draw that IFH has. The participant, who said that, revealed that her father-in-law passed away, and she stays because of the strong and close-knit community.

In speaking with Carol Wahpepah, we discussed the current food programs but also the dreams for the future. If resources were not a problem, the programming would be even more robust. She said, “with more money [we would get a] roof top garden, larger gardening shed, provide healthier food for the community; buffalo, more fruits and vegetables, have funding to increase the garden coordinators hours, more cooking workshops, media messaging, health messaging billboards in Oakland with our community on them. Take community members to visit other Native communities that are doing community gardens, food programs, and addressing diabetes in their community”.¹¹⁴ These dreams signify a larger sense of connection to the Indigenous community outside of the urban environment, a significant lack of resources, and desires to learn more about the relationship a community can have to food.

Conclusion

Oakland is a city that in many ways embodies the relationship of the United States to both Indigenous people and to people of color. The history of this city outlines both the results of race-based segregation, as well as the reality of a paternalistic history, and the real results of de-investments in communities. The resilience and strength of the Indigenous community exemplified by the community’s process of regaining control over what they eat is both inspiring and instructional. Oakland in many

¹¹⁴ Carol Wahpepah (director) in email discussion, January 2014.

ways could be considered the last stop on the colonial highway- the city embodies racist policies (against other people of color) while hosting Indigenous bodies moved because of racist policies against Indigenous people. It has few resources outside of the people that live there. Those people, however, offer inspiration in their community's ingenuity and resilience. I chose to study Oakland, because of this interesting and complex reality. Oakland not only offers solutions for Indigenous communities, but poor communities, and urban communities as well. Their ability to re-assert community control over food, their ability to dream, is what makes them worth studying, and incredible instructive and interesting.

CHAPTER 5

“IF THERE WAS NO FOODS AND NO GARDEN, THERE WOULDN’T BE AN IFH”:

FINDINGS

Jeff, Navajo

In the U.S., a common narrative about Indigenous people that is often utilized against other marginalized communities as well is that they do not care about their health and subsequently make poor eating decisions. This logic is explored in the anthology, *Cultivating Food Justice* (2011) by Alison Alkon and Julian Agyeman. In this anthology, Guthman (2011) explores the function of universalism and colorblind logics that inform the assumptions of white communities on ‘why’ people of color do not frequent places such as farmers markets in the same numbers as white communities. Guthman argues that vendors at the farmers market often feel that they appeal to ‘everyone’. Guthman’s ethnographic study on farmers markets asked vendors why they felt buyers tend to be white. She found that many white vendors relied on evaluative statements about whites having higher education levels and exhibiting greater interest in health as factors that lead to primarily white patronage of farmers markets. Guthman’s study demonstrates that vendors operate from the perception that low education levels, lead to a divestment in personal health. The lack of participation by communities of color in farmer markets, for the vendors was perceived of as a personal choice resultant from divestment in health, participation and education about food.¹¹⁵ Such ideologies and discourses around race, health, and food for Indigenous and marginalized communities oversimplifies the problem and denies the systems of

¹¹⁵ Guthman, “If They Only Knew”, 270.

oppression at work, still very much a part of the day to day realities of racism born out of colonialism. This photovoice project allows us an insight into how Indigenous people adapt to the realities of racism, the history of colonialism, while honoring their traditions and culture.

Coffee and a Sweet Roll

Engaging marginalized communities by listening to the needs and solutions most desired within these communities allows for an envisioning of real solutions, and permits discussions that move us beyond oversimplification or stereotype. Take this photo:



Figure 4

This photo upon first glance could be treated as evidence of the “problems” with the food consumption of Indigenous peoples. The McDonalds coffee and a sweet pastry could easily be transformed into a warning poster of what not to do. At first glance a confirmation of the dilemma nutritionists have identified with the diet of the

marginalized, a diet that includes too much sugar and too much consumption of fast food. This image illuminates the unhealthy choices of a community. It would be easy to use this image to fuel a narrative of what is wrong with the food choices of Indigenous people, and to place blame upon this community. However, what if instead this photo told a very different story? An alternative reading of this image would tell a story of nourishment, access, relationships, and safety.

The hand in the photo belongs to the 82 year old Aunt of Ana, a participant who shared this picture during a focus group in Oakland at IFH. Ana shared at that meeting how this picture was taken after enduring a long day of arranging for the secure and affordable parking of her car, which required both negotiating informal arrangements at IFH and dedicating precious time to traveling on public transportation before Ana, exhausted by the entire ordeal, could even begin the long journey between San Francisco and her family's home on the Stockbridge-Munsee-Mohican Reservation:

I had to bring my car to IFH and leave it in the parking lot, and Carol was nice enough to let me do that because I don't have secure parking. And then like taking the BART and a bus home, and then the BART to the San Francisco Airport and then getting a red eye-- it was just like really exhausting and like such a long journey. It felt so good to get to that airport and um my aunt that I'm really close to, she's 82. So that's her there in the car and so she picked me up and she had brought me um a sweet roll that another aunt had packed for me that she had driven you know. So I just thought it was so sweet that my aunty like making it the day before or something, and my other one[auntie]packing it and like driving it about an hour to the airport and so it was already ready for me all packaged in the car. Then a senior priced coffee from McDonalds. You know that she like got her discount or whatever and got it for me. So um, I know it's not like healthy or something but um it was you know just a meaningful moment and I really felt like I could totally relax at that moment.

Ana, Stockbridge Munsee-Mohican Nation

This strikingly beautiful story illuminates the healing nature that food and connection have on people's lives. This story illuminates the deeper notions of nourishment that are an integral part of both the group discussion about the photos as well as the focus group.

This story however is not an isolated event. Throughout the focus group comments and references to nourishment were abundant and used by almost all of the participants. This word was used often by participants in a way that implied both healing and sustaining (of health) as an integral part of its definition. For the participants, nourishment is holistic in nature; encompassing the spirit, body, and earth.

Nourishment was described as added to food via good thoughts. One participant, Sadie, described the importance of 'her mood' while cooking. She said 'my mother used to always say, when you're cooking always think good thoughts, don't be evil, good thoughts will give you nourishment and always think happy thoughts when you're cooking, so I always try to do that'. This simple lesson demonstrates the belief that food has power, and that how we prepare that food also has power by being able to contribute to, or extract nourishment from, the thoughts or will of the food preparer. It also illuminates the responsibility of the chef to create meaningful, positive, and powerful nourishment for others who will be consuming the food. Sadie's example of good thoughts added new dimensions to the appreciation Ana felt when she received the McDonalds coffee and sweet roll. It informs the sense of relaxation and deeper nourishment that Ana expressed feeling upon receiving the sweet role. The sweet role was made with the intention of making Ana feel welcomed, a gift from a beloved family member, intended to help create that very sense of relaxation that she felt.

Conventionally trained nutritionists and scholars would argue that the nourishment value of the meal Ana received was low regardless of the intention, yet for Indigenous and marginalized populations the power of the intention can nourish the body, heart, and mind in profound ways.

Similarly, nourishment for other participants extended beyond human relations and psychological well-being. One participant, Linda described the power of thunderclouds and shared these images:



Figure 5

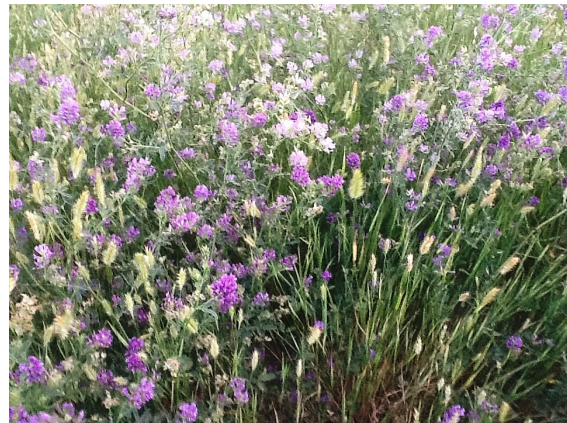


Figure 6

Regarding these two images (figures 5 & 6)

Linda added as she points to the images, this

is of the thunder clouds. Thunder beings from the west, bring the rain and nourish the land-- which is wild flowers [points to figure 6], plants, and its so amazing. You go there and you see the incredible thunderstorms, and its really beautiful but the thunder-beings are considered sacred because they bring the water.

Linda, Sioux

Linda went on to talk about elders, and the extensive change her people experienced in their traditional lifestyles, and why current generations go on (after so much disruption) to sustain their families, and to honor the elders.

This image implies that health is holistic; it is contained within the health of all beings, whether those beings are human or cloud. This seamless connection that Linda makes between the nourishment of the land and nourishment of our communities and bodies is one that can be seen throughout the focus group's discussion of the photos. For example, Ana's story and her feelings of relaxation and comfort connected not only to the sweet bun, but also to being near her homelands. It is the location and the closeness to the land that enabled her to experience a respite and to find comfort.

Its Just Food, or Is It?

All members of IFH do not universally share these two stories of comfort and connection to food. The overwhelming sense of disconnection many Indigenous people feel is at the heart of the following story by Raelene. Raelene is a participant that has lived most of her life in urban Oakland. This urban location is exhausting and forces those who live there to become increasingly disconnected from the land. Raelene described her relationship to food as ruptured because she does not know how to cook. However, she also described a more complex relationship with food. Throughout the focus group and photo discussion Raelene shared stories about what she was learning about food. Her comments revealed what her primary relationship to food has been over the course of her life.

I'm starting to understand the importance of cooking you know? So before it was kinda like just feed us, and whatever, and keep going. But now I'm just kinda just learning about how its important and the nourishment of it, especially like today with all the pictures.

Raelene, Shoshone and Navajo

This story captures the influence of IFH's attention to nourishment and expresses a sense of nourishment that many other participants spoke of as an intrinsic part

of food, and as Raelene shared, a learned nourishment. Raelene's statement highlights that which is not nourishing, the idea that food is food, and the rush to make, consume and move on. She highlights how that is way in which she previously understood food, as something you eat and move on, she juxtaposes this reality with what she acknowledges is a learning process about nourishment, implying that food is much more than consumption. Raelene spoke about the process of learning the value of food, and the relationships that she has with others at IFH that have helped her learn this approach to food and nourishment. This is an important example of how the nourishing power of food largely comes from the relationships it fosters. For Ana, the sweet bun was nourishing because of her relationship to home and her aunt; for Sadie, food was nourishing when the producer had good thoughts and psychically fed the community receiving. For Linda thunderclouds were nourishing because of what they helped to grow and flourish, and for Raelene learning about these relationships and learning to cook, seeing the images produced by her fellow IFH members, this is where she continued to learn about the nourishment provided by food and community.

Disconnection

Ultimately, as much as the story of food is about nourishment, it is also about loss and disconnection for Indigenous populations in the U.S. and worldwide. Almost all the participants addressed some level of loss in relationship to food. Ana's story describes nourishment via her loving family but simultaneously describes the exhaustion of urban living and the story of loss, disconnection, distance, and scarcity.

Another participant, Charlotte, shared these photos:



Figure 7



Figure 8

I just have [in the picture] Pinto [beans] and then some Anasazi beans. I haven't cooked those [Anasazi] yet. I'm like, I hardly see them so I didn't want to open the bag yet. And everybody always gets, I always see Bluebird Flour and this is [notions towards picture] a picture of my huge bag of Navajo Pride flour and uh I'll be saving the bag when that's all gone.

Charolotte, Hopi, Tewa, and Navajo

This story illustrates a sense of longing, and loss that manifests itself in the conservation of foods. Traditional food items that are absent from Charlotte's life, and now that she has them, she doesn't want to lose them again. These food items are largely not sold in Oakland, so one only encounters them when returning home. Charlotte spoke of not opening her bag of Anasazi beans, and saving her empty bag of flour, signifying that these foods mean more than just the physical sustenance they provide. For Charlotte they have deeper meaning, and in particular, drawing from the statements she made in the focus group, it is clear that these foods signify a connection to 'home', to her reservation, her land. For Charlotte having and holding these foods in

some ways brings her closer to 'home'. In this way food becomes the physical symbol of disconnection and distance from 'home'.

“You’re a Bad Indian Girl”



Figure 9

For the participants in this study food not only represented physical distance from home, but also generational difference, loss of tradition, and the difficulties of passing a love of traditional foods to the next generation. Abigail shared a picture of her daughter and the meaningful story behind it conveyed the difficulty of transmitting her cultural values to her daughter:

I grew up on the Klamath River up north and in the summer time we would fish. Like right now is the fishing season and [my daughter] she just doesn't even like salmon, and she's like, 'ew, yuck!' I said 'you're a bad Indian girl' 'why?' and I go because you're supposed to like smoked salmon. I said that's what we've been living off for generations, our

people have, she was like, 'I'd rather have a hamburger and hot chips,' and I'm like, it makes me sad.

Abigail, Yurok and Seminole

This story represents a deep loss experienced and manifested through different palates for mother and daughter. In this moving story Abigail shared a story that illustrated the difference between generations of Indigenous people, exemplifying that land/location is important to the development of a meaningful relationship and connection to ancestral and traditional foods. Abigail came to me after the focus group to also share a story about the preparation of salmon in their smoke houses with generations of women involved in different parts of the process. Salmon is a crucial part of what it means to be a member of Abigail's tribe, and even what it means to be a woman in her tribe. The fact that her daughter has no connection to salmon is an emotionally traumatic loss. It also reveals the difficulty of a person, to instill these appreciations when residing outside of their community. This is particularly poignant because Abigail makes it clear later in the focus group, that she lives in Oakland precisely because of the intertribal community, and because of the people and the love and caring she and her family receive from this community. However, because this community is not on her ancestral homelands, and there are not rivers with salmon, this choice comes with a loss, and at a great expense. This highlights the difficult decisions contemporary Indigenous people are forced to make with their lives and their families.

I Wish That I Could Make My Ketchup Organic

Jeff, another participant experiences a forced palate change in part because of this very same decision, and in part because of the way contemporary life is lived in America. Jeff struggles with the quality of the food he has access to and speaks of not

having the ability or option to feed his children foods that he believes would be nourishing. Jeff wishes he had better access to high quality foods and more time to nourish himself and his family in a way that is more meaningful.

During the photo discussion Jeff stated that he was trying to lessen the damage of chemicals in the food supply his children have access to at the moment by sharing this story and these pictures and this story:



Figure 10



Figure 11

I wish that I could make my Ketchup organic, butter organic, bbq sauce organic, just all the stuff that I buy at the store, something just simple and fast to grab and it lasts longer. Making it from scratch and making it healthy for you, take the time out to actually make this stuff or learn how to make it ... And then I was looking at my BBQ pit and I was thinking I'm using way too much chemicals cooking my food. I think we're going to chuck that, and try to think of a better way, maybe a clay oven, yeah using mesquite, other resources other than this.

Jeff, Navajo

Jeff points out several issues affecting his ability to make nourishing foods: time, knowledge and resources. He points out that it is quick to buy processed foods, rather than making them yourself, he also points out you would have to learn how to do that in the first place, which also takes time. This speaks on many levels to the neoliberal

demands on Indigenous populations that force disconnection from the foods one eats, neither having the time nor knowledge to make something from scratch and in addition it requires more financial resources as well. Jeff wants to change this, but seems unsure as to whether that is really plausible. He also addresses the way in which he cooks, the chemical laden options available to him and the limitations of other options. Jeff stressed how much he would like to switch to a clay oven, also something that is going to take time, knowledge, and most likely financial resources. In many ways Jeff is addressing the reality that there are limited options if one would like to live traditionally. That the idea of choice is on many levels a false one. Jeff's contribution demonstrates that it takes serious concerted effort to change the way we all interact with food, especially in an urban area, and if you don't have the time, knowledge, or resources, then you don't really have an option. Jeff hopes to someday make it an option for his family, but as he points out, it is still a hope, not a reality yet.

This Indian Ain't Going There

This community addressed in several different conversations the conflict or the difficulty of integrating a meaningful interaction with food into a world that disconnects vulnerable populations from food. This could be easily boiled down to a conflict between the traditional and modern, but the reality is that this IFH community values food in similar ways that their ancestors did, but is unable to engage with food in the same way. So how are they adapting? How are they integrating the traditional into the modern? How can we understand this integration without being trapped in binary realities? Linda brings us another powerful story that beautifully illustrates this integration, this simultaneous existence.

Take this image:



Figure 12

This image shows a box, and three women sitting and sorting at a kitchen table. Linda explains this image with great attention to the box on the table;

It shows us all here, we had a whole diaper box of choke cherries so we had to clean them and then you freeze them, then my mom was saying we should get out a grinding stone, do it the traditional way and make patties. And my sister said, 'this Indian ain't going there, put em in the freezer, too much work.'

This passage shows both a generational difference over how to perform the art of making these choke cherries into food, but it also illustrates a modern connection to choke cherries. The important aspects of this interaction are still intact. The relationships in this process are still being honored, several generations are present, These choke cherries were picked from the land by hand and were not gathered by some mechanized contraption, and in these actions the importance of the choke cherries is still being honored. However the preparation is changing, they are being

placed in the freezer rather than taking hours to grind. Although the process changes when those hours of grinding are lost, much is maintained in the process of gathering around a table and communally cleaning them before freezing them. This is the way in which cultures and peoples are able to maintain relationships even through changing realities. And unlike Jeff's previous struggles, the women in Linda's family do not consider this process unhealthy, but value the ability to freeze the cherries because it will save their time and so they are able to do other things with their time.

Throughout the focus group and photo discussion there was an acknowledgement of change and difference, and even a level of trying to accept and deal with these realities. At the same time however, there was a deep integration of what a communal process something like food and eating have in a community. All of stories shared by participants were not only about food but also about relationships with other people, family and community. At times the conversation left the topic of food behind altogether to just talk about relationships and community, showing what a powerful motivator the relationships are in this community.

One participant shared during the focus group that food enabled and strengthened her relationships with other community members. Linda pointed out that the cooking classes bring people together and Megan agreed, sharing that the cooking classes enabled her to get to know people in different ways:

Yeah it's a nice way to get to know each other and tell stories and you know learn each others names, because at events there's a lot of people here and its kinda hard to get to know everybody but you know she's right like through the classes.

Megan, Chumash, Ohlone, and Zapotec

In this way food enables the building of relationships. It strengthens the community while simultaneously allowing people to excel and shine in their different roles. Earlier Megan expressed that she did not like meeting people while milling around; she would rather meet them in smaller circles. Her skills as a teacher and cook, allow her to build relationships in the community she would not otherwise be able to cultivate.

In a similar way Raelene discusses the power of building relationships, and her desire for safety and compassion through food. Raelene shared that every time there is a community dinner she makes sure to share food with two men that are homeless and hang out, outside IFH.

Because every time we make food here, I always mean, I always mean to go you know, to go give them food, but I kinda forget, I get caught up here, but my friend Judy who used to cook in the kitchen used to always go give them food, like all the time.

Raelene, Shoshone and Navajo

It was subsequently revealed that the reason the two men Raelene spoke of were not allowed in the house is because IFH is a dry location that prohibits potential community members who are consuming alcohol from entering. However, it is clear that Raelene is proud and happy to be able to provide what she can for the two men outside of IFH, and to be able to share with them. This exemplifies the power of food, but also the social reality that no matter what community members engage in one does not deserve to be denied food. This cultural and social practice is one that is different than mainstream culture in the United States. In the United States, food has in no way been solidified as a human right, this can be seen through the recent legislation, such as the Farm Bill which cut funding to the SNAP program, 'which includes food stamps, will see a

projected \$8 billion in cuts through 10 years'¹¹⁶. This exemplifies the way in which food is not considered a human right in American society. The way that food operates for Raelene in this quote helps to exemplify that food and relationships, social health, and community are all intertwined for Indigenous people. Speaking about them separately or trying to break them into unique subject areas, denies the complexity and the reality of food for Indigenous people in the United States.

I Know We Are Far From Home... But We Have This Family

Lastly, I will share the story that ended the focus group's meeting to illustrate this point more clearly. Abigail, shared a beautiful story about her father:

I wanted to say that, I've been coming here on and off since I moved here about 8 years ago from back home on the Rez, Klamath in the North. And, I stay here because of my father-in-law, and coming here was important for him because he raised his boys in this place. He was a single father of three and he had a lot of help, and throughout the years from different people here helping him with his boys and different things, so it was important. And so he wanted me to bring the kids here, so I do. And, when he passed in February we came and people honored him and people still are very wonderful to us even though he is gone. They make us feel really welcome and very loved and we appreciate that. Maybe it's based around food maybe it's based around actually caring, but it's important to my kids. Its very important to my daughter, she likes coming here because this place makes her feel closer to her grandpa (I didn't mean to cry). So all the caring and the attention that she gets from everybody that helps fill the void cuz she spent a lot of time with her grandpa. He came every day before school and picked her up. And, he was actually picking her up on the day that he passed away, turned to walk out the door, and he was holding her hand, and they were going to go to school, and he had a heart attack in my house. But you know, we stay here now, and I know we are far from home, and we don't have any other family here, but we have this family, we consider these guys family.

¹¹⁶ Paige Worley, "Farm Bill cuts billions, food stamp access for college students," *The Daily Collegian*, accessed February 14, 2014 http://www.ocolly.com/news/article_e3ee3b9c-944a-11e3-9e7c-0017a43b2370.html

You all are family here, so, yep. So I appreciate this place and I appreciate everyone.

Abigail, Yurok and Seminole

This story exemplifies that it is the strength, resilience, and compassion of communities that builds their power. Food **can** be an intricate part of this, however it is not the whole story. Food can nurture these relationships that create the strength of communities, which in turns nurtures the holistic health of the individuals that comprise that community. Abigail shares this story about her father, and about the love she feels from the community, explaining why she chooses to stay, at the same time she expresses that it **might** be based in food, or maybe its just based on people caring. This is an important passage to end with because it exemplifies the importance of relationships for communities, and it also exemplifies the way that food is partially invisible to the creation of meaningful bonds. The entire focus group, and photo discussion focused on food, and simultaneously addressed relationships in almost all the conversations. Yet, when analyzing the strength of a community and its relationships on their own the saliency of food disappears.

It is for this reason I argue that food has been absent from discussions of colonization, racism, healing, and sovereignty. It has only been integral to discussion about health and wellness. This separation of food, from all other aspects of life, is an example of Western philosophy seeping into Indigenous lives, and also points to a cultural reality in the U.S. of only looking at what is directly in front of us. To remove food, as integral to life, is to create boundaries and tensions that have historically been absent from Indigenous conceptions of life. Meeting with the participants of this study however proves that although this distinction exists philosophically Indigenous people in

Oakland have maintained a meaningful and holistic relationship to food and its meaning. These participants in Oakland illuminated that food is one of the bonds that holds a community together, and as Abigail pointed out, even when you do not know if it was food, or just the relationships presence that created this bond and strength.

When I started this project I wanted to look at how food was a glue for the IFH community that bonded the community together. Then, the further I became entrenched in the research and the stories of the participants, the more I began to realize glue, was too encompassing, too pervasive, it was everywhere all at once, and most importantly glues are breakable. I came to the conclusion that in this community food was more like sinew sewing a community together, food has multiple points of contact and the bonds it creates are unbreakable. Threading through many aspects of life, I found food to affect relationships, learning, tradition, going home, interdependence, and notions of reciprocity. In order to honor the participants and the findings exemplified through their stories and words, I endeavored to use several stories to illuminate many of the themes that ran throughout the data collected.

Addressing wellness in Indigenous communities means much more than healing the consumption relationship. It means healing how we 'get' food, how we 'interact' with food, and finally how and what we 'consume'. Simplifying health to interactions with consumption is ultimately disenfranchising and not helpful for addressing health and wellness for Indigenous communities. Addressing wellness also means that healing, encompasses relational healing, healing a the relationship between community members, between elders and youth, between teachers and learners, many

relationships must be healed in order to create health and wellness for Indigenous communities.

What I learned via this project is that the story communicated by a photo differs from viewer to viewer. People's perceptions, experiences, and expectations can deeply affect the story an image conveys. This can result in an oversimplification or an injustice done to the story of an image, but I simultaneously discovered that when people speak about their own images, greater depth and beauty is made visible. I also discovered the immense bonds and beauty present in a community that is often spoken about only to discuss the 'faults' and 'negatives' that exist for this community. I discovered a community that is working together to carve out a future that is meaningful for them and their children.

The implications for healing and health I see coming from this project, are that multi-pronged approaches to the food crisis must be enacted. There is no meaningful change to consumption patterns for Indigenous people, until meaningful relationships with what is being or not being consumed are created. This means addressing disconnection from food, by creating connection to place and how food is created, produced, grown, foraged, hunted or bought. It means rebuilding relationships to food by fostering connection to food in community gatherings- much the way IFH does with community dinners. It also means a commitment to teaching about food, to sharing stories, wisdom, and experience with food and while creating it. Shaming food, or shaming people into eating better food, I cannot see being a productive or useful way to create change for this community.

For this community the important themes surrounding food were relationships, learning, tradition, going home, interdependence, and notions of reciprocity. All of these themes support integrating changes to people's relationships to each other and to food, in order to heal from the ills of bad consumption. These themes are truly about community, food can be used as a bond when it is properly integrated and honored. I hope that the findings in this thesis can help to shape efforts at prevention and intervention around food.

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