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Promoting or Protecting Traditional Knowledges? Tensions in the Resurgence of Indigenous Food Practices on Vancouver Island

Megan K. Muller
Carleton University, meganmuller3@cmail.carleton.ca

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Promoting or Protecting Traditional Knowledges? Tensions in the Resurgence of Indigenous Food Practices on Vancouver Island

Abstract
Indigenous knowledges are increasingly promoted within scholarship and policy making as a necessary component of the well-being and self-determination among Indigenous Peoples. This article contributes to this discussion by raising practical and ethical questions surrounding the resurgence of traditional food practices in Western Canada. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted with cultural activists and Elders in central Vancouver Island, this article reveals how this resurgence is framed by competing and contradictory pressures to build wider inclusion and awareness while simultaneously protecting knowledge and resources from exploitation. Due to this complication, it is imperative that scholars and policy makers develop and apply a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous knowledges in contemporary contexts that can better respond to the needs of Indigenous communities.

Keywords
Indigenous knowledge, food sovereignty, resurgence, ethnography

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Promoting or Protecting Traditional Knowledges?
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> Now we have a young generation who want these things. And want the traditional foods, and want to try these, and developing connections and starting to see the natural resources in the land as something more than just greenery. Or as something more than just deemed to be developed or built on. That their health and their wellbeing are mediated by the wellness of the land around them and how they interconnect with it. (Elder Ipswa, personal communication, March 2013)

To counteract the colonial suppression of traditional knowledges and the increasing scarcity of traditional food resources, Indigenous Elders and activists across Vancouver Island are developing new spaces for sharing traditional food knowledges and asserting the importance of Indigenous food systems. These spaces include grassroots organizations, workshops, gatherings, and protests. Though these emerging spaces for traditional knowledge transfer can be understood as responses to the changing role of traditional food knowledges within daily life, they also serve several objectives by promoting public recognition of traditional knowledges and practices. Often, these spaces are facilitated through partnerships with public organizations within the education and health sectors. While resurgent practices that bring new life to Indigenous food knowledges are often grassroots in nature, the ubiquity of this trend can be examined as a social movement that is linked to the global Indigenous food sovereignty movement (IFSM).

The IFSM has emerged in recent decades to address the social injustices linked to colonization that have led to food insecurity and the overrepresentation of diet-related diseases within Indigenous communities (Morrison, 2015; Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013). Within the IFSM, activists assert that traditional foods are intrinsically tied to cultural integrity, productive communities, and wellbeing (Krohn et al., 2015; Morrison, 2006). Moreover, the IFSM's goal of reinstating local control over food systems resonates with the call that has been made by many Indigenous groups in Canada for political sovereignty and rights to land, hunting, and fishing (Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013).

Seeking to re-localize food systems, the concept of food sovereignty arose during the 1990s as means to contest the negative impacts of neoliberal trade regimes, resource extraction, and industrial agriculture on health, the environment, and sustainable food systems (Kamal, Linklater, Thompson, Dipple, & Ithinto Mechisowin Committee, 2015). However, among Indigenous Peoples, the reality of living within food sovereignty is remembered and retold through intergenerational knowledge about fishing, hunting, and gathering practices (Morrison, 2015). Within many Indigenous contexts, food sovereignty is tied to the land and culture and is dependent on community-based control over food systems through

the application of traditional knowledges (Kamal et al., 2015). The IFSM incorporates many goals, values, and approaches that stem from the diversity of Indigenous cultures and lived experiences.[1]

Through both the harvesting and the preparation of wild foods, as well as the underlying social protocol associated with these practices, traditional food practices have been recognized as a remedy to many health, social, and environmental concerns within Indigenous communities today (Davis & Twidale, 2011; Kamal et al., 2015). One of the primary reasons for the rising interest in traditional food practices within Indigenous communities, research, and policy has stemmed from concern over the prevalence of diet-related disease among Aboriginal populations. For instance, several studies have indicated that the shift from traditional foods to processed foods containing refined carbohydrates is associated with a rise in metabolic syndromes, including diabetes, obesity, and heart disease (Waldram, Herring, & Young, 2006). The revival of traditional food practices has often been cited as a solution for food insecurity in Indigenous communities (Elliot, Jayatilaka, Brown, Varley, & Corbett, 2012) and has also been linked to self-determination, cultural reclamation (Kamal et al., 2015), and rebuilding family and community connections (Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013).

At the same time, however, many of the species integral to Indigenous cultures and livelihoods on the Northwest Coast of British Columbia are becoming increasingly threatened by climate change, environmental contamination, and resource extraction (Turner, 2005). Given the potential for the misappropriation of traditional knowledges, the benefit of gaining public recognition must be carefully weighed in terms of not only the sustainability of Indigenous knowledges, but also the sustainability of wild foods and associated ecosystems. Based on 3 months of ethnographic research conducted in Nanaimo, British Columbia, this article addresses the ethical implications that arise as traditional knowledges are asserted and adapted to changing socio-political circumstances. In this context, I argue that competing and contradictory pressures frame the resurgence of traditional food practices between building wider inclusion and awareness while simultaneously protecting knowledge and resources from exploitation. As such, the ethics surrounding the appropriateness and methods of inclusion pertaining when, how, and with whom traditional knowledges are shared reveals a tension inherent in the broader Indigenous food sovereignty movement.

This article extends the work of anthropologists who have taken a critical stance towards the recognition of traditional knowledges within academia and policy, highlighting the potentially detrimental impacts to Indigenous communities (Coulthard, 2014; Cruikshank, 2005; Matsui, 2015; Nadasdy, 2003; Povinelli, 2002; Simpson, 2014). Specifically, it explores the nuances of this dilemma—of weighing the benefits and risks of sharing Indigenous knowledge—by exploring how it has been negotiated within the grassroots traditional foods movement in coastal British Columbia. Certainly, it is difficult to refute that cultural vitality is instrumental to the wellbeing of all people, and that nurturing cultural traditions is especially key to rebuilding communities that have suffered the impacts of colonization and cultural or

[1] Within the Province of British Columbia, there are two notable IFSM organizations. The Working Group for Indigenous Food Sovereignty, a province-wide organization founded to collaborate with Indigenous communities to support increasing food security and sovereignty (Morrison, 2015). The Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Food Network (VICCIFN) was established through support from the community dietician program offered by Island Health, the regional health authority serving Vancouver Island. The aims of VICCIFN are to support Indigenous food systems, honor cultural knowledge, and create opportunities for youth and Elders connect through revitalizing traditional teachings (VICCIFN, 2011).

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political marginalization (Auger, 2016; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009). However, the recognition of Indigenous knowledges within policy is not enough to redress the marginalization and cultural suppression faced by Indigenous peoples. As this article reveals, engaging in consultation processes regarding traditional knowledge places Indigenous communities at risk for the commodification of their knowledges, lands, and resources, the criminalization of prohibited harvesting methods, and the closure of previously-accessed harvesting sites. Thus, it is pertinent for scholars and policy makers to develop and apply a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous knowledges in contemporary contexts through authentic and broad consultation so as to mitigate placing Indigenous knowledges and related ecosystems at risk.

Literature Review

The following discussion approaches the IFSM as an emerging form of activism grounded in the resurgence of traditional food practices. Drawing from recent works by Indigenous scholars in Canada, Indigenous resurgence can be understood an increase of momentum in the flow of ways of life that have been passed down through generations. For instance, Alfred (2005) has suggested that because resurgence is rooted in Indigenous ways of being, the preservation and application of traditional knowledge is fundamental to the concept. Traditional knowledges consist of comprehensive frameworks incorporating practices, skills, and modes of learning (Cruikshank, 2005; Martin-Hill, 2003). Moreover, they are typically experiential, lifestyle based, morally imbued, spiritual, and rooted in a sense of place (Alfred, 2005; Coulthard, 2014; Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000; Menzies & Butler, 2006). An important way that the connection between tradition and resurgence has been described is through the concept of practice, wherein resurgence requires the embodiment and enactment of traditional values and principles (Alfred, 2005). Therefore, "Indigenous resurgence is at its core a *prefigurative* politics—the methods of decolonization prefigure its aims" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 159). Viewing resurgence as a practice implies that a range of traditional practices, "whether a song, dance or a spoken word story, becomes then an individual and collective experience, with the goal of lifting the burden of colonialism by visioning new realities" (Simpson, 2011, p. 34). Indigenous resurgence draws on traditional practices to discover pathways to community healing, development, or political assertions, which are informed by Indigenous ways of being.

Traditional Knowledges in the Public Consumption and Policy Making

Social scientists working in international development and environmental studies have become increasingly interested in the study of Indigenous or traditional knowledges[2] (Dei et al., 2000; Menzies, 2006; Turner, 2005). For these scholars, traditional knowledges offer an alternative to Western hegemonic paradigms for addressing the "shortcomings of contemporary resource management" (Menzies & Butler, 2006, p. 5) and formulating sustainable development initiatives. These authors claim that the recording and teaching of Indigenous knowledges offers a form of political resistance, which can transform the way Indigenous ways of knowing are valued in academia and policy. The work of scholars in this area has been instrumental in elevating the presence of Indigenous knowledges in development

[2] I have opted the use the term *traditional knowledges* throughout this article, as it is commonly used within the Indigenous food sovereignty movement on Vancouver Island, likely due to its reference to longstanding cultural autonomy. I designate *knowledges* as plural to reflect to diversity of Indigenous experiences and histories.

and policy frameworks internationally (Dei et al., 2000). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the revitalization of Indigenous knowledges is key to improving the socio-economic status and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples. Martin-Hill (2009), for example, has discussed how preserving Indigenous knowledges is key to cultural identity, self-determination, and combating racism—the necessary building blocks for community healing. Furthermore, policies and programs informed by Indigenous knowledge integrate Indigenous values and beliefs, thereby increasing effectiveness and impact (Dell et al., 2011).

In the Canadian context, the recognition of Indigenous knowledges within policy can be traced to the 1996 *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Castellano, 2000). While many scholars have advocated for the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledges for informing policy, others have remained critical. For instance, though traditional knowledges are sometimes recognized within Canadian policy, the state offers no protection of community ownership and traditional knowledges are not considered tied to Indigenous rights and governance (Matsui, 2015). Furthermore, Canadian scholars have noted that many Indigenous Peoples find that subjecting traditional knowledges to regulation and scientific scrutiny detracts from the sacred and social contexts of traditions (Martin-Hill, 2003; Warry, 1998). Battiste and Henderson (2000) have similarly voiced concern over the decontextualization of traditional knowledges through their integration into scientific or policy frameworks. Through this process, oral knowledges are translated into written accounts, categorized, and subjected to a foreign system of validation, which can lead to seemingly unrelated elements being discarded (Cruikshank, 2012; Menzies & Butler, 2006). Given the claim that Indigenous knowledges encapsulate a worldview, traditional knowledges should instead be understood within their own inherent logic as a part of a holistic system of thought (Cruikshank, 2005; Kovach, 2009).

Nadasdy (2003) has revealed that the promotion of traditional knowledge in environmental management and land claims policy has had subtle, yet detrimental, implications for Indigenous communities in the Yukon because the policy frameworks were founded on an essentially Euro-Canadian worldview. Thus, Indigenous claims were frequently dismissed, even when expressed in the appropriate manner and context. In this way, Nadasdy (2003) has argued that the incorporation of traditional knowledge into policy can further perpetuate the displacement of traditional ways. Menzies and Butler (2006) have suggested that this process requires a "cultural triage;" whereby the translation of information about traditional land-use practices aids in the preservation of some areas from resource development, but inherently excludes other areas from protection as policy makers set boundaries surrounding protected lands. Scholars have similarly suggested that Western law, inherently centered around individualism, is ill-equipped to manage either collective innovation or shared cultural knowledge (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Shiva, 2007).

It is important to extend this discussion from the realm of policy making to the realm of public consumption. For instance, social movements such as the IFSM have garnered wider public acceptance and awareness through their work towards affecting policy change. But, as this article reveals, subjecting Indigenous knowledges to public awareness and policy development places the knowledges, resources, and related communities at risk for exploitation, criminalization, and overharvesting. As such, this article contributes to a growing discussion of the role of traditional knowledge in public consumption and policy frameworks. Specifically, this article reveals the material implications of sharing traditional

knowledge while emphasizing what is at stake both in garnering recognition for traditional food knowledges and protecting these knowledges from exploitation.

Methods

This article is informed by data collected during a three-month period of ethnographic fieldwork in Nanaimo, British Columbia in 2013.[3] In collaborating with Indigenous activists and Elders engaged in efforts to revitalize traditional food practices, the methods used included participant observation and unstructured interviews. Through participant observation, I engaged as an ally and volunteer in community events and in public protests asserting Indigenous rights. Community events included workshops, community gatherings, consultation sessions with regional decision-makers, and traditional foods conferences. Participants for this project were identified through their involvement with Indigenous foods organizations and recognition as leaders or knowledge keepers.[4] The unstructured interviews were guided by a relational and decolonizing methodology. A relational interview approach is contingent on mutual respect and trust, developed through a reflexive approach to understanding how knowledge is co-constructed through a dialogical process of interpretation and sharing between the researcher and participants. To this end, participants maintain a degree of control over the conversation and knowledge they share (Kovach, 2009). A decolonizing approach to interviews carries the ethical imperative to advance the stories of Indigenous Peoples for restorative justice and healing (Roulston, 2010). Both relational and decolonizing interview approaches operate through an unstructured format, as this allows participants to direct conversation towards the issues they deem most important. This necessitates a careful consideration of the impact of research within participating communities, with the objective of bringing attention to tensions that impede the further advancement of Indigenous rights. The interview and participant observation data collected, including field notes and interview transcripts, were analyzed through an inductive and emergent process (Mosher, Long, & Harding, 2017).

The methodology guiding this research project involved a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Coleman & von Hellerman, 2011; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). This research was not conducted primarily within a geographically-bounded community, but rather traced the networks of activism and resurgence that connect communities and urban Indigenous Peoples through a set of shared goals. As such, the research process was situated within non-profit and grassroots organizations that promote the resurgence of traditional food practices. This method reflects the dynamic nature of cultural belonging in light of the ongoing movement of peoples between urban centres and their home communities. Moreover, membership in traditional food organizations often crossed community boundaries. My intention was to move beyond a geographically delineated description of cultural practice towards salient discourses surrounding traditional foods that seemed to both overlap between communities as well as bridge urban and reserve life.

[3] Ethics approval for this research was granted by the Graduate School of Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam.

[4] The interview sample for this research included five primary informants, including three Elders (two female and one male, aged 50-75) and two traditional foods activists (both male, aged 23 and 40). The majority of those who have shared their words within this text chose to be recognized for their expertise through the use of traditional names, however one participant opted to remain anonymous through the use of a pseudonym.

As a non-Indigenous ally, understanding how to speak out against the ongoing impacts of colonization from a place of respect is a continuous learning process. In the context of this research, it implied a commitment to relationality and reflexivity throughout the research process, understanding that the sharing of knowledge and life experiences comes with a responsibility to carry forward what has been shared in a way that empowers rather than objectifies Indigenous communities (Archibald, 2008). As such, this article has been carefully reviewed and approved by research participants.

Indigenous Foods of Vancouver Island

Within Canadian policy frameworks, the original inhabitants of North America are referred to as Aboriginal Peoples. This designation is further subdivided between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. This article adopts the term *Indigenous* to reflect the socio-political experience of colonized peoples worldwide. The traditional territories of Vancouver Island have been and continue to be inhabited by three distinct Indigenous language families: Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, and Nuu-chah-nulth. These language families can be further subdivided into local dialects. For instance, the city of Nanaimo is located on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. The Coast Salish dialect spoken by Snuneymuxw people is Hul'qumi'num, which they share in common with people of the Cowichan Tribes, as well as other groups on southern Vancouver Island and the lower mainland of British Columbia. The participants of this study represented diverse nations but primarily included Métis, Kwakwaka'wakw, and Coast Salish individuals living in Vancouver Island's central region.

Because Vancouver Island is characterized by linguistic and geographical diversity, food practices and cultural protocols differed greatly between Indigenous nations. However, there are number of characteristics that are shared among groups. For instance, access to harvesting sites and related knowledge was often passed through family lineages (Trosper, 2003). Traditional foods common to Indigenous communities in the area included wild game, fish, shellfish, roe, seaweed, berries, and medicinal herbs (Kelm, 1998). Traditional food practices also include specific preparation and cooking methods, such as extracting fish oils, drying or smoking fish, pit cooking, and the use of bentwood boxes. Moreover, because traditional harvesting and food preparation requires diverse skills, this knowledge was typically passed down through ongoing practice and cultivated over the course of a lifetime. As Elder Ipswa, a Métis traditional food activist living in Nanaimo, explained:

> That kind of teaching isn't something that you can just sit down in one afternoon . . . You know, it comes with a lifetime of being connected to that land, and harvesting on there and doing activities so that you can . . . read all those nuances; become a whole way of connecting that doesn't relate to the weekend warrior "let's go hunting or get our hunting gear on today and go collect some food." And it doesn't even come with years of experience because my grandmother, she lived her whole life on the land and at 80, 90 years of age she had that intrinsic lifestyle living in that community and knowing how things were working, on a deep sense of connection to the ecology of everything, that even in my age, although I'd been there a long time, I haven't nearly the connection.

According to Elders, embodying traditional knowledges requires continuous practice both under the guidance of knowledgeable community members and through ongoing interactions with the land. Both

are necessary in order to internalize the values and protocols associated with traditional food harvesting and preparation.

Indigenous Food Practices and Colonization

The resurgence of traditional food practices can be partly understood as a response to colonial disenfranchisement of Indigenous knowledges and ways as life. On Vancouver Island, as was the case throughout Canada, processes of settler colonialism profoundly affected Indigenous cultures and, through mechanisms of cultural assimilation, has been detrimental to Indigenous Peoples' ability to conduct traditional practices. This context reveals both the motivations behind the traditional foods movement as well as the kinds of barriers Elders and activists face in their work to preserve traditional knowledges for future generations.

The institution of reservations in the mid-1800s was followed by the mass relocation of people from traditional territories onto designated sites (Kelm, 1998). As Elder Hyamiciye', a renowned medicine woman from the Cowichan First Nation, explained, "once they got relegated and instituted to reserves, you know, you're in this square. 'Now don't leave this square.' And all those things [medicinal plants] aren't growing in this square." While some of these reserves were located at traditional village sites, many were not and often excluded camp sites used for seasonal fishing, hunting, gathering, or canoe building (Kelm, 1998). Scholars have claimed that this loss of connection to ancestral lands operated as a tool of colonialism by weakening traditional knowledges and the economic independence of Indigenous nations (Bagelman, Devereaux, & Hartley, 2016; Martin-Hill, 2009; Turner, 2005; Waziyatawin, 2012).

Another method of state-endorsed assimilation was the Indian Residential School (IRS) system. Residential schools were operated by the Department of Indian Affairs and Christian churches between 1831 to 1996. Residential schools had a detrimental impact on the teaching of traditional knowledges by removing Indigenous children from their communities, enforcing the adoption of European customs, and suppressing Indigenous languages and lifeways (Kelm, 1998). Children in residential schools were prevented from learning the community-oriented lessons inherent in traditional food practices, as they were removed from the family structures that were the predominant source of knowledge transfer. Elder Hyamiciye' shared some of her experiences reconnecting individuals with traditional practices during community teaching events:

> I asked the Elder to share a story about sea eggs [herring roe], right? And he probably called me back later and did tell me that he shared a story with the kids. But it was my story; that I had told him. And then the next time, something else happened [where he needed my advice]. And that's how to fix the stick for the fire for the fish, right? To smoke the fish, it's called a *pi'kwan*. And, like maybe there's an idea of stuff in the background but after the third time, and I realized that he really didn't have his own story, because he was at [residential] school.

Thus, in the context of communities seeking to restore the transfer of traditional knowledges, Elders have expressed the impact of this shift in the form of knowledge transferal and the difficulty of incorporating traditional foods into daily life. As Elder Hyamiciye' further explained,

> Some people make sure that I get some stuff here and there but that's the only way it can be done. By the goodwill of your family. By somebody being in your family being Indigenous food-

> oriented and keeping it. And if there isn't at least one person in a family doing that, then the whole family is lost in that line. So that's how the residential food thing, when they took them [the children] away and took them away from this being as a daily norm. So now they have to be taught it, as not even a daily norm. As *a treat!*

Indigenous Food Practices in the Context of Scarcity

The changing role of traditional foods is not solely the result of political and economic forces; it is also intrinsically linked with changes to the natural environment. Elders explained that the most drastic changes to the role traditional foods played in daily life occurred as recently as the late 1980s, due to a decline in the abundance of traditional foods through the loss of both marine biodiversity and vegetation associated with old growth forests. Kwin'wah'tala Galis of the Gwawaenuk Tribe, a traditionalist and Indigenous activist, explained:

> From my own experience, not too long ago, like 1990, we had an abundance of food. It wasn't really scattered. Again, it was a sense of security and dependence. And once again, because of development, our natural environment, our resources have been disturbed. I'll give you an example of traditional food sovereignty. You know, we could go any given time and even if we went as far as the beach, in front of our coastal village site, and be able to harvest seafood from there. It was always plentiful . . . I can give you one good example, of our halibut fishing days, where we used to be able to, we literally count up to three, drop four lines and catch four halibut at the same time. So, by 11 o'clock in the morning we'd have eight halibut. Then that was enough, right. We only took what we needed. Brought it home and processed them. But there was one particular spot at the north end, the northern end of Vancouver Island where there was halibut habitat. The draggers come in and they scrape the bottom and they fill their nets with every other types of species we can name. And from what I understand they destroyed that halibut habitat . . . And as a result, we end up not catching any halibut after that fact.

Access to traditional foods has changed drastically within decades due to several processes, including environmental, commercial, and regulatory changes. Important environmental concerns that have impacted and continue to impact the availability of traditional foods include climate change, diminishing biodiversity, and environmental contamination. On Vancouver Island, the primary sources of impact stem from conventional forestry practices, mining, and commercial fisheries (Turner, 2005).

Indigenous communities also face barriers due to government regulations, including fishing closures and catch restrictions instated by the Canadian Fisheries Act and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Turner & Clifton, 2006). Furthermore, due to hunting licensing as well as seasonal and site restrictions, First Nations people have been prosecuted in British Columbia for "essentially preventing starvation," as Elder Ipswa explained.[5] For example, David, a Coast Salish activist explained that the traditional means of salmon harvesting from his community involves spear fishing; however, this method is outlawed under provincial law.

Exacerbated by the barriers of environmental contamination, commercial resource exploitation, and the regulatory restrictions described above, Indigenous Peoples also face difficulties continuing traditional

[5] For a case from Vancouver Island examined in provincial court, see *R. v. Morris* (2006).

food practices in terms of accessibility. Primarily, issues of accessibility to traditional foods are the result of privatization of land and urban encroachment. Due to the establishment of reserves and ongoing natural resource exploitation, many traditional harvesting sites have been privatized or turned in to parks (Davis & Twidale, 2011). As urban encroachment increases, the proximity to traditional foods greatly decreases. As Elder Ipswa explained:

> I used to be able to walk just a way up here on Wakesiah, to gather traditional plant medicines and herbs, but because of the encroachment, I would now need to be able to travel miles and miles away, so the cost of equipment, gas, and fuel, for the return, becomes an expense.

When understanding the resurgence of traditional food practices, it is also important to consider the context of living on reserves adjacent to urban centres or for families who have chosen to live away from home. Elder Ipswa expressed the "lost knowledge of deep ecology" among his grandchildren's generation due to the obligations of urban life and the greater spatial distance from sites where traditional foods are available. He explained that there is little room for the teaching and learning of traditional practices when it is no longer an integral aspect of everyday life. Similarly, David explained the difficulties of finding time between the obligations of education and employment to "maintain a connection," noting:

> It's a culture clash, because in a way we're trying to preserve our way of life but now we're getting into a generation that is assimilated into Western society and it's a danger to the culture in that if we don't keep up the cultural practices when we have the time to do it, then it's going to be gone.

Thus, those promoting the continuation of traditional food practices, particularly those living in urban environments, must make a conscious effort to practice and transfer their own embodied memories, or in Elder Hyamiciye''s words, shift towards "teaching" instead of a "daily norm."

Through the combined efforts of Elders, activists, and grassroots organizations, new forums for teaching traditional knowledges are emerging, drawing on themes of feasting and commensality as avenues for sharing cultural knowledge. These public opportunities for knowledge transferal aim to re-infuse learning into a context where traditional food as an embodied daily norm is less tenable; specifically, they do this by reincorporating urban youth and disenfranchised community members into community and land-based knowledges (Bagelman et al., 2016). These spaces can take various forms; they may be coordinated within a particular community or facilitated by organizations that span between communities—such as Indigenous non-profit organizations, universities, or health advisory boards. Owing to the multi-stakeholder nature of these spaces, they often operate at the intersection of agendas, including Indigenous cultural resurgence, social or leisure interests, efforts to combat food insecurity or nutrition-related health problems, responses to environmental degradation, and sovereignty over sustenance and cultural expression.

Promoting and Protecting Traditional Knowledges

The resurgence of traditional food practices plays an important role for improving nutritional health and honoring cultural knowledge. However, new spaces for teaching traditional food knowledges are framed by contradictory pressures to promote broader awareness of traditional food practices while also protecting knowledges and resources from misappropriation. Promoting an awareness of Indigenous

knowledges can be an important avenue for cultural empowerment. Speaking on the relationship between traditional foods and Indigenous activism, Kwin'wah'tala Galis explained the public promotion of traditional knowledges as a way of renewing public acceptance of Indigenous culture following a history of colonial discrimination.

> In the past it [Indigenous knowledge] hasn't been accepted as a form of technology, for example. Or a science. Because, for one, sadly enough, it wasn't considered civil, it wasn't an acceptable form. So, because people are getting more consciousness, more awareness of it, it's becoming more of an acceptable form. And people are beginning to realize that First Nations people have a lot to offer to the world and the larger society.

As Kwin'wah'tala Galis further explained, the importance of creating awareness of Indigenous food practices stems from an aspiration for "independence:" the recognition that these practices would, potentially, afford greater protection as an inherent right and, in so doing, form a stronger base for land claims. In this sense, the wide dissemination of traditional food knowledges is a necessary step to protecting related resources through asserting self-determination. Similarly, social scientists have argued that the reaffirmation of Indigenous knowledge can:

- Reinforce a sense of identity and wellbeing (Burgos, 2014; Hunter, Logan, Goulet, & Barton, 2006; Iwasaki, Bartlett, & O'Neil, 2005);
- Build awareness of what is at stake for Indigenous Peoples with respect to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and climate change (Turner, 2005; Waziyatawin, 2012);
- Enforce the role Indigenous Peoples should have in managing resources and development (Dei et al., 2000); and
- Influence policy around restrictions to hunting regulations and land access (Menzies & Butler, 2006).

Yet, another key motivation behind the emergence of new spaces for traditional foods knowledge sharing is to increase the knowledge base—especially as a response to the impacts of colonization—by including individuals who may not have had access to mentorship from Elders.

Considering that these new spaces of traditional knowledge sharing aim to build wider inclusiveness, and often dovetail with other public interests by sharing funds and resources, managing access to traditional knowledges becomes an important concern. While some Elders and activists I spoke with were quite open about sharing knowledge, others used their own methods for determining when and how much knowledge they would impart to a particular group or individual. Some Elders were quite critical of the possibility of traditional knowledges falling into the "wrong hands"—that is, to individuals who may exploit resources or harvest in a disrespectful way. While grassroots organizations and Indigenous activists are now seeking to share traditional food knowledges more widely so as to preserve cultural ways and promote knowledge transferal, many of the resources fundamental to traditional food systems are currently threatened by population decline. Individuals invested in the promotion of traditional foods thus maintain a constant awareness of the urgent need to protect these resources from exploitation. As such, there is an observable tension between efforts to share traditional knowledges and the obligation to protect knowledges from exploitation.

In many cases, the colonial legacy of discrediting Indigenous knowledge has led to widespread skepticism and distrust. David explained this as a commonplace attitude:

> You know, kind of a lot of people are very wary with discussing with White people about a lot of these things because of us being taken advantage in many ways, that is through, you know, politically, and culturally, and economically. Often, we're just means to an end in many ways.

This perspective is reflected in Battiste and Henderson's (2000) writing on Indigenous intellectual property rights. Concerning the growing interest in Indigenous knowledges within academia and policy, they stated, "these outsiders have not attempted to prevent the extermination of Indigenous Peoples or their ecosystems; instead, they have intensified their efforts to access, to know, and to assert control over this endangered knowledge and these endangered resources" (p. 290).

Particularly on the Northwest Coast, Indigenous Peoples have experienced a history of commodification of resources important to their communities. The salmon industry and the harvesting of seaweed by cosmetic companies offer two prominent examples of this history (Turner & Clifton, 2006). Pacific salmon have been an important staple for many Indigenous groups in the region for centuries. Yet due to climate change, overfishing, habitat destruction, and diseases introduced through the salmon farming industry, several species of Pacific salmon are currently listed as threatened (Gresh, Lichatowich, & Schoonmaker, 2000; Krkošek et al., 2000; Noakes, Beamish, & Kent, 2000). Similar concerns have been raised about many of the plant and animal species important to Indigenous food systems. For instance, Elder Ipswa emphasized the importance of sharing traditional knowledge to support the re-development of traditional foods networks linking Indigenous communities. Yet he explains:

> I get extremely worried that if, like if any other sort of new commodity, it comes out on the market and everybody suddenly decides that they want . . . if everybody decided tomorrow to eat all Coast Salish, the demand on the food would eliminate the resources for the next generation.

Elder Ipswa's concerns regarding the potential overuse of resources is framed around an awareness of outsiders' interests in traditional foods. He further explained that public preoccupation with "super foods," popularized for their health benefits, has led to the overharvesting of salal berries in the Nanaimo area. Many participants emphasized the importance of understanding traditional food knowledges within the broader context of Indigenous values, beliefs, and food harvesting protocols that ensured the use of wild foods in a respectful and sustainable way. For instance, David explained:

> And so, because our methods of harvesting are so convenient, if we gave it to these people who don't understand the meaning of the land and the culture that we are a part of, then they would not try to preserve any of it. They would go and take as many salmon as they could. They would go and take as many deer as they could. And you could watch half of it go to waste, because they don't know how to preserve it.

Concerns regarding the overuse of traditional resources have necessitated apprehension over the terms by which access is granted to these knowledges. While there are several coordinated initiatives to protect natural resources under the guidance of Elders across Vancouver Island, these organizations experience barriers in terms of acquiring the knowledge about specific harvesting locations and practices required to make a strong case to protect resources within policy frameworks. This is due to the situation in which

First Nations communities may not have "authorized" access to areas abundant in traditional foods. Elder Hyamiciye' explained the difficulties of reaching out to such organizations:

> I went to a couple meetings and one of them was, "okay, so where do you go harvest? So, we can protect those areas." But, I don't know, I've lost so many areas to development that how can you predict those areas? When, really, they're owned by other people . . . And how can you say, "this is where I harvest," when they say, "oh, well that's Crown land. Oh well that's . . . somebody owns that."

Traditional foods may be harvested in covert ways, either because the methods don't meet provincial regulations or because harvesting is conducted on private land. Thus, some Elders fear that too much knowledge shared openly might result in either the criminalization of their activities or the closure of areas they access. Thus, the collaboration between new spaces for knowledge transferal and external organizations operate in a contested field, wherein efforts to protect traditional food resources through public awareness are always susceptible not only to misuse by outsiders but also to the loss of access. Those seeking to encourage the transferal of traditional food knowledges must negotiate between revitalizing knowledge while maintaining a level of secrecy surrounding the actual practice of harvesting traditional foods. This complicates the nature of teaching, as Elders and activists must navigate the tension between promoting traditional knowledge more widely to reincorporate community members, while simultaneously limiting access to these knowledges to prevent misappropriation. The tension I have outlined is not intended to represent two sides of an opposing debate; rather, individuals are often conflicted with both considerations and change their approaches towards knowledge sharing depending on context. However, this tension nonetheless reveals the conditions under which these boundaries of inclusion and access to traditional food resources have been—and can be—drawn.

As was expressed by Elders, the sharing of traditional knowledge before colonization occurred through direct, often family-based relationships. In this way, the transmission of Indigenous knowledge was primarily based on the enactment of social obligations to people, animals, and the environment. As the format for sharing Indigenous knowledge has shifted to an educational approach, operating more within the tension between revitalizing knowledges while protecting them, it has become more necessary to determine the appropriateness of with whom and under what circumstances traditional knowledges are shared. During my research, I encountered several strategies to negotiate this tension. For instance, in speaking about the public dissemination of traditional knowledge, a respected Elder explained that "you can give them all the knowledge you want, but don't give them the locations." This Elder was advocating for an inclusionary approach yet did not remove all obstacles to accessing traditional food resources. Individuals would have to show a level of commitment, through uncovering their own areas for harvesting, that would demonstrate their ability to interpret and understand the landscape within an Indigenous knowledge framework.

This approach to traditional food knowledges often constructs a contrast between hunting and harvesting as a way of life and the "weekend warriors," or sport hunters, whose experiential connection to land exists only in a fragmentary way. For instance, Elder Ipswa spoke about contrasting practices between Indigenous people and non-Aboriginal sports hunters who tend to damage animal populations due to their lack of selectiveness when choosing which animals to cull.

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> So it's a hobby versus attempting to sustain their living. And that's where I think as Aboriginal people we struggle because for most of us, we're not doing this for sport, although there are times where it's recreational, it's mostly for teaching the younger generation the cultural bits of why do we have teamwork? Why do we pull together? How come the hunters play an important role? . . . There's whole sets of steps in each of them and each of them are offered in ways of connecting with the natural world. And a lot of that is that Indigenous way of seeing things.

Understanding traditional food knowledges within a broader Indigenous intellectual and spiritual framework was considered key to the ethical use of wild foods. Traditional food knowledges are embedded within a framework including intergenerational teachings about land ownership and stewardship, an intuitive understanding of the seasons and tides, and a spiritual or philosophical framework encompassing social protocols (Turner, 2005). These protocols outline responsibilities to community, animals, and the environment through values such as an interconnection to the land, respect, reciprocity, and practical knowledge about when and how to harvest so as to promote the longevity of ecologies. For example, Elder Hyamiciye' described the protocol involved with salmon fishing whereby fishers returned the remains of the salmon to the water in order to support future salmon runs. She emphasized that "there really, really is a whole story, and a whole ritual. And maybe all those rituals were there, every single ritual was there to make sure all those things stay in place."

The argument follows that appropriate harvesting requires a lifetime of living with traditional food as an aspect of daily life, especially with the guidance of Elders to internalize and embody the associated values and ways of knowing. However, given the context that many community members have experienced disenfranchisement due to residential schooling as well as the suppression of cultural practices through colonial policies of assimilation, the boundaries of what constitutes such experience are not easily drawn. Thus, the scenario becomes much more complex than a simple division between Indigenous–Western or subsistence–sport harvesting. For instance, there is concern that the obligations of contemporary life take up much of the time individuals could have otherwise spent internalizing Indigenous harvesting knowledges and associated protocols. The resurgence of traditional food knowledges thus requires the continuity of traditional knowledges, but it operates within the context of discontinuity of knowledge transferal. Spaces for knowledge transferal such as community gatherings, educational conferences, and workshops, have emerged to address these concerns. Yet at the same time, a tension remains unresolved in terms of how to promote the continuation of Indigenous food knowledges without making them susceptible to exploitation through processes of resource commodification and land privatization.

Discussion

The transitional role of traditional food from a habitual practice imbued with values guiding human and environmental relations to the more explicit sharing of memories has been expressed in new public forums, often facilitated by external actors, such as public health agencies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. These semi-public spaces for the sharing of traditional food knowledges are embedded within competing obligations to garner recognition of Indigenous lifeways and ensure the vitality of Indigenous teachings, while at the same time protecting knowledges from commodification or exploitation. While the Indigenous food sovereignty movement holds important objectives, such as the recognition of Indigenous rights and cultural reclamation, the sharing of Indigenous knowledges within public and policy domains can sometimes place those knowledges and related resources at risk.

Anthropologists and Indigenous scholars have expressed skepticism about the increasing trend to incorporate Indigenous knowledges within policy and research, especially in the sense that the extraction of these knowledges within Western frameworks negates their sacred, context-based, dynamic, and adaptive aspects. This article has extended this discussion by exploring the perceptions and experiences of Elders and Indigenous activists, revealing the practical implications for communities working to rebuild cultural knowledge and assert its role in contemporary life. Such implications involve the importance of garnering recognition to combat the loss of access to land, to rectify hunting and fishing regulations, and to challenge the colonial suppression of traditional knowledge. These must be checked against the possible risks of increasing species loss, privatization of land, and commodification of knowledges and resources.

Given this situation, it becomes clear that scholars and policy makers should develop and apply a more nuanced understanding of the contemporary role of traditional knowledges, an understanding that recognizes what is at stake for Indigenous communities regarding the loss of biodiversity, privatization of land, commodification of Indigenous foods, and the criminalization of hunting and harvesting activities. It is important to recognize that when Indigenous knowledges are shared publicly, they should continue to remain the property of those communities. While traditional knowledges contain wisdom that could benefit society at large, failing to guarantee communities ownership over their knowledges could effectively usurp their control over these knowledges. While it is important that leaders and scholars are supporting the recognition of Indigenous knowledge and considering their implications for policy frameworks on both national and international levels, it is imperative to assert that that these knowledges are rooted in the communities whose livelihoods and traditional territories are directly impacted by potential policies.

My intention in bringing attention to these tensions has been to highlight the necessity of understanding both the range of opinions held within Indigenous communities as well as the contexts from which these opinions arise. It is pertinent for those engaged in this work to understand the environmental, political, and social context of each Indigenous community in order to mitigate the potential risks attending their decisions to share their traditional knowledges within public and policy domains. From this place of greater understanding, policy makers and researchers could work collaboratively with a wide representation within a particular community or Indigenous organization to develop safeguards before taking any action. For instance, a potential safeguard could involve the establishment of legal provisions to protect individuals and communities from criminalization or the closure of lands if they disclose traditional knowledges and practices that contradict current law.

While the conditions of settler colonial society impose a tenuous balance in terms of how traditional knowledges can be shared and asserted, Indigenous food sovereignty activists and Elders are creatively finding ways to bring forward traditional knowledges in ways that benefit their communities and neighboring ecologies. The ethics of when and with whom it is appropriate to share traditional knowledges is something many, if not all Indigenous communities, are currently grappling with in their efforts to reassert cultural identity and reclaim Indigenous territories and governance. As such, it is ever more necessary to understand Indigenous knowledges within context. This requires that Indigenous knowledges are understood not only culturally or historically, but also within in the context of the environmental, social, and political issues Indigenous communities contend with today.

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