

Regenerating Indigenous Health and Food Systems: Assessing Conflict Transformation models  
and Sustainable Approaches to Indigenous Food Sovereignty

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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in Dispute Resolution

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**Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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Through exploring nine Indigenous young adults' perceptions of their roles in building health and wellness through traditional food sovereignty, I assessed the effectiveness of using John Paul Lederach's (1997) framework of conflict transformation within an Indigenous context for the purpose of creating Indigenous food sovereignty. Conflict transformation does not acknowledge or address the detrimental effects colonization has had on Indigenous peoples within their daily lives. This gap in analysis stunted the effectiveness of conflict transformation in helping young Indigenous adults to challenge colonial authority and work towards developing sustainable approaches to Indigenous food sovereignty.

Within the findings, roles emerged related to a generational cycle of learning and teachings traditional knowledge and cultural practices that are applied in the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples. "Learner-teacher cycles" are an Indigenous response to conflicts stemming from colonization. The cycle follows a non-linear progression of learning cultural and traditional knowledge from family and community and the transmission of that knowledge back to family and peers. Learner-teacher cycles are an everyday occurrence and are embedded within Indigenous cultures. Through the learner-teacher cycles, young adults challenge the effects of colonization within their day-to-day lives by learning and practicing cultural ways of being and traditional knowledge, and then transferring their knowledge to next generations and peers.

I have concluded that conflict transformation is not an effective tool in resolving protracted conflicts within an Indigenous context, particularly with reference to Indigenous peoples from CoSalish and Dididaht territories on Turtle Island. Learner-teacher cycles, a framework based on Indigenous methods of challenging colonialism through learning, teaching and practicing cultural and traditional ways of being within everyday life, is an appropriate model for young Indigenous adults to use in creating Indigenous food sovereignty.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

My mentors have taught me that it is important to identify oneself and one's ancestry when you begin to speak. Shawn Wilson (2008), an Indigenous researcher, talked about the cultural importance of sharing the researcher's life and story so that listeners or readers can more easily understand the context from which the story or research comes (p. 32). In addition, J. W. Creswell (2003) impressed the importance of identifying the researcher's role, which included personal connections. All research data were filtered through a personal lens, so the reader should understand the personal connection of the researcher to the research in order to help generate trustworthiness (Creswell, 2003, pp. 180–182; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 328).

Therefore, I will begin by telling my story about who I am and why I am pursuing this thesis. I am a 35 year-old woman of Scottish and English heritage. I grew up in Toronto, Ontario, in a small middle class family. After 47 years, my parents are still together and our family is very close. While I was doing my undergraduate degree at Trent University in Indigenous Studies and Community Development, I began learning how general assumptions made within the “dominant culture”<sup>1</sup> continued the colonial oppression of Indigenous peoples. This disturbed me greatly. I wanted to focus on something that connected us all and realized that while food brings people together it is also at the core of many global problems, including colonization of Indigenous peoples. After finishing my degree, I moved to the partially unceded territory now called Vancouver Island and started to work with Coast Salish peoples, supporting efforts to rebuild community food systems.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the term dominant culture refers to the descendants of European settlers to the country now called Canada.



I have now been working with Feasting for Change: Reconnecting to Food, Land, and Culture<sup>2</sup> (Feasting for Change) (Feasting for Change and Devereaux, 2008), a working group based in Co-Salish and Dididaht territories whose focus is to helping to rebuild Indigenous food systems within Indigenous reserve-based and urban communities for 8 years. While doing this work, I have realized that building healthy communities and healthy food systems takes the whole community and decisions about how it looks must come from within. Many Indigenous Elders have told me stories about how the younger generations are not participating fully in community ways and events. I believe that the root issue of this disparity is colonization and the colonization of Indigenous food systems.

The colonization of the lands now known as Canada was facilitated in part through political-legal documentation that first seemingly gave recognition to Indigenous peoples and their land as being nations in their own right and then dispossessed them of those lands and rights (Dickason and McNab, 2009). Two major examples of this are the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Indian Act of 1876 and subsequent revisions. Initially, the Royal Proclamation Act of 1763 declared Indigenous people as being sovereign nations over their own lands, however, it was later used to force them off their lands and onto reserves with no compensation (Dickason and McNabb, 2009). The purpose of the Indian Act 1876 that followed was to assimilate the Indigenous people by stripping rights, creating laws that restricted movement and freedom, and provided justification of residential schools and further control over resources and lands (Dickason and McNab, 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> Feasting for Change is a collaborative working group who organizes traditional food feasts with urban and rural Indigenous communities to spark discussion and action towards revitalizing traditional food systems through connection within and between communities and sharing of the 'old ways' (Feasting for Change and Devereaux, 2008).

The colony of Vancouver Island was established in 1846, almost 70 years after Europeans began trading relationships with the Indigenous nations that lived on the west coast (Harris, 2008). The European settlers began a history of physical violence and repression to acquire lands for the colonies as “colonies entailed settlers, and settlers required land, which could be got only by dispossessing native people” (Harris, 2008, p. 169). Dispossession on Vancouver Island was done through violence and threat of violence driven by greed and racism and justified by paternalistic beliefs. Both sides threatened war, however dispossession continued through the sheer numbers of settlers who came and the military backing that supported them (Harris, 2008).

Taiiaike Alfred (2009) reminds us that the externally imposed conditions inflicted through colonization resonate in the personal and daily lives of Indigenous peoples and communities. The general impression of colonialism is comprised of political-legal and economic impositions by an external and oppressive state, for example resource exploitation, land expropriation, extinguishment of rights, residential schools and the consequences thereof, and also wardship of Indigenous children (among others) that was born out of an assumption of superiority and racism (Alfred, 2009). Alfred (2009) goes on to say that “in a fundamental sense [the political and economic aspects are], less important than appreciating the damage to the cultural integrity and mental and physical health of the people and communities who make up those nations” (p. 43). I observed the harmful effects of colonialism on peoples’ daily lives during the time I was working with Feasting for Change.

Coll Thrush (2011) discusses the ways in which food was initially the key to the development of relationships and then later the cementing of difference between Europeans and Indigenous peoples of the northwest coast of what is now called Vancouver Island, BC.

Respectful observances of etiquette over meals helped to establish relationships. However, the creation of myths of uncultivated lands perpetrated by European sailors and settlers and, conversely, the observation that the Europeans were always starving, hungry people in need of assistance by the Cosalish and Nu'chal'nuth<sup>3</sup> led to longer lasting assumptions of vulgarity and poverty (Thrush, 2011). Later, Europeans built on myths of cannibalism that were initially shared on both sides and used these and other arguments of “disgusting” eating habits as “justification to prohibit indigenous feasts traditions” (Thrush, 2011, p. 25). These policies prohibiting cultural practices around food led to the dispossession of lands and culture of Indigenous peoples.

Traditionally, the livelihood of Indigenous peoples in Canada revolved around food sovereignty (i.e., the ability to understand and manage their own food systems). Hunting and harvesting from the land and water represents not only a means of self-determination and continued stewardship over the lands and waters, but also has long-term effects on health and wellness at the community level (Kuhnlein & Receveur, 1996; Turner, 2005). Jeff Corntassel (2008) shows that daily practice of Indigenous cultural traditions and sustaining cultural practices through transmission of traditional knowledge is key to creating sustainable self-determination and regaining traditional food sovereignty. Without incorporating Indigenous practices into ones life on a daily basis, time honoured cultural practices, skills, ways-of-being, spiritual beliefs, food systems, relationships with self, family, community, land and water would be lost (Corntassel, 2008b).

Despite the key role food sovereignty plays in Indigenous communities thriving on their own terms within the dominant culture, there are many barriers to achieving traditional food

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<sup>3</sup> This led to the naming of Europeans as ‘Xwenitem’, or ‘the hungry people’ (Thrush, 2011)

sovereignty or even basic food security<sup>4</sup> for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Examples of this disparity can be found when examining the decline of access to land or oceans, the decline in general health, the increase in general poverty, and the long-term effects of residential school (Barton, Thommasen, Tallio, Zhang, & Michalos, 2005; Government of British Columbia, 2009; Kuhnlein, 1994; Trospen, 2002; Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, 1974; Ware, 1974).

To address physical and systemic violence stemming from protracted conflict at a community level, John Paul Lederach (1995) developed a peacebuilding model called “conflict transformation”. It was developed to challenge the notion within peacebuilding that all conflict resolution models must follow the same, westernized conflict resolution approaches to be successful. Conflict transformation encourages local, Indigenous peoples involved within and affected by conflict to share their lived, everyday experiences of violence with a longer-term goal of creating social change and establishing sustainable peace, thus addressing and resolving violent conflicts (Lederach, 1995). This is done through the creation of transformative models of resolution that are based on local and Indigenous cultures (Lederach, 1995). Conflict transformation relates the stories and lived experiences of those people at the negotiation table, where political-legal matters are discussed and resolved

However, this model, along with other conflict resolution models, fails to capture key aspects of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination that result from conflict. For this reason, it is important to develop other models that are more Indigenous community specific, such as the learner-teacher cycles. While Lederach does address political-legal issues that arise from conflict and he tries to include community in addressing these issues, he does not recognize colonization

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<sup>4</sup> Food security involves access to adequate and healthy food. Heads of states and governments at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (1996a) World Food Summit in Rome of 1996 reaffirmed “the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger” (para. 1).

as a root issue of conflict. Therefore, he does not recognize the manifestation of colonization in the everyday lives of colonized Indigenous peoples. Neither does Lederach understand that lived experiences of colonization cannot be translated into political-legal solutions.

### **Statement of Research Purpose**

Indigenous self-determination, within conflict resolution, is not well researched and I hoped to contribute to developing a critique of its absence. I wanted to research the effectiveness of the conflict transformation model to addressing the lived experiences of colonization and resolve the issues therein. To do this, I assessed the effectiveness of conflict transformation with respect to regenerating Indigenous health and wellness in a sustainable manner through Indigenous food sovereignty.

In this study, I examined the roles of negotiation and sustainable peace in addressing the daily conflict among Indigenous young adults that prevent or delay Indigenous food sovereignty. I compared the effectiveness and relevance of conflict transformation with that of the emergent findings of learner-teacher cycles by using the goal Indigenous food sovereignty to assess the models.

By using Corntassl's (2008) framework of sustainable self-determination, I was able to understand the significance of learner-teacher cycles as an emergent Indigenous model that addresses the devastating effects of colonization on the daily lives of young Indigenous adults. The learner-teacher cycles is an Indigenous model that supports young adults to focus on developing relationships with family, community, Elders, peers, as well as land and waters that facilitate a cycle of learning and teaching. It shows how young adults learn the cultural skills and practices necessary to observe their Indigenous culture on a daily basis. The daily practice of Indigenous culture, combined with continuing the cycle of learning is essential for young adults

to challenge colonialism and facilitate the resurgence of Indigenous ways of being. Learner-teacher cycles might be useful as a model based in Indigenous cultures to facilitate Indigenous food sovereignty.

Given my involvement in and relationship with Feasting for Change, I decided to develop a mutually beneficial partnership and hopefully support the work Feasting for Change does within the community and focus on how young adults are involved in revitalizing their traditional food systems with the goal of Indigenous food The Feasting for Change: Reconnecting to Food, Land and Culture (Feasting for Change) working group<sup>5</sup> supported this research with the hope that conflict transformation and the findings might help to create more effective programming. I interviewed young people about their experiences working with Feasting for Change for the purpose of understanding their perspectives and the role of learning cultural knowledge within the context of community. I asked young adults about their perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty and their roles in creating health and wellness based on their *everyday experiences*. Essential to these questions are young adults' experiences learning from Elders and knowledge keepers within their communities around traditional foods, in addition to community-based programs such as Feasting for Change.

### **Research Question**

In what ways does participation in Feasting for Change influence young peoples' perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty and their roles in building the health and wellness of their communities?

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<sup>5</sup> “The Feasting For Change Project is a broadly representative group composed of interested parties who are working collaboratively to support Aboriginal Communities in South Vancouver Island to enhance their food sovereignty” through the organization of workshops and traditional food feasts (Devereaux, 2009, para. 1).

## **Research Methods**

This qualitative study involved personal interviews within an Indigenous methodology<sup>6</sup> and community-based research approach (Flicker & Savan, 2006; Louis, 2007; Reitsma-Street, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). I conducted interviews to help create a narrative inquiry, a process in which participants were given the opportunity to construct and narrate stories based on their experiences (Barton, 2004, p. 521). Utilizing Pope, Zeibland, and Mays's (2000) five stages of data analysis, I categorized data according to common themes and concepts. I subsequently developed descriptive and conceptual codes and their corresponding themes in an effort to understand young people's perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty, its impact on them, their communities, and their roles within their communities (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 203).

## **Significance of the Study**

This study explored conflict transformation in an Indigenous context by utilizing findings from research interviews done with nine Indigenous young adults from the southern part of what is now called Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. This thesis will make a contribution to literature related to conflict transformation and colonization by showing that Indigenous perspectives are missing in the field of conflict resolution. It will also contribute to literature regarding Indigenous food sovereignty, especially in the area of young adults and community health as it relates to social policy and practice..

## **Summary of Introduction**

I come from a Canadian-European background and through my academic career developed an interest in the ways in which food has been used to colonize Indigenous peoples. While working within Indigenous communities, I observed the importance of food in bringing

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<sup>6</sup> Indigenous methodologies engage the politics of research and emphasize Indigenous communities' control over research, its products, and its processes. This definition is expanded in the Methodology Chapter.

communities to address issues of health and wellness. However, for this to become fully integrated into a community in a lasting way, effective strategies for lasting change must be implemented. This study sought to determine if conflict transformation was relevant and effective in addressing the lived experiences of colonization in Indigenous young adults' daily lives and sustainably resolve the issues related to colonization with the focus of re-establishing Indigenous food sovereignty.

The results of this study will be presented to diverse audiences, including Chiefs and Councils within and outside the Indigenous food sovereignty movement and the health and wellness movement. It is my hope that the findings support changes in policy and programming to benefit young adults leadership and empower whole communities to create Indigenous food sovereignty in their daily lives.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As this thesis explores the relevance and effectiveness of conflict transformation in sustainably addressing the experiences of colonization within Indigenous young adults' daily lives, with the focus of re-establishing Indigenous food sovereignty, it is important to introduce and define the relevant concepts: conflict transformation, and Indigenous food sovereignty.. The first section of this literature review describes conflict transformation and is divided into two subsections. In the first section, I describe food sovereignty, addressing the underlying concepts and terms related to Indigenous food sovereignty and food systems. It explores how Indigenous food sovereignty can be a vehicle to sustainable self-determination as it relates to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities. In the second section, I present the conflict transformation model and outline the relationships between conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and colonization.

### Food Sovereignty

Historically, colonizers attacked food sources and systems in many ways. Paul Smith explained, "colonization hinged on destroying food systems" (Steinman, 2007). Dave Elliott (1983) described the changes brought to his people as being forced on them: "We were forced out of a good way of life, and we don't want this new way, we don't like it" (p. 81). The *Royal Proclamation* of 1763 was the first document to deal with how land was to be acquired from Indigenous people in Canada. It recognized Indigenous title to unceded territory and stated that negotiations would be on a nation-to-nation basis (Government of Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2010). The lesser-known *Constitution Act* of 1791 legitimized ownership by force and royal decree, legitimizing "gifts" of large tracts of land to

colonizers (Milloy, 1983, p. 56). Where colonization started with settling land, it has continued with “ecocidal government policies and corporate hegemony ... the struggle over territory [has become] a struggle over the very substance and (ab)use of the land itself and the lives upon whose survival its inhabitants depend” (Neu & Therrien, 2003, p. 140). Forced disconnection from lands that were used to gather foods, hunt, fish were direct attacks on Indigenous food systems.

In 2008, Jeff Corntassel coined the term ‘sustainable self-determination’ (2008b). Corntassel (2008b) states that for self-determination to be sustainable for Indigenous people, their livelihoods must be connected to land economically, culturally, and environmentally. People must also recognize their ancestral roles and responsibilities towards the land, family, communities and sharing cultural knowledge with future generations (Corntassel, 2008b). According to Corntassel, sustainability is created and maintained through the transfer of cultural practices and traditional knowledge to future generations (Corntassel, 2008b). He also makes a strong link between sustainable self-determination and Indigenous food sovereignty, stating that “Indigenous connections between well-being and food security/ livelihoods are critical to the realization and practice of a *sustainable self-determination*” (2008b, p. 119). To be able to create sustainable self-determination within an everyday context, Indigenous communities must have the ability to practice Indigenous food sovereignty. Corntassel continues to explain that “disruptions to Indigenous livelihoods, governance, and natural-world relationships can jeopardize the overall health, well-being, identity, and continuity of indigenous communities” (p. 119). At the core of sustainable self-determination is a spiritual and community-based process tied to the land in economically, culturally, and environmentally and is viable for generations (Corntassel, 2008b). Understanding the concept of

sustainable self-determination is important to understanding the connection between how Indigenous food sovereignty can help to create sustainable health and wellness in the every day lives of Indigenous youth. Sustainable self-determination rejuvenates the local community by regenerating relationships and responsibilities to family, Elders, land, and future generations (Corntassel, 2008b). Chandler and Lalonde (1998) define self-determination as preserving cultural knowledge, self-government, Indigenous control over title to lands, control over health, child protection, and jurisdictional systems. When considering how to transfer traditional knowledge to young people, psychologists Chandler and Lalonde highlighted the importance of cultural autonomy through self-determination and the exchange of social capital or the degree that resources are socially invested or reinvested within the community. These resources foster environments of trust, reciprocity, collective action, and participation within and outside of ones community. By exploring “self-determination of civic lives”, Chandler and Lalonde (1998) showed that the process of fostering cultural continuity itself simultaneously increases the well-being of the young adults and their community (p. 191). These relationships begin with understanding and enacting one’s own role to ensure sustainability of people and livelihoods (Corntassel, 2008).

In the following section, I will briefly define the concept of a food system. There are many types of food systems. In basic terms, a food system is the path that food moves from the field to the table (Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Social Issues Team and Elliott Kuhn, 2004). There are many ways that this can happen. For example, Figure 1 depicts an image of how the industrial food system works (Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Social Issues Team & Kuhn, 2004). As an example, migrant labourers are hired at low wages to plant, weed, and harvest foods, which are then taken to processing plants, after which

they are trucked to grocery stores to be sold and then eaten. At every step money is exchanged, resources are used, the food is transported, and waste is produced (see Figure 1).

With regard to “Indigenous food systems”, I would like to clarify that the term is somewhat misleading, in that each First Nation and sometimes each community within that nation has its own specific food system (Turner, Ignace, & Ignace, 2000). The way in which each individual food system operates depends on who carries what type of information, harvesting locations, access to sites, and the location of the community itself (Turner et al., 2000).

Indigenous food systems are not focused on monetary exchange and are modeled very differently from conventional food systems. For example, part of an Indigenous food system might be harvesting clams off the beach and eating them that evening for dinner or smoking salmon gaffed that afternoon in the river so the family can eat it later in the year.

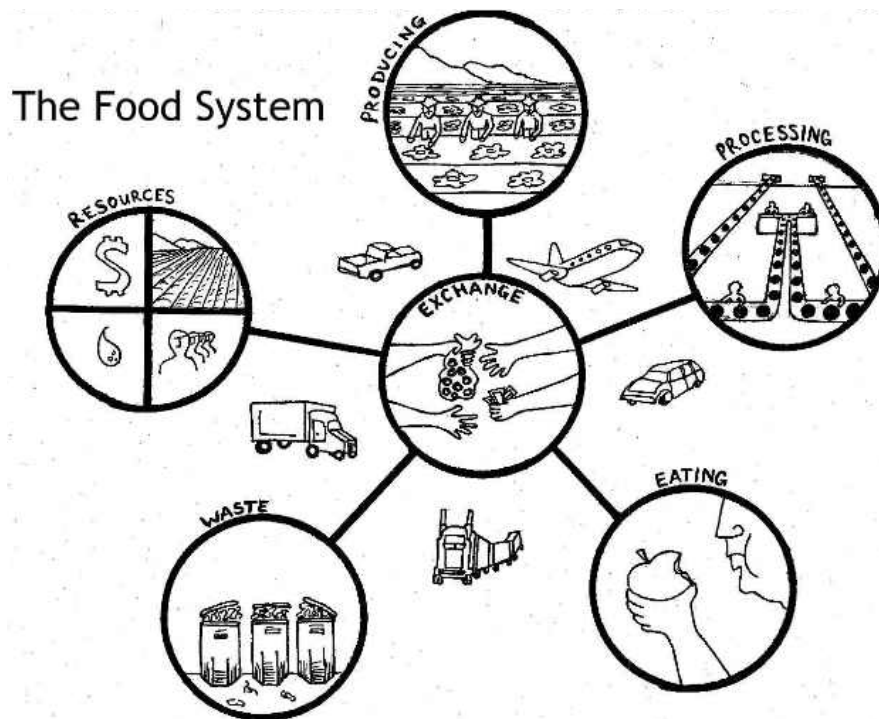


Figure 1. The industrialized food system.

*Note.* From *The Food System* by the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Social Issues Team and E. Kuhn, 2004. Retrieved from <https://www.msu.edu/~howardp/foodsystem.html>

A unique characteristic of Indigenous food systems is the transfer of knowledge over generations and within communities (Turner et al., 2000). Figure 2, developed by noted ethnobiologist Nancy Turner and her colleagues, shows an example of the types of knowledge that are used and passed within an Indigenous food system (Turner et al., 2000). Turner's chart mirrors the complexity of Indigenous food systems and the relationships to sustainable self-determination. The middle of the large oval provides examples of the worldview and philosophy that supports an Indigenous food system. The outer oval shows that there are two aspects relating to the practice of this system: one is the actual practice and strategy relating to obtaining food and the knowledge that surrounds it, and the other is the importance of communication. Often food knowledge is passed along in everyday discourse or through oral history, traditions, stories, as well as other methods (Turner et al., 2000). This shows the ultimate difference between industrial and Indigenous systems. In the industrial system, knowledge transfer is largely limited to institutionalized learning or simple movements in an assembly line. Factories where deep knowledge is not needed have replaced traditional farming knowledge. This is not true of Indigenous food systems where both broad and specific knowledge are essential to working within that particular food system.

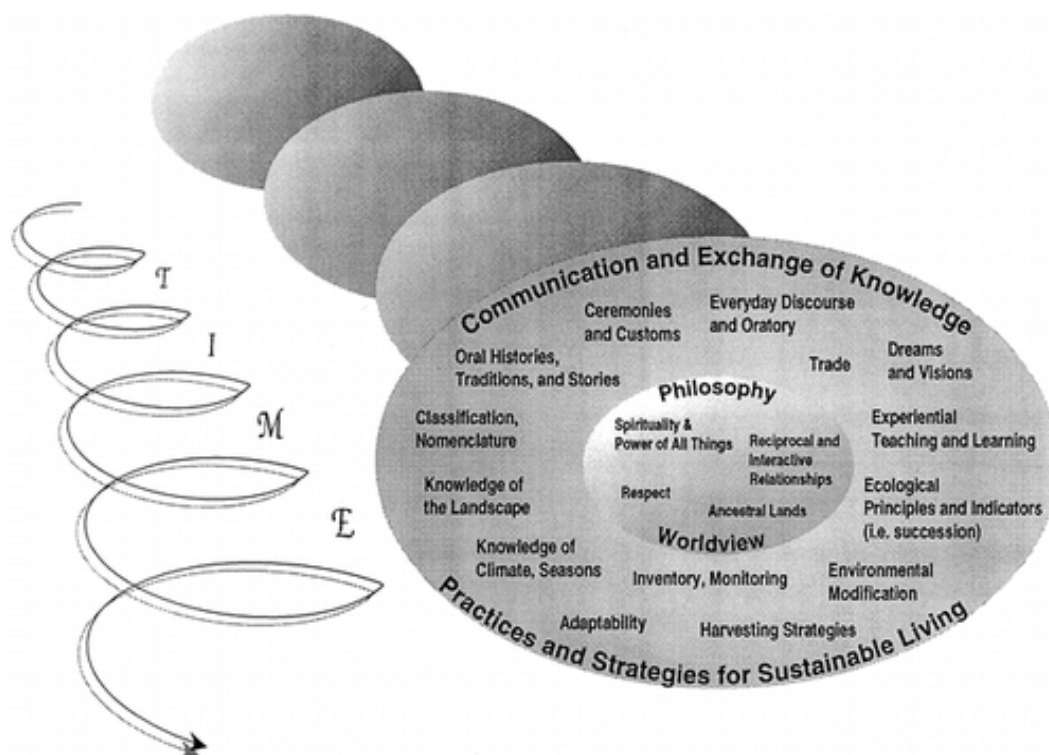


Figure 2. The complexity of Indigenous food systems.

*Note.* From “Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Wisdom of Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia,” by N. J. Turner, M. B., Ignace, and R. Ignace, 2000, *Ecological Applications*, 10(5), p. #. Copyright 2000 by N. J. Turner, M. B., Ignace, and R. Ignace.

Within the context of a food system, there are two philosophies about access and control of the food supplied—food security and food sovereignty. The difference between food security and food sovereignty lies in control of the food system. When a community enjoys food sovereignty, they control the production, processing, distribution, selection, and consumption of food. Food security, on the other hand, is about *access* to adequate and healthy food (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1996a, 1996b). Heads of states and governments at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (1996a) World Food Summit in Rome reaffirmed “the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger” (para. 1). This definition of food security does not refer to control over the food system, or to

decisions about which foods come to the table or how they get there. These decisions are of importance when considering the key elements of Indigenous food systems and food sovereignty.

Cathleen Kneen (2006), quoting Brewster Kneen, both well-known community food activists within British Columbia, warned us not to get caught up in Westernized significance of “security,” “resources,” and “sovereignty.” As these words imply a militaristic and individualistic worldview that is culturally inappropriate.

Often, he said, we just eat food without thinking of its effect on our bodies and our health, and in the same way we often ignore the implications of the language we use. Speaking, for example, about “resources” (“genetic resources”, “natural resources”, even “human resources”) implies that these are items available for ownership and exploitation; “security” carries overtones of individualism and militarism. We need to be careful that we do not describe “sovereignty” in the same language of control that characterizes the system we are critiquing. (Kneen, 2006, p. 1)

Indigenous food sovereignty brings in spiritual knowledge connected to food systems and goes beyond Brewster Kneen’s (as cited in Kneen, 2006) warning, beyond concepts of food security and food sovereignty, to address the specific needs of Indigenous communities. Dawn Morrison (2008), a Secwepemc activist and a founder of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty, shared her description of Indigenous food as “one that has been primarily harvested, cultivated, taken care of, prepared, preserved, shared, or traded within the boundaries of their respective territories based on values of interdependency, respect, reciprocity, and ecological sustainability” (p. 5). Morrison (2008) shared key principles regarding Indigenous food sovereignty, declaring that it is essential that food is understood as a sacred gift and comes with a responsibility to “nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants, and animals” (p. 11). Indigenous food sovereignty is not an abstract concept; it is a daily practice and a lifestyle that includes all generations and community domains (Morrison, 2008). Sovereignty is also about self-determination, where choice and ability to choose to eat from within an

Indigenous food system, rather than an industrial food system is also available and not regulated (Morrison, 2008). Lastly, sovereignty is about creating policy or recreating policy that supports these principles on provincial, national and international levels (Morrison, 2008).

Many Indigenous people are embracing Indigenous food sovereignty as one way to revitalize and sustain their cultural practices. Dawn Morrison (2008) described this as “the most intimate way in which Indigenous peoples interact with their environment, Indigenous food systems are in turn maintained through the active participation in traditional land and food systems” (p. 5). Cathleen Kneen (2006) quoted Dawn Morrison in further describing Indigenous food sovereignty as “essentially the authority to engage in the traditional complex and spiritual relationships with plants, animals, water – as well as other humans – and to fulfill the obligations of responsibility to them” (p. 1).

In 2007, food sovereignty was defined during the Forum for Food Sovereignty held in Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali, as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyéléni, 2007a, para. 3). This definition embraces adaptability, Indigenous knowledge of traditional food systems, and Indigenous spirituality.

Indigenous peoples face many barriers to achieving food sovereignty. Key issues include health issues related to loss of access to traditional foods and the loss of knowledge about how to prepare them. In a radio interview with Jon Steinman, Paul Smith from the Oneida Nation and Director of Indigenous Peoples Initiative for Heifer International, stated that the health burden facing Indigenous peoples is a “direct result from the food and the colonizing of our diet” (Steinman, 2007). However, addressing the colonization of the diet is not enough; Smith asserted, “We need help protecting our forests ... need help protecting our fishing and hunting



rights; that's our food security" (Steinman, 2007). Control over ones food sources is more than just food security: this is food sovereignty.

Harriet Kuhnlein (1994), Professor of Human Nutrition and Founding Director of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples Nutrition and Environment at McGill University, recognized that for Indigenous peoples industrialization of the land, and now the oceans, has led to a decline in the density of food species, reduced accessibility of harvesting areas, reduced time and energy to devote to harvesting, and a decline in the transfer of knowledge to young people regarding food harvesting and use. These losses, coupled with the observed contrast in the past good health of the elders versus the comparatively poorer health of the younger populations, has made many people embrace the old ways, which includes embracing the practical tools that work within Indigenous food systems.

When Kuhnlein (1994) explored the western foods Indigenous peoples were eating she noticed that there was a lack of variety. In fact, the three top foods were white sugar, white bread, and sugar drinks. Eating these types of foods is linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, dental decay, loss of visual acuity, and diabetes, which were previously unknown to Indigenous communities (Kuhnlein, 1994). For example, cardiovascular disease has been largely attributed to high-fat, high-calorie diets in combination with low levels of physical activity, which characterizes the western lifestyle (Bell-Sheetter, 2004).

Harriet Kuhnlein (1994) also noted that, while traditional foods are sometimes becoming combined with market foods, "food made available through industrialization and market economies are replacing traditional foods in the diets of Indigenous peoples" [Video]). As well, the use of western ingredients as substitutes for traditional ones often leads to the loss of knowledge about how to use traditional foodstuffs. Kuhnlein provided the example of cow

parsnip, which is used by the NuXalk people. She explains that, in preparing cow parsnip, a traditional green vegetable, “[Human] hair is ... taken by knowledgeable Indigenous people to remove the caustic outer layer [of the vegetable]. The use of cow parsnip is declining slowly, but to such a point that it is not used today” (Kuhnlein, 1994[Video]). This example shows that, in addition to the loss of food sources, food knowledge has been undermined by colonization.

The supermarket has become the new shoreline, as Indigenous people are also losing access to their traditional territories and food. Traditional foods are unfortunately not readily available in the supermarket and many of the fresh vegetables are unfamiliar or expensive. In British Columbia, there is a 21% unemployment rate among Indigenous people, and the average employed income of an individual is \$21,000 (British Columbia Stats, 2001). It is difficult to feed a family on a small income with more expensive but healthier, locally grown or organic foods where the story of “field to table” is known.

New, cheap western foods that contain large amounts of sugar and starches are easily accessible; they are what Michael Pollan (2008) has called “edible foodlike substances” (p. 1). Indigenous peoples are increasingly relying on these foods because of “increased external economic development and dependence on federal aid, coupled with continued low incomes” (Bell-Sheetter, 2004, p. 7). This reliance on unhealthy western foods is significantly contributing to the destruction of Indigenous people’s general wellbeing and traditional knowledge, both of which are imperative to healthy living cultures.

The effect of eating western foods reaches beyond physical implications. Harriet Kuhnlein (1994) described food as “an anchor to culture and personal well-being” and “an important indicator of cultural expression” ([Video]). Alicia Bell-Sheetter (2004) also noted, that “While traditional foods may restore physical health, they are equally important for the

revitalization and continuation of Native American cultural and spiritual traditions” (p. 9). She also noted the symbiotic effect of traditional practices with the local ecosystems that industrial farming practices do not have (Bell-Sheetter, 2004).

Indigenous food systems are complex, cyclical processes that involve practices and strategies for sustainable living such as harvesting strategies, adaptability, knowledge of climate and seasons, and the landscape (Turner et al., 2000). These are communicated to future generations through exchanges of knowledge over everyday discourses, ceremonies and customs, oral traditions and histories, and ecological principles (Turner et al., 2000). These systems are embodied within overarching worldviews and philosophies of spirituality, respect, reciprocity, and ancestral lands (Turner et al., 2000).

Turner et al.’s (2000) description of Indigenous food systems (see Figure 2) shows the importance of both cultural continuity gained through information transmission and the role that community has in maintaining this system. This description includes a timeline, maintained by knowledge transfer. Turner has been working with Indigenous people on the west coast of British Columbia to creatively maintain traditional knowledge using western forms of capturing information. She has helped publish many volumes on the identification, uses, and stories surrounding traditional plants.

The preservation of traditional food knowledge is increasingly important, as external factors compromise the ability of people to harvest traditional foods. It begins with a decline in the density of food species as ecosystems are compromised. Elder Laurie (*last name and Nation unknown*) sadly described “a realization that the foods themselves and the skills and practices in using them are slowly dying” (Elder Laurie, as cited by Harriet Kuhnlein in her lecture, *Traditional food of indigenous peoples: An endangered heritage* (1994). Harvesting areas are

less accessible and increasingly unsafe because of environmental damage and privatization of lands. Additionally, people have less time and energy to harvest, as many people are working, are in school, or suffer from chronic disease; all of which contribute to a decline in the transfer of knowledge about food harvesting and use. Finally, as knowledgeable Elders pass, Indigenous cultures becomes increasingly at risk of being lost. In this climate of declining traditional food availability, decreased harvesting time and loss of Elders, the role of young people in maintaining cultural knowledge and continuity is critical.

The premise of using Feasting for Change as a potential vehicle for supporting young adults in working towards Indigenous food sovereignty comes from understanding that feasting together helps to establish or strengthen networks that support the transfer of cultural knowledge to younger generations. For instance, gathering together supports “the resurgence of Aboriginal ceremonies, practices and values [and] has already shown powerful healing qualities” (Mignone & O’Neil, 2005, p. S52). Corntassel (2012) asserts that “these everyday acts of resurgence have promoted the regeneration of sustainable food systems in community and are transmitting these teachings and values to future generations” and are the foundation of regenerating cultural practices (p. 98). The goal of Feasting for Change is to create flexible, diverse, inclusive networks across the dimensions of social capital by bonding, bridging, and linking, thus supporting systems that are necessary to create Indigenous food sovereignty, as understood through the lens of sustainable self-determination. The opportunity to spend quality and constructive time with community members builds trust. Feasting for Change aims to support building this cultural continuity as a pathway to Indigenous food sovereignty, and the health and well-being of Indigenous communities, through young people’s involvement and engagement with Elders and knowledge keepers.

Corntassel (2012), through his work with sustainable food sovereignty and by examining state-based relationships with Indigenous peoples, demonstrates how every day practices that build health and wellness, such as eating traditional foods and supporting Indigenous food systems, are essential aspects of resisting colonial authority (Corntassel, 2012). Through understanding the role that control of food systems and diet has played in the oppression of Indigenous people and the creation of a colonial state, it is possible to appreciate how a "state-centered rights discourse has limits in terms of addressing questions of Indigenous recovery and community resurgence" (Corntassel, 2012, p. 93). Conflict transformation focuses on the community level of state-based relationships and tries to create sustainable forms of peace.

### **Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding**

It is unclear how conflict transformation addresses the conflicts arising from colonialism and how they affect Indigenous peoples. In fact, I question the effectiveness of state-based relationships in confronting colonialism and supporting Indigenous peoples in creating self-determination. In this section, I define the terms and concepts related to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. I further examine the relationships between these concepts and colonialism. In the first section, I describe and contextualize the concept of conflict transformation and its goal, sustainable peace and in the second section, I examine the relationships between peacebuilding and conflict transformation, with respect to colonialism. I also outline perceived colonialist tendencies within the peacebuilding field within three main models of peacebuilding: neo-colonial, liberal, and post-liberal. Finally, I analyze potential effects these tendencies may have on resolving protracted conflict and the possibility of eradicating further manifestations of colonialism.

## **Conflict Transformation**

John Paul Lederach, a well-known researcher and Director of the Eastern Mennonite University's Conflict Transformation Program, developed the conflict transformation methodology to help with his peacebuilding work, which was focused on resolving protracted and intercultural conflicts in highly divided societies (Lederach, 1997).

Lederach (1997) defined conflict transformation as

deliberate intervention to effect change.... [T]ransformation represents intentional intervention that minimizes poorly functioning communication and maximizes mutual understanding, and that brings to the surface the relational fears, hopes, and goals of the people involved in terms of affectivity and interdependence. (p. 82)

Edward Azar (1985) first defined protracted conflict as not being necessarily violent, but as an “on-going and seemingly unresolvable conflict” (p. 59), and recognized that conflicts persist when resolution does not touch on the underlying injustices. To resolve protracted conflicts, Azar advocated focusing on human needs, defined as (a) security of culture and valued relationships, (b) social recognition of distinctive identity, and (c) effective political participation, rather than peacebuilding attempts (Ramsbotham, 2005). According to Lederach & Lederach (2010), protracted conflict destroys a person's voice, sense of self, and sense of place and purpose. Healing from protracted conflict is a personal process or journey to reclaim, name, and project one's voice. This happens both within a cultural context and individually (Lederach & Lederach, 2010). Personal healing from protracted conflicts is necessary to create sustainable peace. It is the role of conflict transformation to empower individuals and communities to move along this path.

Conflict transformation is described as a journey taken by individuals who recognize the capacity for relationships on all levels to transform and who are willing to take risks to make constructive change (Lederach, 1997; 2005). This includes cultivating a sense of bravery by

letting go of fear and welcoming creativity, and embracing complexity of relationships rather than focusing on polarization (Lederach, 2005). For Lederach (1997), conflict transformation means “redefining relationships, envisioning how people will work together in interdependent ways, and changing the way people structure and conduct their relationships” (p. 130).

The goal of conflict transformation is to create sustainable peace by focusing on transformation of relationships within societies and communities, as a whole, rather than solely within political negotiations. Lederach (1995) defined sustainable peace as “peaceable relations and restructuring” (p. 14) and balancing of power structures as well as increased equality and justice to the benefit of the less empowered. Peaceable relations are achieved when addressing imbalance of power and interdependence within unequal relationships through negotiations between the two sides. The markers of sustainable peace, the goal of conflict transformation, are co-existence, cooperation, and constructive interdependence (Lederach, 2005, p. 97). According to Lederach, 1995) balancing power, creating social change, and an increased sense of justice through more peaceable relations and means are achievable with sustainable peace (Curle & Dugan, 1982; Lederach, 1995).

According to Lederach & Lederach (2010), throughout the transformation of conflict it is important to continuously stay in touch with one’s personal power and to challenge the destructive forces that cause the conflict. To support the healing process, Lederach’s (1997) model of conflict transformation relies on five concepts related to empowering the people involved within the conflict: (a) people are a resource, (b) Indigenous knowledge is key to creating appropriate action and defining meaning within the context of the conflict, (c) build self-sufficiency from local resources, (d) participation of locals is essential, and (e) self-awareness

and validation stems from empowering locals (Lederach, 1995, p. 31). The process of sustainable peace is analogous to a process of personal and societal healing, and relies on negotiation.

According to Lederach (1997; 2005), his focus is not on negotiating conflicts on state levels, but rather on transforming violent protracted conflict into sustainable peace at the local level. This is done through using conflict resolution techniques such as mediation, nonviolent political action, and spiritual transformations to move through the conflict and towards sustainable peace.

### **Protracted Conflict, Peacebuilding, and Colonization**

Lederach (1997) suggests that peacebuilding is “fundamentally rooted in the building of relationship and trust” (p. 130) rather addressing the history of peacebuilding, which stems from colonialism and imperialism (MacGuinty, 2008). This section describes the history and practice of peacebuilding, the field from which conflict transformation is based. It describes the neo-colonial, liberal, and post-liberal peacebuilding models and relates their relationship with colonialism.

Peacebuilding was a discipline that emerged to both prevent and resolve protracted conflicts and support self-determination for post-colonial states (Azar, 1985; Paris, 2002; Richmond, 2004). The goal of peacebuilding was the decolonization of states (Paris, 2002), however, the indiscriminating and uncompromising promotion of liberal market democracy continued the colonial-era system in particular and subtle ways (Mac Ginty, 2008; Richmond, 2004; Walker, 2004). For example, the liberal democracy methodology focussed on achieving human rights rather than human needs (Rosato, 2003). According to Barnidge (2009), the philosophy of liberal democracy fits a broad definition of neo-colonialism, in which foreign powers (other states, supranational, or intergovernmental organizations) seek to subjugate an



acknowledged sovereign state to its own interests, despite the independence of the state, thus continuing the spirit of colonization rather than disrupting and dissolving it.

Self-determination within the peacebuilding model is a difficult and elusive goal; Indigenous self-determination is even more so. Oliver Richmond (2004) states that peacebuilding as a field follows a Western hegemonic idea of peace and order that is maintained by Western neo-liberal governance and economic structures. Indigenous voices are subsumed by policy and process dictated by powerful entities are convinced of the superiority of Western peacebuilding systems (Mac Ginty, 2008). In particular, Richmond (2010) criticises conflict transformation for ignoring the power of local elites and the potential to co-opt the peacebuilding process by "advocates international approaches at the local level rather than engaging with local agency" (p.673). This risk is not acknowledged within conflict transformation and therefore allows the peace process to become easily co-opted. Despite focusing on the local, peacebuilding and conflict transformation "have failed to represent the everyday. [They have] failed to recognise local capacity, agency and resistance" (Richmond, 2010, p. 673). As a result "the indigenous, local, nature and 'other' has been excluded and masked by a discussion of interests, norms and rights" (Richmond, 2010, p. 674). As long as Western approaches to peace are promoted, Indigenous models will be ignored.

According to Patrick Thornberry's (2000) research on the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, there are many international-level obstacles to Indigenous self-determination: (a) self-determination is too vague a term; (b) self-determination means secession; (c) self-determination is superfluous, autonomy is enough; (d) self-determination of Indigenous people divides the state; and (e) Indigenous groups are not entitled to self-

determination. Corntassel's (2008) concept of sustainable self-determination provides a marker of what conflict resolution models should be working towards. His definition is rooted in community and disregards the political-legal and economic solutions that conflict transformation and other peacebuilding models propose as manifestation of colonization (Corntassel, 2008b). Further, his (2008) definition of sustainable self-determination focuses on the ways in which "evolving indigenous livelihoods, food security, community governance, relationships to homelands and the natural world, and ceremonial life can be practiced today locally and regionally" (p. 119). This definition is rooted in the land, culture, and ceremony of Indigenous peoples, within daily life. Further, any influence on the international political level can then happen in concert with cultural values and ways (Corntassel, 2008b). Keeping this in mind, I analysed three contemporary models of peacebuilding with regard to colonialism: neo-colonial, liberal (also known as post colonial), and post-liberal. I look at how each model promotes self-determination and potential effects of these practices on Indigenous peoples.

#### ***Neo-Colonial Peacebuilding Model.***

The neo-colonial internationally-sanctioned peacebuilding agenda endorses sovereign democracies, linked with liberalist and neo-liberalist models of free market economies, termed liberal market democracy (Paris, 2002, p. 638), while ensuring the democracy is aligned with powerful states (e.g., US, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, France) and organizations that hold international power, such as the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund, and World Bank (Heathershaw, 2008; Mac Ginty, 2008; Paris, 2002). The endorsement often happens with little or no compromise or equal alternatives and at the insistence of outside entities (Paris, 2002), with the increasing tendency to use force (Richmond, 2004); recent events in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Egypt reflect this tendency. However, it is born primarily out of the belief that liberal

democracies enhance international security and promote world peace (Fukuyama, 1992; Heathershaw, 2008; Paris, 2002). Liberal market democracy has been promoted as a model of governance that allows states to gain international recognition and full rights (Paris, 2002).

Within the context of neo-colonial responses to violent protracted conflicts, Indigenous people calling for self-determination themselves are often denied a voice because of fears this will open a gateway for violent struggles for sovereignty or statehood, causing more civil unrest (Barnsley & Bleiker, 2008; Cornassel, 2008b; Richmond, 2012). This practice of neo-colonialism is still being actively pursued, mainly by the United States (e.g. Palestine, Libya, and Afghanistan) and has moved towards more aggressive models of pre-emptive peacekeeping rather than peacebuilding (Richmond, 2012).

#### ***Liberal peacebuilding model.***

In response to neo-colonial peacebuilding, the liberal peacebuilding model shifted to embrace “non-sovereign” self-determination (Richmond, n.d., p. 9; Permission to Cite). Non-sovereign self-determination challenged the notion of inseparable ties between Indigenous self-determination and sovereign “boundaried territories,” while recognizing the physical and cultural survival of Indigenous peoples is tied to the resources of the land (Richmond, n.d., p. 9; Permission to Cite). By allowing partial control over decisions regarding local territory, the liberal peacebuilding model supported giving more power to the local voice (Barnsley & Bleiker, 2008, p. 132; Richmond, n.d., p. 9; Permission to Cite). The UN report *Indigenous Peoples’ Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources* by Special Rapporteur Erica-Irene Daes (2004) asserted that for self-determination to be sustainable for Indigenous people control over natural resources must be permanent. Self-determination, in this context, embraces the “collective right to determine or influence the use of traditional lands and related natural resources” (Barnsley &

Bleiker, 2008, p 132), while allowing the state to maintain control over the territory (Richmond, n.d.; Permission to Cite). Non-sovereign self-determination within the liberal peacebuilding model does not explicitly take into consideration the generational transmission of Indigenous cultural knowledge and the security to continue practicing it or the importance of connection to traditional lands for cultural and physical survival (Corntassel, 2008b). Corntassel (2008b) argued that this model focuses ensuring economic viability through exploitation of limited natural resources, such as oil and gas, thus compromising or not fully acknowledging sustainable cultural and environmental practices.

***Post-liberal peacebuilding model.***

The post-liberal theory promises Indigenous peoples voice through a hybrid model known as “top-down bottom-up,” in which local agencies are incorporated into negotiations on all levels, including state-level negotiations regarding the adoption of liberal market democracy (Richmond, 2010). Within this model local agencies (i.e., non-governmental agencies and Indigenous peoples with claim to traditional territory) can subtly resist the policies and agreements put forth by the state or outside powers (Corntassel, 2008b; Mac Ginty, 2010). Richmond (2010) suggested that this form of peacebuilding supports “the constant everyday forms of resistance through which local agency may be expressed despite overwhelming authority” (p. 685). However, Richmond (2010), as well as Alfred and Corntassel (2005) cautioned against integrative goals, as an aspect of a new colonial agenda, as there is no obligation on the part of the state and outside powers to recognize the position of Indigenous peoples. Corntassel and Bryce (2012) warned that “when addressing contemporary colonialism and cultural harm, it is important to understand that the Indigenous rights discourse has limits and can only take struggles for land reclamation and justice so far” (p. 152).

The top-down bottom-up manifestation of post-liberal peacebuilding has demonstrated the power to disperse and faction Indigenous mobilization by encouraging people to lower their goals to what “can” be done (Hale, 2004; Smith, 2007). Indigenous groups are allowed a semblance of organization and political power limited to non-threatening actions that do not question state authority (Fischer, 2007; Hale, 2004). These goals are known as “limit points” (Fischer, 2007, p. 8) and “foreshorten the possibilities of radical change by concentrating attention and energy on what is viewed as attainable” (p. 8). Silencing Indigenous perspectives is one of major tools of colonization (Walker, 2004).

Despite focussing on the Indigenous voice, peacebuilding practices are limited to operating within the liberal democratic model, and while the hybrid model provides room for distinctive identity and more participation in political processes (Mac Ginty, 2008), it still does not address human needs, as defined by Azar (1985), which are necessary in ending protracted conflicts. As Alfred and Corntassel (2005) suggested, the colonial process is continued by drawing Indigenous peoples into a political-legal relationship, thereby pulling people away from culture and cultural practices, as well as relationships within the broader First Nation community. Self-determination in the context of peacebuilding or conflict resolution focuses on conflicts over land rights. It is not a spiritual process that fosters connections to ancestors, cultural responsibilities or relationships to land, family, Elders, and future generations.

### ***Summary of Peacebuilding Models.***

Through the uncompromising promotion of liberal market democracy, various peacebuilding models continue the spirit of colonization, despite the original intent of decolonizing and supporting self-determination. Rather than encompassing and embracing spiritual connections and cultural responsibilities to land, family, ancestors, and future

generations, peacebuilding continually engages Indigenous peoples within a political-legal framework. Methods such as limit points have the effect of controlling possibilities for social change. This constrains negotiation boundaries by restricting options to challenge underlying colonial and neo-colonial systemic tendencies. Indigenous voices are encouraged in a controlled environment and the state is not obliged to act on recommendation. The potential for utilizing conventional peacebuilding models to analyse findings is very limited. Lederach focuses on spiritual and peaceable relationships, but consistent with the peacebuilding agenda does not acknowledge the importance of addressing systemic issues stemming from colonization.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

Indigenous communities within Canada have experienced generations of structural violence through colonization, resulting in intergenerational discord, loss of cultural knowledge, and loss of access to cultural practices, including land-based activities. This discord has manifested in many ways, such as a decrease in the quality of traditional knowledge transferred between generations or between peers, a decrease in the amount of traditional foods, and an increase in cheap foods that lack nutritional value, all of which has resulted in challenges to wellness on personal and community levels.

Feasting for Change works within communities and with young adults to address these challenges caused by colonization in two ways. The first is to directly address underlying effects of colonization—the loss of food sovereignty and traditional knowledge. The second is to encourage young adults to discuss challenges caused by the colonization of traditional food systems and inspire communities to action, thus working towards sustainable self-determination. Feasting for Change works with individuals and communities and is involved with

acknowledging the effects of colonialism has had on daily life, including relationships with family and community, connection to the land and oceans, as well as spirituality.

Conventional methods of peacebuilding continue the spirit of colonization through engaging Indigenous communities in political-legal frameworks without acknowledging the importance of cultural and spiritual responsibilities and connections on individual and community levels. Exacerbating the difference between The state has no direct responsibility towards engaging Indigenous peoples and is thus restricting the capacity for Indigenous voices to be heard. Peacebuilding as a field of work is then limited in its ability to ensure and support lasting social change that works towards sustainable self-determination.

Lederach's (1997) model of conflict transformation works towards sustainable peace by breaking down the stages of conflict and developing strategies to rebuild a sense of wellbeing and peace. While being rooted in peacebuilding, Lederach's model relies on individuals, Indigenous knowledge, self-sufficiency, participation, and personal awareness to direct the transformation. I question the effectiveness of conflict transformation in being able to recognize and address the everyday experiences of colonialism through the modality of the political-legal state-based framework.

Through this thesis, I explored the utility of conflict transformation in addressing issues of relevance in the every day lives of Indigenous young adults. In particular, I examined the effectiveness of conflict transformation as a tool for supporting young adults in working towards Indigenous food sovereignty as an indicator of sustainable self-determination. In order for conflict transformation to be meaningful with an Indigenous context, it must addresses traditional food sovereignty and cultural exchange not only at the political table, but more

importantly, at the community table, where relevant issues can be attended to and where the younger generation's voices are heard.



### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

To ensure a culturally appropriate approach for this project, I employed an Indigenous methodology, grounded in community-based research principles, in this exploration of the perspectives of young people about their roles in building community health and wellness through Indigenous food sovereignty (Louis, 2007; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). The qualitative research method was adopted, as this was the most appropriate method in exploring young people's experiences in relating to traditional foods, Elders, and their communities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

Indigenous methodology relates to the politics of research and emphasizes Indigenous communities' control over research, its products, and processes. For Indigenous peoples, the term research is often "linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 1), in which researchers take a position of power and make decisions that affect Indigenous lives and communities without consent. Indigenous methodological practices facilitate Indigenous control over cultural identities as well as decolonize research practices. The goal of Indigenous methodologies is to support the Indigenous community or group in self-determination through research that promotes decolonization, transformation, mobilization, and healing (Ball & Janyst, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 117). In his capacity as Policy Analyst with the National Aboriginal Health Organization and in partnership with Indigenous communities, Schnarch (2004) reported key ethical considerations involving Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) to protect Indigenous people within the research context. Ownership relates to the community having stewardship of their own information. Control relates to the right of the community to direct the research from conception to completion. Access refers to having access to raw data and maintaining the right to made

decisions about what is done with it. Finally, possession is the mechanism through which ownership is asserted and protected. Research in this context benefits Indigenous communities, rather than solely academic researchers and the institutions researchers represent.

Unlike many Western research methodologies, Indigenous methodologies do not pretend to be apolitical or objective (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 117). Legitimacy is not gained through researcher neutrality, but by basing research on localized and situationalized Indigenous epistemologies<sup>7</sup> (Louis, 2007; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Within Indigenous epistemology, research is a spiritual journey, incorporating holistic thinking that embraces both spiritual and physical worlds (Louis, 2007). This contrasts many Western, positivist perspectives, which tend to compartmentalize knowledge and seek universal “truths.” Indigenous research is led by a community vision of social change, rather than a researcher’s passion or vision.

Within Indigenous methodologies, research processes are expected to support self-determination through healing, enabling, and educating, which are just as important as the research outcome (Cochran et al., 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 127). Naming this methodology as Indigenous research privileges “Indigenous values, attitudes and practices rather than disguising them” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 127) with labels like collaborative research or even participatory research. In the context of this research, I have incorporated Indigenous methodology by ensuring active participation of the working group members of Feasting for Change, who have provided ongoing guidance and support in maintaining a strong Indigenous perspective throughout the project.

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<sup>7</sup> Epistemology is a Greek word meaning ways of knowing.

## **Indigenous Research as a Paradigm**

As a researcher, I used Shawn Wilson's (2008) concept of "being accountable to your relations", as an obligation that I supported through the relationships I made within the context of this research (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). Decisions were made and information was shared respectfully with integrity and in a way that was useful to the communities I worked with; using this methodology also honoured the reciprocity of the relationships built between me, the Feasting for Change working group, the young people who chose to participate, and the Indigenous communities represented by Chief and Council or Executive Director. Reciprocity, respect, and responsibilities are the features upon which a methodology should be built. It was my responsibility, as the researcher, to maintain reciprocity and respect so that uneven power dynamics did not occur. An Indigenous research paradigm conceptualizes research as revealing links or relationships between different objects, people, places, and concepts that make up the web of Indigenous understandings of the world (Wilson, 2008).

## **Research Design**

My goal was to determine the relevance and applicability of conflict transformation in supporting young adults in working towards Indigenous food sovereignty through community programs, such as Feasting for Change. This was done through trying to understand Indigenous young people's perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in building community health and wellness through traditional food sovereignty. Feasting for Change supported the research with the hope conflict transformation could be used as a tool to make their programming more effective. To achieve this, I utilized methods, which reflected my methodological principles, ensured community support for the research and, therefore, the participating young people, and captured their perceptions related to the phenomenon of study.

**Qualitative research approach.**

Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (p. 15). Qualitative researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Creswell, 1998, p. 3); researchers engage in complex processes in an in-depth manner. For example, qualitative research is typically employed to explore little-known phenomena, or those previously over-studied from a particular perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 57). Qualitative research itself should be “systematically and rigorously conducted” (Mason, 1996, p. 5), while remaining strategic, flexible, and contextual. Indeed, qualitative research embraces the combining of methods, methodologies, perspectives, and observers, which is said to add “rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry” (Flick, 2002, p. 229).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with Indigenous young adults using an Indigenous methodology and CBR approach to ensure that the Indigenous young adults were given appropriate space to construct and relate their experiences of what their role in their community is around Indigenous food sovereignty as it relates to Indigenous health and their relationships and teachings from Elders.

**Community-Based Research.**

I have worked with the Feasting for Change working group in a research capacity since September 2009, when I introduced the concept of creating a research partnership with them. They approved of the idea, and together we created a research goal that would help Feasting for Change understand how they could best support young adults through programming. Within this goal was a mandate to ensure that the research would benefit the young adults themselves, the local Indigenous communities, as well as Feasting for Change. The goal and the mandate

supported the community-based research (CBR) guidelines that privilege community knowledge and participation within a framework of social change and decolonization (Flicker & Savan, 2006; Reitsma-Street, 2002).

The Feasting for Change working group met on a monthly basis, and I consulted with the group on the development of the research particulars. The Feasting for Change working group included three young adults, who were very generous in offering direction and feedback throughout the research process. The young adults later agreed to participate as interviewees. This process followed the principles encompassed within Indigenous methodologies, CBR which defines research participants as equal partners in the research process—all stakeholders work together to define the research, develop the methodology, collect and analyze data, and communicate findings (Castleden, Garvin, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 127). These goals of power sharing, trust, and ownership are similar to the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) (Schnarch, 2004, p. 81).

There were many stakeholders within this research project: the Feasting for Change working group, the research participants, and the Indigenous communities represented by the Chief and Council or Executive Director. I wrote letters to the Chief and Council and Executive Director of the Indigenous communities that the Feasting for Change working group decided to invite to participate in the research. I presented these letters in person, which enabled me to engage in a conversation about the nature of the research and any changes the Chief and Council or Executive Director wanted to make.

The key aspects of CBR are a reflection on the experience and concerns of participants, dialogue about power and influence, and action for social change (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 22). Reflection, dialogue, and then action provided a system to discuss the priorities of

Indigenous methodologies and issues as they arose when conducting the research. The pairing between Indigenous methodologies and CBR can theoretically dissolve when obtaining “reliable data” becomes more important than the process (Cochran et al., 2008; Reitsma-Street, 2002, p. 70; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). It was my responsibility as the researcher to ensure that potentially disparate power was addressed through privileging each Indigenous community within the community action research framework. This especially included young people’s perspectives.

An Elder from Scia’ new First Nation taught me about creating mutual respect with young people. I followed this teaching to encouraged the young people to make their own decisions about how they would like to be involved with this research project. In keeping with this teaching, I made very clear spaces within the scope of this research for young people to provide their input and help give direction to the project. Through Feasting for Change, young people had the opportunity to direct how they wanted to be involved in the feasts, thereby creating personal ownership over the process. This research project also gave the young people a space to talk about their experiences

### **Recruitment and sampling.**

Establishing community partnerships includes building trust and mutual understanding. As a founding member of Feasting for Change, I have been both a volunteer and a paid staff member. The long-term relationships between myself and the other group members were based on trust and mutual understanding. The Feasting for Change working group acted as an Advisory Committee and fulfilled this role by accepting my Research Proposal for approval and revisions. They received a regular in-person report and offered me direction and guidance. As an Advisory Committee, and with guidance from my research supervisor Dr. Charlotte Reading, the Feasting for Change working group provided approval for the research design and method, including data gathering methods, analysis tools, and dissemination plan. Additionally, the support of Feasting

for Change members and particularly the young adults involved with Feasting for Change provided me with knowledge around protocols specific to their communities.

I have built relationships with people from the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), Pacheedaht First Nation, T'Sou-ke First Nation, Songhees First Nation, Scia'new First Nation, and other local First Nations over the last 7 years through my work with LifeCycles Project Society and Feasting for Change.

The research participants were nine Indigenous young adults who lived in Victoria's urban community, attended programs at VNFC, or were members of Songhees First Nation, T'Sou-ke First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, Tsawout First Nation; all participants had previously participated in an Feasting for Change event. They were asked to demonstrate an interest in the topic by answering a yes or no question: "Are you interested in traditional foods?" Young adults who answered yes were informed of a \$25 thank you gift, which they received upon signing the Participant Consent form. This gift was to be given to potential participants, even if they decided to withdraw from the research after signing the Participant Consent form. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at anytime during the research process. The number of participants was limited by the financial support provided by Feasting for Change.

I followed the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (TCPS, 2010) standards and the OCAP guidelines in three ways:

1. I invited the Chief and Council of each participating community to review the research framework and related processes.
2. I invited the Chief and Council to access information through formalized protocols.
3. I continued to consult with the Feasting for Change working group throughout the project about decisions related to the research.

Feasting for Change recommended that I hand deliver letters of invitation to the Chief and Council (or appropriate representative) of T'Sou-ke First Nation, Songhees First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, Tsawout First Nation, Scia'new First Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, and the Executive Director of the VNFC (urban centre) for participation in this study (see Appendix A). In the case of Pacheedaht First Nation, I mailed the request due to their remote location. This letter outlined my research rationale and methods as well as my relationship with Feasting for Change, the Indigenous community, and the research participants. I included the Permission to Conduct Research Form (see Appendix B), the Participant Consent form (see Appendix C), topic guide and research questions (see Appendix D), information about Feasting for Change (see Appendix E). I also included my contact information and that of my supervisor, Dr. Charlotte Reading as well as a research proposal and recruitment poster.

Following Band Council protocol, I held meetings either in person or by telephone with Executive Director, Chief and Council members, or designate to gain permission to conduct research. During these meetings, I gave the Executive Director, Chief and Council, or designate the opportunity to address their concerns and goals within the scope of the project by offering to modify the research to fulfill their particular needs within the scope of the research. During each meeting, I was asked to state my previous connections within the communities I was requesting to conduct research within, thereby establishing my reputation as someone who was concerned for the welfare of the community and its individual members.

I invited and held meetings with the Chief of Scia'new First Nation and designate of Pauquachin First Nation, both of whom verbally encouraged the research premise; however, the Permission to Conduct Research Forms were not signed due to perceived lack of interest in the villages. T'Sou-ke First Nation, Songhees First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, Tsawout First



Nation, and the Executive Director of VNFC granted permission to conduct the research. Each of these communities were given the opportunity to revise research protocols to ensure benefit to their community.

After the University of Victoria Ethics Board approved the research and I obtained the support of Chief and Council (or appropriate representative), I invited the participation of young adults between the ages of 15 and 21 through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is the selection of “information-rich cases” (Patton, 1987, p. 52) for in-depth study. This form of sampling is used in situations in which the researcher would like to learn more about specific issues that are of importance to the research topic.

To increase transparency of the phenomena of research, Feasting for Change recommended that I hand deliver a second copy of the original Request for Permission to Conduct Research along with posters to Community Health Representatives, young adults workers, and community members; I also posted them in the reserve and community offices, buildings, and newsletters. The recruitment poster was written at an appropriate reading level in non-coercive language and outlined eligibility criteria for research participants. My contact information was provided, and participants were encouraged to contact me directly if they had questions, concerns, or wanted to participate.

On their own initiative, the designate from T’Sou-ke First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, and Tsawout First Nation offered to support the assessment by personally contacting young adults who they thought might be interested in participating in the phenomena study. T’Sou-ke First Nation and VNFC invited me to events attended by young adults in the community to hand deliver the recruitment poster. I was later contacted by young adults from these communities as a result of the support given by the designate. After potential participants

contacted me, I met with them in person or over the telephone whereupon I informed the participants about the purpose of my research thesis and why I wanted to interview them.

Participation in this study was based on self-selection and was voluntary in nature. To garner interest in the research topic, a yes or no question was asked to those who had previously participated in Feasting for Change events: “Are you interested in traditional foods?” Feasting for Change and Elders had recommended the age range of 15–21, as this is the age range of young people typically missing from Feasting for Change events. However, this age range was not static and community members who were both above and below the age criteria expressed interest. As participation numbers were low, young adults outside of the recommended range were accepted and the age range was extended to 14–30. I used a small but critical case sample of nine Indigenous young adults from each of the participating communities who were involved in Feasting for Change as “information- rich cases” (Patton, 1987, p. 52) for in-depth study.

After the nine Indigenous young adults agreed to participate, we arranged a date and location for the interviews. Before each interview was conducted, I asked the participant to sign a consent form to use the information they shared during the interview process (Appendix G). A gift of a thank you card and \$25 dollars was then given to each participant. Participants were also invited to choose photographs related to traditional food and Feasting for Change events. The interviews were conducted in an environment familiar to the participant and in a private space at each participant’s convenience. Feasting for Change generously donated \$500 for travel funds and participant gifts. The number of participants rested on these funds.

### **Data collection.**

Feasting for Change programming is focused on the importance of young adults shaping their experiences. Graveline (1998) insisted “on people representing their own voices, their own stories” (p. 124). Carlson and Dimitriadis (2003) also spoke about the importance of young

people having “a sense that they are controlling their own representation, that they are in control of their own cultural identity, and are creatively shaping and moulding language, style, and self into something new” (p. 21).

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for participants to explore the “meaningful properties of the social reality” (Mason, 1996, p. 39) they live within and that the research wanted to explore. Interviews provided interpretations of experiences, which are sometimes seen as a shortcoming (Mason, 1996, p. 40). However, as the purpose of the research was to explore young people’s perspectives of their role in Indigenous food sovereignty, the interviews provided an excellent method to explore their experiences in a deep and complex way, rather than a focus group method, which might have elicited more superficial answers (Agar & McDonald, 1995; Kaplowitz & Hoeln, 2001; Mason, 1996, p. 41).

When a community feast was held, young adults were invited to take pictures of the event to express their voice. The photographs were not taken for research purposes, but for building young adult’s’ role in community events and support for Feasting for Change. Individuals who were in the photographs granted permission for Feasting for Change to use photographs; however, explicit permission to use the photographs for research purposes was not given. With this in mind, I avoided photographs of people and instead chose photographs of activities the young adults participated in during feasts. Examples of these activities included taking food out of a pitcook or smoking salmon using traditional methods. I used some of these photographs to elicit conversation within the interview (i.e., photo-elicitation<sup>8</sup>) if needed and gave the photographs to the participants at the conclusion of the interview.

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<sup>8</sup> Photo-elicitation involves the use of a photograph or image, taken by either the researcher, the participant, or obtained in some other manner (e.g., archival images), within an interview to bring out otherwise submerged information or bridge the gap for participants who lack fluency (Lorenz & Kolb, 2009, p. 263).

## **Demographic Study of the Participants**

The following demographic information was gathered to create a picture of the nine young adults who participated in the study. The participants involved in this study were JB (30 years old), PENAC (24 years old), Shana (25 years old), Eydie (14 years old), Leonita (19 years old), Raven (19 years old), Sandy (20 years old), Daren Wolf (14 years old) and Maddie (18 years old). The participants were between the ages of 14 and 30 and expressed interest in traditional food and in the health and wellness of their communities. The participants were actively learning about traditional ways of being and had been involved in Feasting for Change. Maddie, Raven, Leonita, Sandy, and JB actively promoted traditional foods through community-based programs. PENAC was attending ALENENEC: Learning from Homeland, a school devoted to teaching traditional ways of being through SENCOTEN, the language of the Saanich people. Shana and Eydie were sisters and learning about traditional foods together.

Different age groups seemed to experience different challenges. This was most noticeable when comparing challenges faced by the youngest and oldest participants. The older participants tended to focus on community level challenges, such as restoring habitat or teaching food skills. The younger participants, Eydie and Daren Wolf, on the other hand, found that friends and technology were distractions from learning about traditional foods.

Different living circumstances also contributed to differing perspectives. Daren Wolf lived in T'Sou-ke First Nation in Sooke, a small town with a population of 11, 435 (Wikipedia Sooke). PENAC, Shana, Eydie and JB lived in Tsawout First Nation on the Saanich Peninsula near to Victoria, BC. Raven and Leonita lived in the City of Victoria. Ravens' community-ties lie with Manitou, an Anishnaabeg village in Ontario and in Georgia, United States. Sandy lived in Songhees First Nation, situated in the Township of Esquimalt, adjacent to Victoria, British

Colombia. Maddie lived in Pacheedaht First Nation near Port Renfrew, British Columbia on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The nearest grocery store was in Duncan, British Columbia, a 2-hour drive away.

I used a narrative inquiry within the interview to learn about the participants' perceptions, experiences, and their "hopes, dreams and intentions" (Barton, 2004, p. 519) regarding Indigenous food sovereignty. I interviewed each young adult for 1 to 1.5 hours, addressing their participation in Feasting for Change's activities and how it has affected their perception of food sovereignty and their role within their community. At the beginning of the session, I reviewed the consent form and reminded the participant he or she could stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions.

The interview focused on the young adult's' perceived roles at a community and family level. I first asked the young adults to define, using his or her own words and understanding, what "traditional foods and practices" meant to the young adults and why it was important to the young adult's' community and to the community's wellbeing. This step helped to establish the young adult's' priorities and perceived barriers around Indigenous food systems. The interview focused on the young adult's' perceived roles at a community and family level and his or her interpretation the desired to fulfill these roles in the young adult's' daily life.

The conversation then shifted from talking about food skills and practices to talking about larger concepts, such as food sovereignty. To facilitate this shift, I asked interview participants about their perspectives and interpretations of food sovereignty and how these relate to traditional food practices. The purpose of these questions was to establish connections, if any, between practicing food sovereignty, traditional food skills, and the roles played by young adults. Additionally, I asked young adults to explain the influence organizations such as Feasting

for Change have had so as to gauge the importance of such organizations on the roles played by young adults and on the young adults themselves.

As the interviewer, I used the topic guide developed to help shape the flow of discussion. The topic guide was reviewed and approved by the Feasting for Change working group to ensure the interview questions addressed issues key to their programming and were culturally appropriate:

1. Please describe what “traditional food skills and practices” means to you.
2. Can you describe how you learned about traditional food skills and from whom?
3. What are the traditional food practices that you think are important and why? What traditional food skills are important for young adults to learn and why?
4. What is your perception of the barriers to young people participating in traditional food practices (in your community)? What are some ways in which these barriers could be addressed?
5. In what ways, if any, do you think traditional food and knowledge impacts the wellbeing of people in your community?
6. Can you describe to me where you see your community right now in terms of practicing traditional knowledge around food?
7. Do you see yourself as having a role in the community that relates to traditional food practices? What roles do you think are important for young adults and why?
8. What does food sovereignty mean to you? Is there a link between traditional food practices and food sovereignty?

9. Is Indigenous food sovereignty, in any way, being practiced in your community/family/self? What are the challenges, if any, in being able to practice food sovereignty?
10. What can we do together today that could make the most difference to the future of your community's basic food sovereignty?
11. How have Feasting for Change and other organizations made a difference for you?
12. What more do you want to learn, do, teach about food? Look at the photos and pick out ones that are about what you want to learn, do, or teach about food.
13. Do you have any other thoughts you want to share?

With permission, the interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were held in locations the participant chose and felt comfortable with.

It is crucial for a researcher to gain informed consent without coercion or deception at the beginning of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The informed consent form was written at a Grade 8 reading level and clearly explained concepts (see Appendix G). The participant consent forms contained a description of the research project, issues of confidentiality, risks and benefits of participation, and how information would be collected, stored and disseminated. A section for parental approval was included for participants under the age of 16. This form was given to participants at the beginning of the interview to read with a verbal explanation of their rights. For the participants who were uncomfortable reading and writing, I recorded myself reading the consent form and their assent to participate in the research.

Participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of this study and their right to stop at any time and decline further participation. Participants were reminded that they could decline to

answer questions. Participants were asked to sign two copies of the consent form. The first was for the participants' records and the second was for my records. The consent forms were kept in a secure location separate from the data.

### **Data management and analysis.**

With participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. I then transcribed the digital recordings onto my personal, password--protected laptop computer where they were kept. Digital recordings were deleted after the interviews were transcribed. In order to ensure the accuracy of transcripts, after they had been cleaned of identifying information, the transcripts were given to participants to review and comment, or member check, the data (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 510). Electronic files were kept in a locked folder on my computer and then erased and scrubbed from my hard drive.

The photographs used in research to stimulate conversation during interviews were of Feasting for Change events, such as community feasts and workshops, which were not taken for research purposes. To address this issue I chose photographs where there were no recognizable people. The photographs themselves were not analyzed.

According to Pope et al. (2000), there are five stages of data analysis:

1. Familiarization – in which the researcher immerses in the raw data through listening to and reading the data repeatedly.
2. Identifying a thematic framework of key issues, themes, and concepts and then organizing the data into manageable “chunks.”
3. Indexing data into a coded numerical system.
4. Codifying information by arranging data into charts that contain summaries of experiences and views.



5. Mapping and interpreting charts to “define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena, create typologies and find associations between themes” (Pope et al., 2000, p. 116).

With the data from the interviews, I categorized data according to common themes and concepts or “words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). I utilized ATLAS.ti Version 6.2 (2010), to manage data and help assist in ordering data sets. I followed Pope et al.’s (2000) stages of data analysis to develop and apply descriptive and conceptual codes and subsequent themes to understand how young people perceive food sovereignty, their role in food sovereignty, and how traditional food feasts, such as those facilitated through Feasting for Change, impact them (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 203). These codes were presented to Feasting for Change Advisory Committee for input and approval.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the four elements of research quality as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (p. 289; see also Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 192). To ensure credibility, I ensured participants member-checked the data: participants reviewed the transcripts and findings to ensure that the findings were accurate and that my interpretations were recognizable as appropriate and adequate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). 7 of the 9 responded to my invitation by approving the findings or giving feedback, which was then incorporated. I was given feedback from all participants excepting two. Full copies of the research paper and research data were given to each First Nation and any individual who was involved and who had requested it. To ensure transferability, I prepared a synopsis of findings so that others could determine the degree to which they might reflect the experiences of other groups.

Dependability reflects the “*process* of the inquiry, and the extent to which it is acceptable to an ‘auditor’” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 318). In order to provide information on the research process, I maintained a reflexive journal, in which I made notes about (a) my daily schedule and logistics; (b) personal reflections on interests, values, and insights; and (c) a methodological log for decisions and rationales (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319). In addition, I analyzed my writings with regard to my neutrality as a researcher and possible dynamics of power. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 3).

Confirmability refers to how well the data confirm subsequent interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). I kept detailed notes regarding the rationale employed to categorize data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 323). Thus making it is possible for a researcher to demonstrate the quality of the data collected and allow the reader to understand how the researcher has perceived the data and made the study conclusions.

Within Indigenous methodologies, relational accountability is an important element when looking at which data were chosen to report on and how they were reported (Wilson, 1998). As a researcher, I am accountable to Feasting for Change, the First Nation communities I worked with (both on- and off-reserve), and the participants who chose to work with me. Each of these relationships highlights a different set of responsibilities or ways I am accountable. These relationships are outlined in the Ethics section.

I presented my findings to Feasting for Change and T’Sou-ke Health Team. I invited all First Nations whose members participated in the study to presentations of the findings. I scheduled presentations with Pacheedaht Band Office, VNFC, and Tsawout Band Office, all of which were cancelled due to extraneous circumstances. Upon completion, I will offer a copy of the completed thesis, accompanied by a simply written synopsis of findings to each of the First

Nations. The South Island Wellness Society, an organization devoted to developing community based and culturally relevant Child and Family Services programming, requested that I present my researching findings. I applied to the Vancouver Island Traditional Foods Conference 2012 to present my findings; however, my application was not accepted due to a policy that favoured Indigenous presenters. Members of Indigenous communities, participants, Feasting for Change, academic community, and general public will be invited to attend the defense of this thesis. I will distribute the thesis and synopsis of findings through the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Food Network (VICCIFN) and the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty listserves. Finally, I will submit manuscripts for publication in academic journals such as *AlterNative* (Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, 2009), *Pimatisiwin* (Native Counselling Services of Alberta, 2008), various conflict resolution journals, and the *Journal of Public Policy* (Cambridge University, 2012).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Marlene Brant Castellano (2004), a respected Mohawk Elder, reminded readers that ethics must consider the cultural order, cohesion, and personal responsibilities that are part of the First Nations involved in the research (p. 100). Castellano described ethics as “the rules of right behaviour” (p. 103) and questioned the deep values and spiritual beliefs that one holds. When engaging with potential participants, Feasting for Change working group members, and with Tribal Councils about their First Nation’s involvement in this research project, I dialogued about my personal ethics, spirituality, and expectations, which ultimately led to a mutual understanding about how to reduce risks and enhance benefits for each community. I used the reflexive journal to help me become more aware of the assumptions that I brought to the research table.

Anonymity of participants was protected by changing basic identifying details (i.e., name, place, and age) so people who are not close to the participant would not be able to discern who they are. However, in the context of participants' home communities and given the closeness of families and the reserve setting and the involvement of blogs (Wikipedia 2012), I could not guarantee full anonymity for the young people participating in this research. Potential research participants were informed of this situation and were asked to sign a waiver of anonymity and confidentiality.

All information was disclosed to participants. No deception, misdirection, or nondisclosure was used in the study. All questions used in the interview were discussed with the Feasting for Change working group and representatives of each community to review and comment on, thereby ensuring that all questions were culturally appropriate and sensitive. There was no physical risk to participants, and issues of a sensitive nature were not intentionally part of the topic of discussion. In the event that issues of a sensitive nature did arise, I reminded the participants that they were directing the topics of conversation and could move to another one. Additionally, participants were reminded that this study was voluntary and they were able to withdraw at any point. If participants did require support as a result of engaging in the interview process, I had a contact list of Indigenous-focused programs within the Capital Regional District area as well as contact with an Elder who could help them address any issues or to direct them to other appropriate supports. These resources were not used. Participants were also given my contact information as well as that of my supervisor if they had any questions following the interview.

In the case of my research, I followed Schnarch's (2004) OCAP approach and the *Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS, 2010)* principles for conducting ethical research involving

people. The Feasting for Change working group and representatives from participating Indigenous communities were consulted and given the opportunity to voice their concerns and desires and decide how they wanted to be involved in the research, if at all. This addressed many of the good practices outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS, 2010)*, such as respecting culture, traditions, and knowledge of different Indigenous communities and the young people involved, adequate consultation of experts, design of the project, and how the project addressed needs and concerns of the people and groups involved.

Community involvement and control also raised the issues of authorship, credit, and knowledge transfer (Cochran et al., 2008). Lack of proper acknowledgement has often destroyed trust and relationships between researchers and Indigenous people. The acknowledgement of Indigenous ways of knowing are sometimes complex, yet can bring fundamental changes to research methods or methodology (Cochran et al., 2008). Ultimately, finding ways to build and maintain trust with Indigenous communities, increase institutional support, and redefine partnerships are all challenges that I attempted to overcome (Cochran et al., 2008). Given these theoretical and practical parameters, I made it a priority to develop a research agenda that was acceptable to participating communities, funders and academia, involved a practice in listening, understanding, and coordination.

Researchers have a responsibility to cause no harm. Further, working within an Indigenous methodology introduces the responsibility of leaving people better off (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [TCPS], 2010). When developing a research agenda, the researcher must recognize that research implications, methods, and lack of responsiveness to communities' needs or concerns can cause distress (Cochran et al., 2008). In

working with communities to develop a program or research agenda, researchers must “clarify and justify their intentions” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 140) at the methodological level. Then, “methods become the means and procedures through which the central problems of the research are addressed” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 140). In the case of this research project, the method itself involved working with the members of Feasting for Change, including young adults and Elders, to incorporate the agendas of the First Nations, the academic community, and my own personal motivations into the project.

### **Summary**

Indigenous young people’s involvement in increased community capacity around health and food sovereignty has been a little researched topic. Feasting for Change and the Elders and First Nation community members who work with Feasting for Change have talked about the importance of young adult’s’ involvement in traditional practices, including strengthening relationships with Elders. Feasting for Change has also been interested in exploring how young adult’s’ involvement could affect the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people, communities, and culture.

This thesis explored the opportunity provided by both Feasting for Change and supportive Elders to examine young people’s perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty within their own communities as it pertained to Indigenous health and wellness. The use of Indigenous methodologies supported the voices of the Elders and young people and their control over the project. By incorporating CBR practice within Indigenous methodology, I ensured that all parties felt empowered by research that continually supported self-determination. In this case, self-determination referred to community control over health and wellbeing, especially in regard to young people.

The project had been designed so that it would benefit young Indigenous people by encouraging their interest in traditional knowledge, working with Elders, and learning new ways to use technology. Each First Nation involved in this research has benefited through the involvement of their young people in creating archives of traditional food knowledge and obtaining supporting evidence for changes to policy about health, environment, and land laws. The findings of this thesis have also helped Feasting for Change focus their energies in ways that can most support Indigenous communities to encourage young adults and Elder relationships through traditional practices and foods. The findings have also elucidated the role of young people in traditional food sovereignty as it pertained to chronic disease and community health, which has not been a well-researched area.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

In this chapter, I describe in what ways does participation in Feasting for Change influence young people's perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty and their roles in building the health and wellness of their communities. This question stemmed from my experiences and work with young adults who were involved with Feasting for Change. I saw that Feasting for Change, a community-based group, supported young adults to work towards the health and wellness of their communities through traditional foods. I wondered if the young adults had mindfully created particular roles for themselves in creating social change and if so, could conflict transformation be a useful tool to create effective strategies for change.

I examine participants' responses to questions about their roles within their respective communities.. I show that the direct consequence of young adults fulfilling roles in creating community health and wellness is conservation of knowledge and tradition, which ultimately help support positive social change and the amelioration of sustainable self-determination. An important aspect of understanding and performing roles is learning the cultural knowledge to do so, this learning comes from family and community. I briefly explore the challenges related to the findings and the recommendations made by participants to address the challenges they face. Lastly, I explore the participants' perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty as well as discuss the complexity of fulfilling roles and maintaining the health and wellness of a community. I

### **Thematic analysis of the findings**

Each of the several themes that were identified within the sections were consistent across many of the participants' interviews. Individual perspectives stemming from particular life experiences that were different than that of the majority were clearly acknowledged, as this information was also important in understanding the complexity of how roles were enacted,



particularly within the context of community programs that had been focused on creating health and wellness through the promotion of traditional foods.

It was important to contextualize the definition of traditional skills and practices as understood by the participants. At the beginning of each interview, the young adults were asked how they defined ‘traditional skills and practices’. When describing this, the participants consistently spoke about learning and using the traditional skills used by their ancestors.

Make traditional foods. To be able to smoke fish on a stick or do the clam stick or make traditional food and how to do it. (Raven)

Traditional food practice means what my ancestors did and in terms of preparing food so we can have it available for us in the winter-time. And practices are just the ethics that are applied to harvesting these plants so that as we’re harvesting them that it’s done in a sustainable manner. (JB)

You go and hunt or you gather food at the beach or you gather from around you and get berries from the bushes and then you get your fruits or whatever from your garden so it’s natural. (Daren Wolf)

It’s carrying on the legacy of the old people, the ancestors. It’s a constant learning process even when there’s skills that you’ve learned within the Saanich teachings and traditions. There’s a dialogue that goes along with it, whether it be the names of those plants or prayer terminology something that goes along with it. There’s a constant relationship building and informing that’s taking place that possibly goes back longer than I can fathom. (PENAC)

### **Roles and Learner-Teacher Cycles**

Each young adult provided a unique perspective on how traditional knowledge was kept, lost or regained. The direct consequence of young adults fulfilling roles in creating community health and wellness was learning and teaching traditional knowledge and practices, which enabled the continuation of these practices. The themes that emerged around the conceptualization of roles included: learners, teachers, and traditional roles. The traditional roles theme was divided further into two subthemes: helpers and being a traditional person. At the end

of this section, I examine the challenges and then recommendations made by the participants that are associated with the emergent themes.

Participants highlighted basic roles, such as being a learner, a teacher and a leader. They also emphasized traditional roles. These roles included being a helper and a traditional person. Within each role, responsibilities ranged from quite basic tasks, to passion driven learning, and traditionally performed tasks. Participants all agreed they would like to be engaged in the community and have roles.

Well I think they should be involved, that's for sure. Because you do learn something every day and like what more about learning about your traditional ways and your foods. What's healthy and what like. I was really shocked when we went for the plant identification walk like or what things are like all around us and we didn't even know that what worked for bee's stings and like for teas for like colds and stuff like that. It's just really amazing. (Maddie)

The roles that young adults should have in general should be whatever they're passionate about. And what I mean by that is learning about where any of their traditional edible food plants are and where the best place to harvest those are found and then learning about that. And then, having another young adults that's passionate learning how to hunt various animals, various traditional animals and what where are the best places for those to hunt them. And then the best place for the salmon. All those would be good things to learn about and not having one person learn about all of those is best because then all the knowledge isn't centralized into one location. (JB)

I think we do have roles; we do have roles that each of us play. When we go to the Big House in the wintertime sometimes there will be family gatherings. Where our families will hold it and say, "This is our work, this is something we're doing." Automatically we don't get asked to do anything, we just know: we gotta be in the kitchen. We have to be in the kitchen and we have to be ready for somebody to say bring that up there, do this, do that, grab this, do that, wash this, grab that, peel this, do that. You don't have a choice. (Shana)

Roles are strongly embedded into Indigenous culture. Shana explained that young adults are expected to know the tasks to be completed at a community gathering and contribute without being told or asked to. Her example highlights the level that the roles are reinforced within a community gathering such as a potluck, event or gathering in the Big House. Not only does this

mean completing tasks, it also involves maintaining a level of observation of what is happening that dictates the tasks you must do.

No. I don't think that it [roles] would be a problem in reinforcing that because it's just ingrained in the psyche in a lot of First Nations communities as well as community members, or individuals. That's how it was done and that's how it should be now and into the future. (JB)

Even at other community gatherings, they see me and Eydie—especially us. They can't ask other people because a lot of the other young adults really aren't very open to being told what to do. For us, it's ingrained in us. You're told to do something; do it. Actually you shouldn't be told to do something. (Shana)

All participants identified learning as a primary role for young adults. Learning from Elders is especially valued. Learning encompasses listening to Elders with respect and extended into being able to perform the tasks and responsibilities one has learned. PENAC specifically referred to the valuable knowledge and experience Elders hold and the importance of continuing to pass on Elders' "deeper insights" to young adults.

To learn and participate. Well, not just to learn but to be able to do it. And then help teach it. (Raven)

Like the roles of like SNAMU, taking his role. Learning how to crab and fish. I guess what your families do. Listen to them and learn what your responsibilities are. Listening to SILE when she shows us to cut fish, how to can fish, how to smoke it. (Eydie)

As learners, as ones who are just coming to acquire this knowledge. That just goes back to that teaching about respecting the Elders. There's this social dynamic that has been really valued for time immemorial. About the young adults having a close ties to the Elders. It's almost like closing that gap between time, where the youngest and the newest just come into beginning to realize things and understand things. Have so much to learn about the world. And you need to learn so much more are coupled with the eldest of our people who have all the experience in the world, who can speak from not only techniques and methods that they've learned, be it hunting and fishing or creating something, but an added perspective having deeper insights in relation to those things. (PENAC)

According to some participants, the learner progresses into the role of the teacher.

Leonita outlined the cycle of learning and teaching and the expectations teachers had towards learners.

Mostly just being interested. Like if they show up, that's good enough. If they pay attention, that's more than enough. If they take something from it, and hold that and teach somebody else that. And then that person teaches somebody else that, then that's awesome. It benefitted some people. That's all they really need to do now is show up and pay attention, and they'll learn something. (Leonita)

Yeah, like with the celebration book. I'm trying to be part of that and everything. That's kind of a good idea to be able to when I do go into the corrections to be able to teach that. That would be awesome. I like to teach people what I know so maybe I'll just keep teaching as much as I can. (Raven)

I don't know. Just some things aren't the best to explain, but you get it after a while of being around everyone and finding out what their knowledge is about everything. And then you can pass on more knowledge to them and taken in more and keep passing. (Daren Wolf).

Taking on the role of a leader is an important aspect of being a teacher. It is important to recognize that not all teachers must embody the role of a leader. Sandy defined a leader as “somebody who would help somebody out”.

A leader is somebody who would help somebody out. With no money no pay, they are just there for their people willing to help all the time and planning, doing things, and with all the weight on your shoulder, it just seems so different. But sometimes it's a good weight not a bad weight. (Sandy)

The culmination of being a young adults leader and of young adult's' roles is to maintain the cycle of passing on knowledge and holding knowledge for others. Sandy saw himself as a leader, but differentiated from being a role model. Maddie also saw herself as a leader.

Yeah, I do. I. The young adults look up to me as a role model but I really say just be their self. I look at myself being a leader, not really as a role model. There's a difference. That role model is someone that would be like you. To the young adults that say they just want to be like me, I just say make your own path and do the best you can do and then younger young adults will look up look up to you as a role model too. But that's a point, eh. But they need somebody their own age to look up to as a role model. (Sandy)

I can't really say that I know the most. Like, I still learn new things, but I do think that I am in a way, a leader for that like, 'cause, I like sharing my knowledge from what I've learned. Because like I thought it was amazing when I first learned it, and like because when I show someone else I see how it affects them like and it's nice. (Maddie)

Following protocol is an important part of being seen as a respectable person.

Anticipating others' needs is one aspect of following protocol across communities. This encompasses the roles of helper and being a traditional person.

Being a helper encompasses the role of paying attention to possible needs and quietly helping without being asked and without thought of reward, which can create a supportive environment. For example, Sandy wanted to gather teas to share as medicines to his people.

I said I want to go down there and help, help my community. We brought down a hamper. Cause the Band gives away a hamper and it has a turkey and all that kinda food in it. I brought the hamper down and we brought it to his house. We said 'Oh this is just to help you' and he said 'Oh, ok'. And we went back the next day. He was really happy that we brought him food. Food is a big thing. People don't have it. A lot of people don't have it. (Shana)

Well, that's what I want to learn about more, what can I use for tea and what can I get. That's the only thing I think of these days a whole bunch because some communities, they don't do well. And I want to learn about the teas and what does what and what is it good for. Sa'll I want to do for my people is help them out. (Sandy)

Established protocols also include serving Elders in the community during feasts and performing tasks for their community, such as delivering the Band Council's' newsletter and sharing food and medicines.

And that's how we were raised. As you serve your older people so they don't have to do anything. And then when all the older people are served, then serve yourself. As soon as you're done go walk around gather plates, make sure that they're finished and do whatever. (Shana)

They [young adults] can help deliver newspapers. They can help harvest if they have been harvesting before. And there's events: they can serve the Elders. (Sandy)

The role of a traditional person goes beyond fulfilling roles within a social setting. Learning how to conduct oneself in a traditional way can involve rigorous training from respected Elders. PENAC's choice to practice the traditional ways of his ancestors was inspired by their relationships to plants and animals and his respect for his Elders.

There's this social dynamic that has been really valued for time immemorial, about the young adults having a close ties to the Elders. . . . And you need to learn so much more are coupled with the eldest of our people who have all the experience in the world, who can speak from not only techniques and methods that they've learned, be it hunting and fishing or creating something, but an added perspective having deeper insights in relation to those things. (PENAC)

Through the culture and the language: understanding the value of that relationship that our ancestors have developed with all of these plants and animals, understanding the relevance of the way things were done before. That's just up to anybody how they conduct themselves. Anybody who's serious enough or sees the value of what it is that we do might be inclined to further develop themselves in accordance to those practices, so it's just maintaining that connection. (PENAC)

Young adults discuss whom they are learning from and whom they are teaching first within the context of family and then within community-based programs, including Feasting for Change. Participants explore how roles of learner and teacher were enacted within in the contexts of participants' own lives. They also discuss the barriers they face within each context and lastly propose solutions and suggestions for project improvements.

The themes relating to how roles were enacted emerged within two different contexts: family and community-based programs. This section concludes by examining the challenges faced when young adults enacted the roles they have adopted and the solutions they proposed to counter these challenges.

Family provides the primary context within which young adults learned cultural and skill-based traditional knowledge. All participants' mentioned family as the context in which they first experienced their cultural heritage. This system of education is an important foundation of passing on cultural knowledge to younger generations.

I've been pretty lucky that way because that's something that's just carried on within my family, with my mom knows a lot about this stuff. And she learned that from her mom and dad, my grandparents, and my Uncle John as well. (PENAC)

He was really fortunate to have his grandma raise him. His mom's mom. So he's always grown up around the traditional way of doing things. And then he passed it on now to his kids. I think it made a huge difference. (Shana)

Family. Big part. Family is one of the most things. You can learn millions of different things from other people but the main thing that will probably sink into you will be family, because it's sort of a run off of yourself. . . . . [I want to learn] from family. Cause they know knowledge about it and they can learn, you can learn easier about it than from a stranger or whatever. (Daren Wolf)

An important aspect of learning cultural knowledge is the creation of memorable experiences within the family context. Participants shared stories from their childhood and young adults of learning skills from family members.

You know when I grew up; we used to go camping out in the woods with just a camping tent. And my dad used to go: "We're on survival week". Yep, bring our fishing rods. Sometimes we would stay at Goldstream [River] and go fishing during the running season. When I was a younger boy, I spent time with my family. We had a go out fishing, crabbing, clam digging. And then, my grandpa used to come over all the time and show us how to cook them. (Sandy)

When we were younger, I can remember when I was really young going fishing with my dad's friends and my dad. Of going down to the beach and actually casting. My parents have taken us all out and sat down at the beach and cooked crabs down there and put clams in a pan and cooked them over the fire. Probably wasn't exactly what they used to do back in the day. (Shana)

I caught the fish and she [his mother] gutted it and cooked it. And then I helped prepare it. It's not that hard. (Daren Wolf)

Participants' extended family members and Elders were important contributors in their learning process.

[I learned to cook from] [m]y Grandparents, I would guess. My Grandparents and Aunts and Uncles. Some of them know how to traditionally cook. I've learned a lot in the Big House. That's where I learned how to cook, a lot. I learned how to make fish soup in the Big House. I couldn't eat it. But I learned how to make it<sup>9</sup>. (Leonita)

I was taught by my Elders, and like not Elders, but the younger generation from the Elders, they taught me and I am teaching the younger ones. It's still going to keep continuing. But it's just, it is not happening as much as it should be I guess. (Maddie)

What I do is I spend time with my Elders and they just want to get to know you more and see if you're worth learning knowledge. That's why I am there for my Elders. (Sandy)

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<sup>9</sup> Leonita refrained from eating seafood as an initiate in the Big House.

In addition to learning, teaching other family members was important to some participants.

[I want to teach] [m]y family; my siblings, my nieces and nephews. So that they have, they have a well-grounded knowledge, set of knowledge. They won't have top and heavy in the plants, like I am. (JB)

I'd pick my brother. He's just over one [years old]. I'm definitely going to teach him and show him everything that I know. (Maddie)

Community programs, such as Feasting for Change, helped create connections between community members, across communities and with non-Indigenous peoples. Programs enable people to experience traditional knowledge and offer opportunities to learn and practice skills. As a result, people can build self-confidence and pride. : (a) experiencing traditional knowledge, (b) value of eating together, (c) creating connections, and (d) building skills

Community programs aspire to fill potential gaps within family-based teachings. Programs were offered to all community members and did not include teachings specific to a family. Most importantly, community programs offer the opportunity to build networks within and between communities. Programs have been established in many communities and across communities to ensure that traditional knowledge is taught and passed on.

It's just supplemented that perspective or further sort of validated it. It's just opened up new doors. Knowing that there's ways to supplement your own lifestyle. Your own knowledge base as far as your livelihood in terms of food is concerned. It's just all good information. It's all good knowing there's other likeminded people out pursuing the same things. There's a larger community out there who is becoming involved and moving towards reclaiming a lot of these ways of doing things. I think ultimately that we have these alternatives which is funny to say alternatives which in our way, it's just tradition. But you know alternatives I guess you could say, are there, available that they're still there. Especially in light of health issues. (PENAC)

When Earl and JB go out and they talk about what they know. And when they inform people, it's like wow! I've been just trudging through the bushes all this time. Stomping around on all that stuff when that's valuable medicine or valuable food. It affects people. It gives you a different perspective. So it's got a positive effect, for sure. (PENAC)



The community members participating in eating traditional foods is steadily increasing and that's because of programs like mine and programs similar to mine that are offering opportunities to our younger community members: the opportunity to eat our traditional foods (JB)

Participants described Feasting for Change as a unique program that brings people together from across First Nation communities that provides opportunities to try and enjoy traditional foods possibly for the first time. Feasting for Change helped to inspire pride in culture and eating traditional foods. In addition, young adults were able to participate in cultural ceremonies they have never seen performed.

Feasting for Change gives us the ability to offer these traditional foods to people in my generation and the adults—the older young adults: The opportunity to eat our traditional foods and be exposed to it and not think that it's something that you should be ashamed of, eating traditional foods. (JB)

Bringing everybody together. I don't really know all the things that we eat. And they had a whole variety of stuff. And how they cooked it. I think it brought everybody closer. We all got together and ate and talked. They did the salmon ceremony. And I didn't really know I was a part of that. But they did it. And I guess I'm a part of it. (Eydie)

Feasting for Change events exposed participants to traditional foods, harvesting, and cooking techniques for the first time. Within this program, they had the opportunity to learn about and taste a wide variety of foods for the first time, even if they did not like the flavour. JB learned how to barbeque salmon which inspired him to learn more from Elders who were teaching at Feasting for Change events.

I got to try foods that I hadn't tried before, traditional foods. I didn't even know what oolichan was. It's really good. And dried seaweed. Stuff like that. I seen sea urchin back, I tried it and I did not like it at all. But at least I tried it. And I had the opportunity to try it. (Leonita)

Traditional food skills, I'd have to say the first one that pops into my mind is the barbequing the salmon that I learned from Earl Claxton Jr. And that led into learning about traditional pit cooks and how those were done. And I learned that through Feasting for Change from some Elders in Nanaimo. (JB)

I think it was just more teachings of what is good for us. And what is our traditional food. It makes us more aware of. The things that they used to eat. There's different kinds of

clams. And I never really knew that. There's a lot of different kinds of seafood that we eat. A lot. There's a huge variety. Sea urchin and stuff. I like them a lot. (Eydie)

Participants came together within the context of Feasting for Change to share stories and practice traditional skills including learning to gather and cook seafood in pitcooks, a traditional way of cooking by steaming foods in a pit dug into either sand or soil. Participating in this event created opportunities to come together as a community within an Indigenous context.

Like the young adults gathering, we'll gather down there and we'll share together about our knowledge together and then we take what we need and what we need to do<sup>10</sup>. . . . We gather seafood and then we bring it back for everyone to share. And whatever we have left from our gathering from the beach, we'll bring back to the Band Hall for sort of a potlatch. (Daren Wolf)

I would say, we usually do it annually, well, once a year for the pit cook. I think it'd be good to have potlatches because it's always good to bring all your family together and just like reminisce and talk about back in the day as Elders or like the Elders can have some stories to tell. And that's what I think is the biggest thing is the potlatches and the pit cooks and continuing with like the fishing and the seafood harvesting. (Maddie)

Participants recognized that eating together was an important way to gather and share stories, interact with each other and enjoy each other's company. This often happened through the medium of feasts.

Everybody has the best conversations while they are sitting around the table eating with each other. That is something that brings us comfort. When you're talking to people if we're eating, talking to each other, everything that we're talking about, you're taking it down with you. That's the teaching I got from Auntie Belinda . . . And food is the ultimate way of comforting one another, talking and just being together. You have a dinner, everybody's there, eating, talking, laughing, having a good time. (Shana)

We try to involve everybody. We encourage everybody to come and join but you can't really force everybody, right. But there is a lot of kids and then we get Elders too. And then the majority of the community do come out and interact with the other members and enjoy a good meal. (Maddie)

Increasing numbers of community members were participating in programs dedicated to sharing traditional knowledge.

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<sup>10</sup> Daren Wolf was referring to collecting clams and mussels for a feast on the beach.

The community members participating in eating traditional foods is steadily increasing and that's because of programs like mine and programs similar to mine that are offering opportunities to our younger community members: the opportunity to eat our traditional foods. (JB)

JB and Sandy's programs brought people together within different frameworks. Sandy's program re-connected members of his community through an pleasurable event by offering a context to share traditional foods, engaging in conversation and enjoying each other's company. JB's educational program (SEEP) focused on food and medicinal properties of plants. He taught both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people indiscriminately.

What I like doing is bringing the community together so we can have a potluck pitcook, so they can they can bring whatever they want and I'll be doing a pitcook. That's where my strengths are; is bring people together to eat and have a good time. Talk with one another. And bring that contact back and so we all won't be living next to each other and not seeing each other. And that's what I do, I bring them all together so we can talk and have fun and communicate. (Sandy)

And I've developed a program with the help of my Elders to start teaching these plant foods and plant medicines and plant tools to our First Nations community members as well as the Non-First Nations because they're not leaving anytime soon and they need to learn that these plants are not weeds and they have functioning uses to them. . . . . T . . . he education needs to be within the First Nation communities, and while that is going on, it needs to be shared with non-First Nations. (JB)

JB's hands-on traditional style of teaching helped his students learn practical skills and treaty rights. He did not make a distinction between what he taught Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, thus challenging a history of segregation.

You can't teach treaty rights without having a hands-on experience because that's the traditional way of doing something is having the hands-on experience to learn those skills. Cause in a lot of First Nations communities there is this saying or something to the effect of it: "you only learn by doing". That's the best way to learn as well as teach. It makes the teaching experience that much more enjoyable rather than giving someone a piece of paper and saying here study this and come back to me and let me know what you retained. And I'll tell you if it's right or not. Cause when you do it that way, like I say it's not as personal. And it seems like from a student's standpoint. It seems like the teacher is being judgmental. (JB)

There really isn't a line that I draw within the knowledge that I share. For me what that reflects is segregation. And that defeats the community building aspect of things. If we

start putting people into the communities on their own individual pillars again, we're gonna face that atmosphere that nearly wiped out my people. (JB)

Programs had a profound effect beyond the scope of learning traditional knowledge.

Young adults connected with supportive communities, began to gain confidence, and developed friendships as well as heal and find their own paths.

I would not at all be the person I am today if I didn't get involved in the Friendship Centre. It isn't about foods but in all aspects of my life, I wouldn't be working right now if it wasn't for the Centre. I wouldn't have my voice right now, if it wasn't for the Centre. I wouldn't be as confident as I am, if I didn't have the Centre. And I've gained a lot of friendships, I've experienced a lot. I wouldn't even know what the Traditional Foods Conference<sup>11</sup> is if it wasn't for the Centre. I was a bad kid before I got involved in the Centre. And that's what I want a lot of people to know. It's not just a place for us to go and be our own little community as First Nations. It's a place for us to go to heal to find a path and stay. People are there to support you to help you stay on your path and you don't always have to walk the path straight, you're gonna all crazy and they're there to support you no matter what. (Leonita)

Feasting for Change offered opportunities beyond learning traditional food knowledge such as organizational skills and early graduation from high school through volunteering with the working group. Participants took pride in what they have learned and as their confidence level grew they became motivated to learn more and share what they have learned with others.

I graduated early because of Feasting for Change. It makes me so proud to be part of Feasting for Change, because it's such a good movement. More knowledge going around about Indigenous foods. (Raven)

It has helped with organizing. Or for a better term: creating leadership skills. And I think that is a by-product of the events that we hold. Myself, for example and then Sandy as well is another good example. He's a better example than me. But I, the by-product of it is creating leadership skills. And also promoting the already established leadership skills with the middle generation: not quite the Elders, and not quite the young adults. Helping them, helping us define and gain confidence in our leadership skills and organization skills. (JB)

I'm going to try and try and try until I get a fish. We went gaff fishing last year. And my sister, she was right on the water with the gaff. It was so cool. We got to see them out

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<sup>11</sup> The Traditional Foods Conference is a Vancouver Island wide conference on traditional foods run by the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Foods Network (VICCIFN).

there trying, and to be out there trying myself was so fun. And that is my to do list to get my own fish. (Leonita)

Challenges. Participants spoke about struggles to learn and fulfill roles with pride and confidence. The young adults presented themselves as powerful and influential young adults and community leaders working towards realistic and valuable goals. The participants focused on fostering open and welcoming environments for learning and teaching traditional knowledge thereby empowering young adults and the greater community to address challenges and embrace their roles. Young adults enacting roles established within the contexts of family and community programs faced a number of challenges. In general, the challenges included a general lack of available teachers caused by communication breakdowns within family circles and disinterest. Specific issues contributed to this. For example, Elders passing before their time severs the connection between young adults and Elders that PENAC has highlighted. In addition, community programming lacked funding to provide consistency and participants struggled to find a balance of program frequency that engaged, rather than bored participants. Substance abuse, lack of interest and negative connotations associated with learning traditional knowledge created seemingly insurmountable barriers to embracing young adult's' cultural heritage.

Learning from family members presented specific challenges related to the availability of knowledge keepers. Participants spoke of there being a lack of connection between generations. They also spoke about communication breaking down within the family and having personal difficulties at home. PENAC noted that programs offered outside of the home made an effort to fill the gap created when family members were not available to teach the younger generation.

[I want to learn from] My cousins, but it's hard to get a hold of them. (JB )

I think that's kind of hard 'cause for some families there was just not that line of communication to be able to ask about it. So I think that's a big part. For a lot of people if you don't ask then nobody's going to tell you. So it's having to find out that you have to ask. For some families the grandchildren can't just go up to their grandparents and be

like, “What was it like when you were younger?” Because maybe the family just isn't that connected. Or something, I don't know. . . . Yeah or even just the family just isn't close and they don't talk. (Raven)

Even though a lot of our young adults are really placed in pretty troublesome circumstances be it social, on the home front or whatever it is. It's harder for them to come back to those things because of those circumstances. We have an outlet now for them reclaim that. It's here. . . . This [the Tribal School] is our home base for where our people collaborate and come together and it's the Saanich Nation again. For those young adults, even they are given an opportunity and it's pretty powerful thing. (PENAC)

Despite the effort to provide young adults with avenues to learn traditional knowledge, they still perceived an absence of people who were interested in supporting young adults to build their tradition knowledge and practice their cultural heritage. A dispassionate approach to traditional knowledge resulted in stagnation of learner-teacher cycles and young adults became less likely to participate in programs.

I don't know [who is practicing traditional skills]. That's hard 'cause I would say mostly that I know of these, just Feasting for Change. Cause I don't really know what my community would be. If I was to say Manitou there would be nobody. But here, whoever participates in the Feasting for Change things. And then in the places I have lived it's not, very focused on traditional foods. So nobody knows (Raven)

If you look at it this way, there's nobody out there though to actually like doing stuff like that. There's not many out there who'd actually like to go out to get it. Nope, well, if you know, some people will. They wouldn't want to go as much. (Sandy)

I think that everybody needed a big push. Especially us. Cause the warrior nation, the nineteen year olds especially. It's like really? Nobody's even doing anything. (Shana)

The participants suggested that community based programming offers a supportive environment and teach traditional knowledge to all of the young adults in the community. However, due to lack of teachers and funding, communities were not always able to provide programs on a consistent basis, which left a notable gap in children's cultural education.

I don't really see that much of traditional teachings around T'Sou-ke around our Nation that much anymore. But my mom used to be the teacher around SunSet'hu'lem Sunshine House. It was a daycare, it is a daycare, and my mom used to teach Coast Salish and tell stories about the old ways, of what happened and what's changed and what's still

changing. (Daren Wolf)

There's all these hoops that we have to jump through still. There's all these policies that we have to abide by. We have to apply for funding to try to keep us afloat. . . . It's like with all funding that we're depending on, we have all these sources of funding that are coming in. But they all dry up. And we have to continue looking. (PENAC)

We used to have this science camp. They haven't had it in a few years, but when I was growing up we would go out and look for all this traditional foods like rockstickers, mussels and sea urchins; just all the traditional foods right from the age of six all up to young adults and 19 probably. Yeah, so, we got taught all through our life. I took that with me. I will remember that... that was fun. (Maddie)

Balance between too much and not enough programming must be maintained in order to sustain interest and bring community members together. The consequence of offering a program too frequently may be lack of attendance at events. Conversely, when programs were offered infrequently people felt like they were not gathering together enough.

Like, a whole bunch of people eat fry bread and they lose their taste and they start wanna do something else. So I moved the pitcooks to twice every other month. . . . Yeah, they get less excited, and people don't wanna show up. (Sandy)

Yeah, and if not that, then a few more times a year. It does give you something to. You can look forward to that, but you shouldn't have to wait that long right. There is other people that really do go out. We have the tide table, so they just check out what day would be good to go seafooding. (Maddie)

I think it'd be a really good idea to have maybe every other month have a potlatch. It doesn't have to be a celebration or anything. Make it completely traditional and show young adults, this is how it is and you're more than welcome to come and a place for us to get together. There is so much lack of being together. Everybody's got jobs and school and a lot of young adultss don't have that family setting at home. And they don't have the access to travel to the potlatches. It'd be good to get together. I love to getting together. (Leonita)

Upon reflecting, Leonita and Raven described their experiences of attending community-based feasts where traditional foods and teachings were not always the focus of community-based feasts. Food shared at community events can be a wide variety of Western and Indigenous

foods. Raven shared her disappointment in lack of traditional knowledge shared and frustration at the division and drama at feasts preventing community cohesiveness leading to happiness.

I've gone to potlatches actually. I went to one last weekend and they had some fish. That was about it. Other than that it was pig and beef and spaghetti. (Leonita)

Yeah. There would be powwows and stuff but at the powwows it's like these little booths that come in with fries and there's some Indian Tacos and stuff and that type of thing. . . . I'm sure that somebody, somewhere knows the traditional foods, the traditional ways for our area. And I would love to be able to go and help them but I don't know if I could. Because it's so, so crazy there. But in my head I could see it like, people just happy and feasting. Together, and not with hamburgers or fries. Just with fish and wild rice and happy and doing things together and not wanting to kill each other 'cause there's so much drama. But just happy. (Raven)

Lack of access to Elders and a dearth of classes and workshops were barriers to learning traditional knowledge highlighted within the context of urbanization. Leonita observed that young adults living in urban areas were disconnected from Elders living on reserves. In addition, some classes offered focus on local teachings rather than teachings from other Indigenous nations, for example language. In Leonita's opinion this insinuated one culture was more valued over another.

A lot of the young adults are urbanized now. They're not on the reserves. They're not going to their Elders. I can't even remember the last time I really sat and talked an Elder about traditional stuff. . . . Because we're losing our Elders and we realize after it's too late, 'oh I shoulda went and talked. I coulda got teachings.' (Leonita).

Nobody down here speaks Carrier. We talk about getting language. Classes started at the Friendship Centre, but it's the whole, not everybody's language background is SENCOTEN . . . It'd be kinda hard just choosing one language and like "This is available but, your guy's isn't available." My personal opinion is I don't want to think that this culture is more important than their own. (Leonita).

Daren Wolf and Eydie were under 15 years old. Modern distractions such as computers, video games and wanting to be with friends were challenges young adults of their generation must reconcile if they want to learn about traditional foods. In addition, embracing a traditional



lifestyle required balancing time constraints and modern conveniences with maintaining a connection to the land and a traditional lifestyle.

The young adults are more intent with electronics and technology in the young adults centre. And at home they have the computer and anywhere else they have the computer, instead of going outside and doing the board game or knowledge. . . . Most parents they give them an XBox or PSP or something to go off and do something instead of going being crazy outside. And then when you're outside you can learn new things rather than being inside and just sitting there and doing whatever else. (Daren Wolf)

I think just distractions given the way that you'd rather be somewhere else with friends rather than doing or listening to stuff that's important that you can use in the future. The newer ways just way more distracting. You can't be totally focused on the old days because we have computers everywhere and TV's. (Eydie)

Convenience. There's two ways to convenience now. You can work things out in the way to make things easier for yourself. But it gets to be a severance of that tie to those places and things. I kinda go through this rotation where I feel like I'm connected. Its a good feeling. But then we're faced with time constraints. Whatever reason you have to justify just going to the store or eating out. Sure we're all entitled to those things. But to have it alter your lifestyle or alter that connection is the part that's unfortunate. I think it's ok so long as you sustain that connection. . . . But I'm only connected to those things so long as I'm out there committing myself to that tradition and continuing that one. And walking the talk. (PENAC)

Participants perceived a lack of access to teachers. Elders are often cast into a teaching role as they hold the most knowledge and memories. Elders' knowledge is becoming more valuable as many are passing away. Not having access to Elders erodes the opportunities for passing on valuable cultural knowledge and an understanding of what accepted roles entail.

Because all our loved ones are getting older and they, some of them are going. There's only a couple people from Songhees that know the Lewungen language. (Sandy)

Well there's only a few Elders that are left around here and I think that they are have the most knowledge around that. But growing up, I didn't . . . like, we ate saskies [Saskatoon berries]. We would eat saskies and yeah, that's probably about it. There may be one more, but I can't remember about it. But that's it. Other than that we didn't learn anything about the traditional plants. (Maddie)

There's not very many people who can teach that again because all of them have moved away, or passed away and their teachings haven't sunk into their children. So teaching really hasn't moved on very much. It's just been the easy pronunciation of little bits here and there. (Daren Wolf)

Sometimes valuable cultural knowledge that is passed down to the next generation of teachers is lost or forgotten due to remembering only partial or incorrect information.

Say we lost this person and they taught us something a long time ago. But we only remember bits and pieces of it. It's half of it. And it gets deformed as it gets passed down. It changes every time it gets passed down, cause people don't remember. People don't pay attention until it's too late. (Leonita)

Young adults who are interested in learning more about their cultural heritage or specific areas of expertise sometimes experience a scarcity of knowledgeable teachers or are not aware of whom they could ask for teachings.

There's just, there's a lack of teachings in that area [plants and harvesting techniques] to further our reach within the community (JB)

Now if I went out there trying to get crabs, I'd be walking around, "What the heck? What's am I supposed to do?" I don't know how to do that and it's something that we really take for granted, I think. (Shana)

I don't know if they have the knowledge. I guess people it would, if you look for it, it's easily found but I don't know if people know to look for it. (Raven).

Sandy observed that some young adults have lost their connection to the community and to the potential to learn from Elders because of substance abuse and a lack of reliable adults, which in turn, inhibits them from taking on leadership roles. Leonita described her experience of young adults feeling lost and disconnected from families who have been pushed apart as a result of Elders dying so frequently.

Drugs, alcohol, and no communication, they're lost. What I mean by lost, is they have nobody to look up to. You show them that you're there, but they're looking for somebody they can actually build the comfort with. (Sandy)

I think it's really important that we sponge off Elders for their knowledge. Cause, it's really sad. But everywhere, every reserve I go to, there's tons of Elders passing away, one after the other. It's not just every once in a while. It's back-to-back deaths that are really pushing our families apart. Which is another reason we're not connecting with the Elders. Cause we're lost and we just kind of fall apart after that. (Leonita)

Many young adults are engaged and excited about learning within a community environment. From Leonita's perspective, particular young adults facing challenges at home and school sometimes attend workshops and events to be away from those environments rather than out of inspiration or a desire to learn. JB spoke about non-Indigenous people's actions and attitudes invoking feelings of shame in Indigenous people specifically around eating traditional foods. Participants acknowledged these challenges to participation and suggested powerful solutions. For example, Sandy created supportive spaces for communication between members of his community.

Sometimes [there are challenges]. It depends on the person. If they're interested then they're interested. For some people they just go to be away from home and school and stuff. Sometimes, I guess. It's kinda hard for people. (Leonita)

Feasting for Change gives us the ability to offer these traditional foods to people in my generation and the adults -the older young adults: The opportunity to eat our traditional foods and be exposed to it and not think that it's something that you should be ashamed of, eating traditional foods. Because that's another barrier of, connecting traditional foods with the young adults is that outside non-First Nation community members sometimes purposefully and sometimes non-purposefully make First Nations community members feel ashamed about eating our traditional foods. (JB)

That's why I pull the community together to communicate. But some people don't really like coming out because for the things they done. But you still gotta be there for them and let them know that you're there. (Sandy)

Participants talked about how their identity as an Indigenous person influences how they perceive and experience their roles within the community. JB and Raven talked about going through a process of realizing the traditional knowledge they were learning was acceptable to learn. Both of them came to this conclusion from very different places and for different reasons. Raven revealed that she had questioned her right to learn about Co-Salish traditional knowledge because she is of Anishnaabe ancestry and from only one side of her family. In addition to questioning her Indigenous identity, she feared that her own people would not be willing to teach

her because she does not live in her home community. As a child, JB rejected the traditional ways of his people out of a misconception that it meant rejecting modernity. As a young adult, JB realized that learning the “old ways” is empowering and he can support younger generations in realizing this as well.

I think at first, I wasn't sure if I had the right to learn it because I'm not from here, and because I'm only half. But then I realized if they're willing to teach it's for me to learn. And I think that was the biggest challenge and if I don't know completely I don't try and know if I don't know, 'cause then I could get it mixed up. I think I've heard people saying that if somebody's going to teach you then it's not a secret. I don't know why but even with Manitou I feel people are going to be like, no that's not my home. Like from there because that's how they are but it is because that's my family, they are my relatives. So, I don't know it's maybe just an internal thing for me. (Raven)

I think that the big contributing factor is the perception of learning the traditional ways causes misconception in learning those ways you have to back to the old ways. As opposed to learning those ways and bringing those ways forward with you so you can continue to go on. And I think that was a really big barrier to get past as I was growing up. Is to understand and that just because you learn the old ways doesn't mean you have to go into the past . . . What it means, because you've learned it, you've brought the past to the present and you made it relevant to yourself and to the people that you become in contact with. And then as a result of that, you are making it more relevant for the future generations. (JB)

Shana and Eydie talked about their perceptions and experiences of traditional gender roles.

I would want to cook the food and then eat it, instead of being actually out there. We talked about that with my Dad. “I don't think I'm gonna go out in the boat anymore because it just doesn't feel right for me to be on the boat, trying to fish.” I think it's the traditional part of me. Because I think my Dad went on the boat a couple of times, but she [Mom] was always the one at home, ready to cook. Cook the food that my Dad brought home, with the kids. She always told me, “Make sure you have a man who's got to fill the table,” because that's just kinda how she was raised. It seems so that's the way I am now. Yeah. (Shana)

A man's job. I think. We could do it. But it's [a man's job]. (Eydie)

Sandy and Leonita spoke about their regret over not paying attention to teachings given to them earlier in life. Now older, Leonita has realized the importance of education and the contributions an educated person might be able to make towards helping the community. Despite

feeling that Sandy doesn't have 'his choice and pick' of teachers, he makes an effort to bring his community members together and create opportunities for learning.

If I knew then what I knew now or what I know now. It'd be like the most important thing to me, is being my best in school. Right now, I'm doing the best I can. It's benefitting the community, but I have no education and that's important now. And it wasn't to me when I was younger. (Leonita)

I don't have my choice and pick. I get, ah; they were willing to teach me that yeah. But I'm not one of those people that would go up and [say] "Hey can you teach me how to do a proper pitcook". I grew up the way my parents taught me to. You sit still, pay attention, go help your Elders, go help out and you'll get something back in return. Most of the times I did, but I guess I didn't do a very well job then, but I'm working on to pay more attention, I am trying to bring everybody together. And that's all I've been trying to do the past couple of months. (Sandy).

In response to the question of what challenges Indigenous young adults face when fulfilling roles of learner, teacher, and other traditional roles, it is important to assess what potential solutions might be. Participants recommended creating a safe environment where they could learn and then bring back teachings to their families. They wanted to be engaged and learn traditional knowledge with their peers. Most powerfully, young adults spoke about being empowered to create their own change within a loving atmosphere with caring teachers and peers.

Shana and Leonita expressed desire to be learning from a caring, devoted teacher, not someone motivated solely by financial gains; helps to create an open and safe environment for participants to engage in learning traditional ways and also supports young adults to make healthy lifestyle choices.

But you find the certain people who really actually care about it and say, "What, this is somebody wanting to come here and just to only talk about our food, our old ways of life. How we used to gather it, how we used cook it, how we used to do the old things." It's information in one place. Making us something where you bring it out in the community and say, "Look! Hey, this is what we're involved in." We want to change our ways of life so that we can tell our younger people, "We've got to start thinking about these things." (Shana)

[I want to learn from] anybody who's willing to teach. They want to be there. Now, no offense to the Elders, but I mean money is important, but it's not the most important thing. And to them, it's like, "I'm only going to do this if I get paid this amount of money." They're there for the money; they're not there 'cause they want to teach. But that's not all young adults, or not all Elders, but that's always a factor in having them. . . . Sometimes [I can tell the difference]. It's cool to have them want to teach you. And you can feel that sense of care. (Leonita)

Young adults gain a sense of honour through learning and having practical experiences and then bring that back to the community either through teaching or helping others.

Being First Nations myself, not many communities know how to do the cooking of food and what is traditional for the pit cook. We had the salmon and that. It's a really nice experience to have that and you can pass it on to the younger generations. Cause, it should be an ongoing traditional kind of thing, being able to know what kinds of plants can be used for sicknesses like we did on the plant identification walk. It's an honour to be able to know and to experience all these traditional ways. And to bring it back to the community. (Maddie)

Seeing their peers become empowered through engaging in traditional practices inspired Sandy, Daren Wolf, and PENAC. They described young adults encouraging each other to participate and learn through example and leadership.

But, some of them have tough doings of not wanting to do it but some of them step up and say, "I'll do it," and one stands up then they'll all start doing it. Yup, they're working together and they . . . its really pretty awesome. (Sandy)

Some of them don't cause they don't pay much attention to what's going on. And people who are really close attention and who want to know more about us; they will have more knowledge than others sometimes. . . . . If you know you know them by heart, or if you're friends with them, you can share some knowledge with them and so they can get an understanding of what's going on. (Daren Wolf)

. . . The other way that I was thinking about it was just within community to community, at least within reserve to reserve or people to people. There are positive effects of doing these things and I know it's inspiring to a lot of people to see things taking place; to see people going out and harvesting on the land. For one because it's an empowering thing to know you can just go out and do these things. (PENAC)

Empowering young adults and the community helps to create a positive loving environment that is essential to enabling people to create their own positive change.

It's more of a, let's empower ourselves. Empower the people. Empower our community. Empower our young adults. Empower our young people. Bring them all together and say, "What? We care. Let's care about each other." Instead of just having an event. (Shana)

Participants' suggestions leading to improvements for programs focused both on strategies to engage community members and specific recommendations to improve programs. Four themes emerged within this context: community engagement, program suggestions, strategies for success, and community consultation. Proposals included creative ways to engage and motivate young adults, children, adults and Elders as a group, rather than focusing on age-related activities. Participants recommended a range of specific events, programs, and activities. Emergent goals were to connect leaders with young adults; educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples about the effects of their actions; and strengthen communications between decision-makers and community members.

Sandy and Eydie expressed concern over community engagement. In discussing the need for general improvements to community focused programming, Sandy responded by stating the need to create a vision for the future through reconnecting with his cultural heritage. Eydie realized that her cultural was being threatened, which motivated her to become engaged in learning more. She was especially enthusiastic about her desire to rebuild learning relationships with Elders.

I think it's just starting up again now because out there our culture like is being threatened so we're trying to regain that all back now, together. . . . Just when I noticed that nobody learns anymore and our Elders try to teach us that. I don't know much that about our culture. Interested in learning how they used to lived and whatever. I think just realizing that it could be gone tomorrow. It's really opened my eyes cause I think it'd be weird without having teachings and stuff. I think I would miss it if it was gone. So just that. It keeps me trying to learn the ways that my Elders are doing. (Eydie)

We need something to look forward to instead of eating all this junk. And we have to have something we never had in a long time. (Sandy)

Conferences and large gatherings were part of the broader Indigenous food movement that can provide young adults with opportunities to experience their cultural heritage. This helped to create a feeling of curiosity and can motivate them to engage in further activities.

I'm going to the conferences. Well, there's the young adults at the food conferences. It's the best feeling knowing that they're always gonna remember that kinda stuff. It's a big experience for them. And not very many young adults get to experience everything like we do. And to see them excited to go to it, it's a good feeling. (Leonita)

If you have a taste for the language and the culture and the value of harvesting and the old way, I think you'll further pursue that. That goes for anything. But there's a value in it that's really connected to this movement of people who are trying to make green spaces and who are conserving. I don't wanna say it's a sub-culture of that, but it's backed up by it. . . . It's all good knowing there's other likeminded people out pursuing the same things. There's a larger community out there who's becoming involved and moving towards reclaiming a lot of these ways of doing things. (PENAC)

Yes, it starts to get them interested in learning where they can get these traditional foods and the traditional protocols of harvesting these foods. Not only wanting to learn about these traditional foods they've had, they've become curious about other traditional foods they have never had before. It starts to get them curious to learn more, which is an excellent thing. (JB)

Participants suggested that creating education events focused on a wide range of age groups and interests is an important strategy in creating community engagement. Particular strategies included widespread and open invitations to events, and especially focused on creating programming to engage children and their families.

We try to involve everybody. We encourage everybody to come and join but you can't really force everybody, right. But there is a lot of kids and then we get Elders too. And then the majority of the community do come out and interact with the other members and enjoy a good meal. (Maddie)

I think it [education] will make a huge impact if you gather the right people: adults with their kids, the Elders with their kids and their grandkids. You get everybody in one place, make it fun, make it interesting. (Shana)

Maddie and Shana both had extensive experience in organizing events and creating community engagement strategies. Maddie advocated for continually coming up with programming ideas to encourage participation such as organizing transportation and planning



times to coincide with work schedules. Shana reminded us that people are more likely to be engaged if an event does not have a stiff agenda or schedule.

I say keep planning things. You can't just do it. You need a ton to like set it up. Like say, "Oh we'll do it this way", like the ride, make sure people know the time, so like have like so we could get off work early and put their hours towards that because really it is a community event as well, right. (Maddie).

Always brings people together. Never any planning involved. You just go. It just happens. And people like it like that. They don't like too much of a schedule or agenda, following times. To us, you just let it happen.

The participants wanted to see more activities and programs that bring adults and young adults together and entice participants into the outdoors. Some participants wanted more events where young adults and Elders meet together, rather than events where they are separated. They also wanted events that build on their knowledge and can help them learn more complex skills.

We could designate a night for young adults and Elder drop in. Where we could all have dinner together and share stories and stuff. Teachings. I think it's really important that we sponge off the Elders for their knowledge. (Leonita)

Being more outside activities for young adults and more activities around the community, so outings for everyone, not just young adults. And then you'd have your adult you'd have a hike or a luncheon so everyone could meet around. (Daren Wolf)

Have more events, community events. Have two types of community events. One that specialized and geared towards only the First Nation communities and having an aspect to it that where we teach the participants about our treaty rights and where our treaty rights cover: where they can harvest from. And then have another set of events where it's more intercommunity. Having the First Nations and non-First Nations come together so that we, us First Nations can show the non-First Nations that there are still First Nations members that are practicing our treaty rights and show them what our treaty rights are. (JB)

Shana, Leonita and Maddie also suggested that hosting regular, traditional programming might help to bring people together.

Not just make it a one-time thing. Make it annual. We are going to have a session this week and then two weeks from now, another one, then two weeks from then, we're going to have another one and it's just going to be an on-going thing where everybody comes in with their own ideas, their own input. Too many times you do things once and then you forget about it. And then it never happens again. (Shana)

I think it'd be a really good idea to have maybe every other month have a potlatch. It doesn't have to be a celebration or anything. Make it completely traditional and show young adults, this is how it is and you're more than welcome to come and a place for us to get together. There is so much lack of being together. (Leonita)

Some participants also spoke about creating educational content focused on skill building to engage community participation. They listed skills they were interested in learning, such as fishing, plant identification and harvesting techniques, clam digging, crabbing and also more complex skills such as hunting.

Big skills would be how to how to hunt, and prepare food or how make a happy home for someone else. Gutting a fish. Picking the right berries or fruits or vegetables. And which animals or birds or something you hunt. How old they have to be or what their gender is. [...] Because if you pick an animal that looks too young. It might not have as rich as meat. And you don't want to kill off another member that could reproduce in a little bit. So you need more resources, so you get the middle age. (Daren Wolf)

A lot of us don't know how to get out there and go clam digging. Would how to go clam digging if you went down there? (Shana)

I've never I've never actually caught crabs or anything like that myself. I think it's something I'd be, oh there's so many things, so many things that are just within the immediate area. Just being able to go out and identify all the different species of plants and medicines that the old people were accustomed to and how to harvested then. It's incredible you know going out with people who are really knowledgeable about those things. (PENAC)

Strategies for success.

Eydie and Shana recommended focusing on the young adults by organizing activities to engage them and supporting them to become future leaders.

[The community can support young adults better if they] pay more attention to them. . . . A lot more things to do with them. We have a gym. Do stuff there. Have different kinds of gatherings for them. So then they'd be there with the community rather than out up to no good.

They're [the adults] not seeing the bigger picture which is the young adults trying to reach out. And say, "Hey! We wanna learn something here and be involved." Act like you actually care, because these are your future leaders here. We're future leaders. They need to see that, recognize it and help. That's what I think. (Shana)

Daren Wolf suggested educating young adults about the distracting effects of technology.

Teaching them about or telling them what has happened in the last ten years of changing of the environment or changing of technology that has changed everything. (Daren Wolf)

Shana suggested using pamphlets to inform people about how their habits are destroying the sensitive ecosystem around Todd Inlet. Her motivation was to educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about the polluting effects of dumping waste and also habitat destruction caused by not staying on pathways in Todd Inlet as well as building positive relationships between the different communities.

And because we've brought pamphlets out to a lot of the Native, or the non-Native people. We brought pamphlets out and said, "This is what you are doing; this is what you are affecting". But, we're making it more aware to our people as well because we want to make our own people care. Know what they're doing. (Shana)

Shana, Eydie and Maddie suggested that reporting, presenting, and consulting with the community are important strategies used to engage the community and give community members opportunities to contribute suggestions and make recommendations upon which decisions can be made and acted upon.

My first thought is to report back to the community, not to everyone individually but to just to somebody, people who care. Have a meeting or a little potluck and say, "This is what we talked about and this is what we thought was really important. And we want input." . . . And then I could say, "Well, this can go on the newsletter. This is what we talked about." Go up to all the community members and say, "Yeah, if you have any feedback? Got any questions or comments, whatever. Get back to us and let's see where it finally goes from there." But making everyone aware of this. (Shana)

. . . Maybe set up a presentation or something where you can put forward more information towards to everybody else and get their input. They'll definitely look into it. If they see something new gonna happen, you're gonna want to know what it's all about. It's in your community and about your community. (Maddie)

I agree. To bring everybody together and discuss it. And do stuff that's gets the message across. You get people who talk about it, give their input. Yeah. (Eydie).

Young adults embraced the roles of learner, teacher and also roles fulfilled in a more traditional capacity, such as being a helper and a traditional person. These roles go beyond tasks in a social setting and encompass deep connections to land, ancestral knowledge and culture.

Fulfilling roles continues the education of traditional values and practices, ultimately supporting healthier food choices and physical activity.

Young adults were learning about cultural roles and values from their family. Similarly, community programs helped to create new learning opportunities and to build on what young adults have already learned. Feasting for Change linked young adults who are interested in learning more about traditional foods with Elders and knowledgeable adults. Programs operated as a web, each supporting others to educate and inspire communities. Identifying with being Indigenous or a particular gender can influence perception of how roles are enacted. Some young adults had to reconcile feelings of shame and lack of entitlement and work towards feeling empowered to learn traditional knowledge. However, the next challenge lay in finding Elders and knowledgeable adults who were willing to share their time and experience. In part, this was caused by Elders passing away with alarming frequency, having a lack of experienced teachers and feeling lost due to substance abuse and a disconnection from reliable adults and family members. Young adults become disinterested and lose motivation to learn resulting in barriers to learn valuable traditional knowledge. Resolutions to these challenges began with empowering community members to learn traditional knowledge and skills, and hopefully create a positive environment for developing community cohesion and healthy life practices.

### Food Sovereignty

In this section, I explore the participants' perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty and how this reflects sustainable self-determination. The discussion is framed within the complexity of fulfilling roles and maintaining the health and wellness of a community.

Food sovereignty was a new term for most of the participants. Several participants associated the concept of food sovereignty with academia and were not aware that it originated with the Indigenous peoples of South America who fought for control over lands where they harvested their traditional foods. Morrison (2008) emphasized that Indigenous food sovereignty is a daily and spiritual practice that it is grounded in self-determination and personal choice. Participants' responses reflected this definition through experiences and reflections on how having or not having Indigenous food sovereignty was a part of personal identity and life choices. However, Morrison's definition does not reflect the daily food choices that were made by participants. A dichotomy emerges between traditional and non-traditional forms of food sovereignty that does not address the realities of choice presented within the day-to-day. In a way, this dichotomy between notions of modern and traditional has created a false assumption that one must choose one or the other. Neither does Morrison's definition reflect the day-to-day difficulties in practicing Indigenous food sovereignty. This seems to emerge as a contrast between a belief that Indigenous foods are the only healthy foods and conventional foods are all unhealthy. This can stifle an important discussion of how to balance a healthful diet that incorporates both traditional and conventional foods.

Self-determination is one of the core principles of Indigenous food sovereignty (Morrison, 2008). PENAC eloquently described this by connecting freedom from a consumerist society with freedom to make choices beyond food. PENAC, JB, and Raven spoke about connecting to traditions, having access to healthy food, and being able to choose the foods they want to eat. They highlighted the enormous impacts that controlling food sources and putting traditional knowledge into practice has on shaping their lives.

I guess being able to have the knowledge and the means to sustaining yourself. Carrying on those traditions. It's really carrying on that legacy of the old people. Not being

depending of what's provided for you in a consumerist system. I think that is ultimately the thing that allows us our freedom. Just as human beings. (PENAC)

Food sovereignty is being able to have access to healthy foods, healthy foods that are again now a combination of both traditional foods and introduced foods, like the potato, and tomato and carrots. And then traditional foods<sup>12</sup>: the deer, the camas, the chocolate lily, the salmon, the clams. . . . The age that we live in now is that we need a combination of both traditional foods and introduced foods. And if we do it that way, what that does is create diversity in what we eat. And having diversity in food is not only a good thing for the psyche but it's a good thing for the body. We're not overloading it with too much of one nutrient. (JB)

It means get the foods that you want and having them available to you. Being able to say no, I don't want that or yes, I want that. (Raven)

Other participants expressed varied views on the meaning of food sovereignty. Sandy and Maddie understood food sovereignty to be synonymous with Indigenous knowledge around foods. Maddie further interpreted food sovereignty as adopting a diet of only traditional foods, while Daren Wolf did not seem to have a full appreciation of the concept.

I don't know what you're talking about. (Daren Wolf)

It [food sovereignty] would be important, but after you like try the outside foods. You're most likely gonna go like "Oh I can't just go without that", like but it would be nice right; like especially it would save you money too. Yeah, but I don't think I could see that happening. Well, not like everybody eats all the seafood. There's like a few people who don't eat any at all. They eat crab but they don't eat fish and they don't eat like any of the other traditional foods. So, I don't really see the community, just like as a community like doing that, like going straight over to traditional foods. (Maddie)

Oh, like having everybody knowing the seasons and going out. Knowing the seasons for fishing. All's I know is around here, is October when we get salmon on the salmon run, but we can't go anymore because of the accident we had there on Mill Bay, right off Goldstream there. That used to be in February. Clam digging is May to August. Crabbing is the first month of spring. And I think that's right. I can't remember when it was. (Sandy)<sup>13</sup>

Sandy's and Maddie's explanations of food sovereignty were similar to definitions of "traditional food and practices" shared by Sandy, Leonita, and Shana, yet they also noted the

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<sup>12</sup> The bulb of the camas plant and the corm of chocolate lily plant were eaten as a part of the Coast Salish diet.

<sup>13</sup> Sandy was referring to an intoxicated oil truck driver who crashed and spilled oil into Goldstream River.

importance of cultural knowledge, connecting to the past and ecosystem conservancy. Shana emphasized the diverse diet her ancestors had compared to the foods that now she chooses for herself, however unpalatable her ancestors' diet may seem to her.

It's getting to know your culture more. And practices in the traditional way of our people. (Sandy)

It's pretty much like reconnecting with your history. I guess you could say. Like back in the old days, what our people used to eat. Now we have stuff like this [sandwich]. It's just reconnecting. . . . I think the important thing is like taking as much as you need, not taking a lot. Cause we're running out of fish. The fish count is down. And hunting isn't as easy as it used to be. I don't think that we need more than we need. . . . Right now, the most important thing for me to learn is how to how to can [fish]. I know how to skin a deer. And I know how to cut it up and stuff. And I know how to cut, gut a fish. I guess you call it. And canning like preserves it for a while I guess. (Leonita)

It's how the old people used to eat compared how we are now. Changed so much because what we thought was good. Because of the way it tasted. But our old people had seagull eggs; they had seal. I heard of them even catching whales, which is really weird. Or those big sea lions and eating it and actually really liking it. And then they had seaweed and sea asparagus. And there was all these things that they used to eat that they loved that now we would look at it and go, "Ugh. No. Ew. No. I'm not eating that." (Shana)

Participants conceptualized the term Indigenous food sovereignty with practicing the "old ways," a term frequently used by CoSalish to describe cultural practices. According to JB and PENAC, learning the old ways was directly connected to food sovereignty.

There is no way that learning traditional foods and learning traditional culture cannot include food sovereignty. Because as far as traditional foods go; our traditional foods are our land. And our land is attached to our culture. And that's attached to our food. And it's just an endless circle. And that link is traditionally we didn't have to worry about any food. And if we had a time when we had what we called famine, or what we call famine. There was always still foods available for us even if we weren't able to harvest our main traditional foods. There was always those secondary and tertiary foods that we could harvest as well as go trade for. (JB)

And I think that's what I was getting at with the way the old people were. When I say they didn't have to work, it was because they had everything they needed. They went out and they got all their food. They prepared themselves and everything else was just icing on the cake. That is true independence. That's freedom. That's the freedom to do whatever they want. . . . We went to the store it was for some kind of occasion. And that was an occasion in itself. We needed nothing. Really. And now it's the other way around. We need everything (PENAC)

JB, however, drew a distinction between the 'old ways' and food sovereignty, noting that food sovereignty also includes modern foods found in a grocery store.

I think it would be best to continue to use the description food sovereignty, but also add, or to remember to include traditional foods or the old ways. And again I say that because that's just a reflection of the age that we live in now. We need to have both. (JB)

Some participants spoke a great deal about the connection between food sovereignty and self-determination. PENAC and JB were inspired to see families become independent and grow or harvest their own foods. JB's comment about family camas plots was especially significant as most of these lands have been developed or taken for parkland in Victoria, BC. Daren Wolf considered reclaiming land by buying it back from the government.

Buying land from the government and that will change a lot. . . . Because too much development. Major development on second reserve with the surroundings, new development and they're saying its private property when you guys come down on our reserve for no such reason. Just to look at the view. And then so, what the big difference? We come on your land; you come on our land. What's the big difference? (Daren Wolf)

Well, I would like to see it grow into having each family have their own family plots again for the camas fields and any traditional family boundary marking for traditional foods. And have it expand to the point so that we can have our community plots, community plots for First Nations communities as well as community plots for non-First Nations communities. So that we can have and share in all of this food. (JB)

Cause as it is right now we're completely dependent. It's our livelihood that's at stake. We basically break our backs to have a roof over our head and food on the table. If we're able to not have to depend so much on forking out the big bill to put the food on the table and acquire all that stuff ourselves; then you're not necessarily having to depend on all that stuff financially. Then it's just the matter of the roof over your head and transportation. (PENAC)

JB recognized food sovereignty as an action against assimilation and the policies created by the Indian Act. Maddie also made a connection between the politics associated with deforestation and Indigenous rights as well as the cultural practice of taking cedar bark without harming trees.

Oh yeah, I see that as a political act because - speaking as a First Nations person, promoting traditional foods goes straight against the Indian Act and some of the side



policies that came out as a result of the Indian Act or the similar policies like that to tried to eliminate traditional foods to assimilate myself as a First Nations into Canadian culture. Like I've said before and I will continue to say Canadian culture is a European culture. I am a WSA NEC and Ahousat. (JB)

And when usually we go out for that, they [forestry company] give us the area where they are going to go out and clear all the trees and so we're gonna go in and like harvest the cedar, so it doesn't go to waste. . . . I think they are cutting down a lot of the old growth. But I don't know too much about the forestry, or anything. . . . Well, we did go out and do the cedar harvesting and where we got sent, there wasn't very much there. So, that was a bummer. We were out there for a few hours and only came out with a few strips of cedar. And they keep putting us in different areas. But now it's beginning to be less and less every year. Yeah, so that's not good. Especially because it's such a big thing: the cedar. (Maddie)

Applying sustainable traditional teachings and techniques of land stewardship increases the health of ecosystems and holistic food systems, which leads to benefits for people eating those foods. In contrast, changes in agriculture, mining, transportation, and manufacturing stemming from the Industrial Revolution have increased the toxicity of the earth affecting even traditional foods.

If they're in control of their food, they can dictate what's applied to that food. And in traditional teachings there was nothing applied to our traditional foods with exception of the odd bear, odd wolf, odd cougar dragging out the salmon carcass and leaving it to rot. And as well as select years where we take some of the salmon carcasses and add it to our camas fields to add the salmon nutrients to add it to our camas fields. And again that would be organic materials. Cause if you maintain the land in a healthy, natural way, then the people eating those foods will be healthy and maintained in the same way. But if you are doing it in a non-respectful way by adding artificial fertilizers, artificial chemicals then all that lovely stuff that our industrial revolution brought with us, then we are degrading the environment. And when you are degrading the environment; you start to degrade the health of the people because you're adding all this unnecessary stuff. (JB)

Yeah. I feel it's [traditional foods and the environment] one in the same. Cause the food traditional foods are just from nature. They don't go through processing plants and sprays. And if the environment isn't doing good, then the traditional foods can't be doing that good either. (Raven)

And with our traditional food, like fish and stuff. We have to be careful where we get it. Cause I think locally, there's big issues with the crashes on the Malahat<sup>14</sup> and the oil and

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<sup>14</sup> Leonita was referring to an intoxicated driver who upon crashing spilled an oil tanker into the Goldstream River. This river is significant to the local Indigenous people as a major source of salmon.

gas leaking into the river. And all the fish are dying. And then red tide, stuff like that. You have to be careful about eating traditional food now. . . . We don't take traditional foods. Well, yeah we don't take it unless I know where it came from. . . . If we were being offered moose meat from Burns Lake. I'd ask who'd it came from. And then I'd go to my parents and be like this is where it came from, is it ok to eat. And most of the time it's yes. (Leonita)

Participants emphasized that a healthy traditional diet is compromised by the destruction of the environment and ecosystems. Pollution of the environment is a complex and multifaceted problem. Participants noted the destruction of natural habitat participants caused by oil spills, conventional farming practices, and excess waste among other things. Daren Wolf, Leonita and Shana spoke passionately about this issue as it relates to bountiful areas they have personally harvested traditional foods from.

Well, a couple years ago, there was the oil spill on the bridge and it killed off a lot of the salmon run up here. So normally from here on up there would be fish jumping everywhere, but since then there hasn't been as much. It dropped about a quarter of the population of the fish running back up. . . . Some people didn't care. They just thought, oh, ok! Bye! And a lot of the Natives, our people, were no, this is not ok. This is our land of. This is our feeding ground of catching our fish. And we've dropped a lot of it. . . . They just cleaned up some of the oil, just about all that they could see under the bridge and then that was it. There is still a little bit of the oil running around everywhere. (Daren Wolf)

Yep. I dunno, we used to go out and pick salmonberries and Indian ice cream when we were younger, when I was younger, but where we used to go get our Indian ice cream, they cleared it out. And we haven't found any since. . . . They're building houses on that place where we used to go get it. . . . You'd walk probably an hour and half away from the road. But now they got a road there. They cleared it all out away from the road. And now we can't find any more and so we haven't got any in a long time. (Sandy)

. . . . . You've got to think about the ground water pollution from the cars, from people coming through all the time and that's going down the creek and going in the bay. It's affecting all the shellfish and clams. We'll never being able to eat from that bay again. Everybody says Tsawout is healthy because we had that strait coming through. Water is constantly moving keeping the shellfish really healthy, and crabs, and our fish. But we want to make the stream<sup>15</sup> healthy so the fish come back and start coming up the stream again. And they're starting to now. [...] The cows. They kinda made it so that the

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<sup>15</sup> Shana is referring to Shady Creek, which runs through East Saanich into the Salish Sea near TIXEN, also known as Cordova Spit.

farmland or the farm water drained into the ditches, came into the creek and came out that way. Totally polluted it like a lot of other things. [...] You don't burn crap in your driveway or your ditch. It's like really? You're burning a couch in the backyard? Like I don't think so. Because burning plastic and all that crap is going right into the ground water and the ditches. It's going straight to our bay. That's not healthy. Brings so much damage. But, we are working on it making it a bigger deal for people. Because they don't know, they have no idea what they're doing. Everybody thinks it's common sense but to who? (Shana)

Despite these concerns Eydie, Leonita and Raven believed that eating traditionally would help people be healthier and happier.

I think that we would be healthier if we had that diet. . . . Like more nutritional and [...] I would choose an old diet. Cause the food that we have now doesn't really make you feel good all the time. And I would rather be healthier. (Eydie)

I think it's if everyone had their traditional diet, everyone would be a little be healthier and kind of live a little longer. Cause they're getting younger and younger when they pass away. Cause heart problems and stuff like that. I think that's important. (Leonita)

I think they are all important because if people go back to the way that traditional foods and go back to eating like that then there will be less health problems like diabetes and heart stuff. (Raven)

Participants contended that eating traditional foods and acquiring the health benefits that come with it, relates to more than just consuming the foods. Traditional food sovereignty is also about learning and maintaining the cultural practices of harvesting sustainably and taking care of the land. Leonita brought home the contrast between the spiritual and cultural significance to the land for her people and society at large. For her people, the land is seen as a gift.

Well, with the use of traditional knowledge of both Nations, Ahousaht and Saanich, what that would do would improve the health of the territory, and as the health of the territory increases, the health of the Saanich and Ahousaht would begin to increase as well. Because of the health as humans in general reflects the health of the territories we are living in. (JB)

So many people don't understand how important how these, it maybe little things to them. But they're so important to us, to have that culture and to have that food. A fish is a fish to them. But a fish is a gift to us. (Leonita)

An important aspect of food sovereignty is having control over food sources. The availability and choice of food sources has changed in the last 30 years for the Saanich people. Daren Wolf had an optimistic attitude and expressed frustration about people spending money on food when they can “[go] out into the backyard and [find] something”.

It hasn't been very long actually that our people have been getting our foods from the store, eating out and all this stuff. . . . My mom, she'd talk about all these different foods and she recalls the first time that she'd tried a lot of these things, like store bought things. . . . Cause otherwise everything that they had came from what they harvested in the garden, what they went and picked, what they went and fished or hunted. They still did it that way. It wasn't until later in life that she started trying all these things. And then it was an occasion. It was all new. And so it wasn't until our generation, it was kinda like we just took this nosedive and started depending on grocery stores and eating out. Things changed so radically. So when you look at all these statistics: diabetes, and high blood pressure. I think it's really just within the last thirty years. (PENAC)

It's harder to get nowadays for them. (Eydie)

Just going out into the backyard and finding something. And then you'd be good a couple of days and then going out and doing it again, instead of going out for a whole week to get money and go out for an hour to get food. And it only lasts a couple. Waste your money on your food. Instead of you could just go in the back or ten minutes away and find your own food. (Daren Wolf)

Gaining a broader understanding of the whole traditional food system means that people can trace where their food came from giving them a better sense of how healthy it is, thus enabling people to make more informed choices relating to the quality of the food.

More knowledge going around about Indigenous Foods. . . . Because it's what's going into your body. And if you don't know what it is, it could be really bad for you. And at least through Feasting for Change and eating traditionally, you know where it came from. (Raven)

And I know that, as a First Nations person, it'd be better suited for our health if we knew more about traditional foods. (JB)

Adopting conventional foods has multiple consequences for physical health due to the lack of variety and the quality of foods. Additionally, PENAC related stories of how, historically, communities gathered annually to harvest berries. These large events fostered positive

relationships, strengthened community ties, and well-being. Whereas, contemporary berry harvesting gatherings are small and many people are not interested in participating.

Compared to McDonalds. There's the two sides of the scale. McDonalds is like death. And then traditional foods can just bring you back from death. I'm not sure if it can do that but you know. (Raven)

People, like the older generation in their 50's. They're so used to having fish and crabs, and clams. And then potatoes and rarely any bread. Rarely any rice. And then as soon as they get older, we introduced the canned foods. We introduced McDonalds. We introduced coffee. We introduced juice. We introduced hamburger, chicken all that kind of stuff. Their stomachs, their whole bodies don't really react as well to it. (Shana)

It's not always a solitary thing that you're going out and you're harvesting things, just by yourself. We have a lot of stories about our people going out picking berries and it wasn't just a couple of people. These were entire communities that were going over to these areas. We hear all kinds of stories about people going down to the States and picking berries down there and this is how a lot of our grandparents go to know each other, was by picking berries. They met each other out on the fields. So it really goes hand in hand. It can be a community event. And I think that's one thing that the old people miss. How we go out in our small little pockets to go out and do these things and everybody else goes to McDonalds. (PENAC)

However, non-traditional foods can also provide benefits to health and wellness. PENAC contended that choosing healthy modern foods and exercising in tandem with a traditional diet is important to maintaining a contemporary Indigenous lifestyle. The challenge of maintaining such a lifestyle can be invigorating and healthful. Maddie recognized the health benefits of incorporating healthy and organic non-indigenous foods into their diets. She suggests that there are so people who aren't healthy as a consequence of not having those foods.

Especially in light of health issues: people with all the diabetes and high blood pressure. That those alternatives are right there just ready for people to pick up and take on. That's always a disciplinary thing for people to do. That's just like going on a diet or exercising again. It's a challenge to anybody. But I think we all need that challenge though. No matter what I think that people just need challenges anyways. (PENAC)

I would try to stay healthier side. I can't really say much for anybody else. Through there is a few people who are totally on and all about health. They get organic foods, and healthier things. But there are some people who aren't so healthy. (Maddie)

JB spoke about how practicing treaty rights affects food sovereignty. PENAC also explained how treaty rights are understood and how they can protect Indigenous rights to harvest food and eat “as formally done”.

The way we understood is that it states in there<sup>16</sup> about being able to hunt and fish and gather as formally done. So before. . . . and we feel that entitles us go to a lot of those places that we'd held as sacred. And so it enables so to be at these places and continue on those traditions. There's a lot of controversy about the treaty. There's its upsides and downsides of course. But that's one of the big things, is that we get to continue on all those practices. (PENAC)

Yeah, it's [treaty rights and food sovereignty] a direct link, because if they don't know what our treaty rights cover then they don't know what we can harvest. And if they don't know what we can harvest then there is a lack of food sovereignty: a lack of food security. . . . And because of those things it's getting encroached on by urban development because of lack of knowledge. . . . If we do not have the traditional knowledge of what was harvested there and what can still be harvested there then we'll lose our rights to those lands and with those lands we lose our rights to our traditional foods that belong to that land. (JB)

A longstanding barrier to creating food sovereignty lies in the cultural disconnection created by the legacy of residential schools. This includes a diminished familiarity of treaty harvesting rights and a loss of traditional knowledge that has halted the cycle of passing knowledge to younger generations. Thus the succeeding generations have not had learned the full spectrum of traditional skills and practices necessary for understanding the complex traditional food system<sup>17</sup>.

A lot of the First Nation community members aren't familiar with our rights to harvest these things. Just because it's part of the after effects of the residential school. The lack of knowledge within community members on what's ours. (JB).

But my Uncle, he's my great-Uncle and he's such an active elder in the community. And he has no idea what the traditional foods would be except for sturgeon and walleye and wild rice. So I, I don't know who I would go to 'cause if he doesn't know then I would have no idea. It's so lost. (Raven).

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<sup>16</sup> PENAC was referring to the Douglas Treaty signed in 1850-1854 (Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation: 2011)

<sup>17</sup> Refer to Nancy Turner's Traditional Food System chart, p. 5.

During the member checking process, Sandy spoke about how the residential school that his father attended was closed the year Sandy was born. The residual effects of residential schools are quite close to home. The following passage is a discussion between Shana and Eydie on residential schools:

*Shana: Because maybe something happened in their generation where it wasn't believed teach your kids this; teach your kids that. Some people were taught it but not a lot.*

*Eydie: Cause of residential school.*

*Shana: Residential school is a big part of why our parents, some parents are the way they are, really distant.*

*Eydie: Keeping to themselves. And don't really teach them things.*

*Shana: Learn how to love. Or don't know how to teach because it was started at home.*

*Eydie: They were taught not to be by themselves.*

*Shana: That means something when your parents bring you on the beach and say 'Oh we are going to go cook crabs' and we are going to eat clams and everything and prawns.*

JB believed that making an effort to rebuild relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through education creates the opportunity for non-Indigenous people to acknowledge and realize the effects residential school has had. This can have a positive effect as non-Indigenous people begin to understand the historical effects of residential schools and ultimately can lead to them supporting Indigenous people in their healing processes and respecting treaty rights.

Because they [non-First Nations people] are not leaving our territory anytime soon. And strictly from a numbers standpoint, they far outnumber us. . . . And if they are going to be continually going to be coming into our territory, that means we are going to be continuously training them. . . . [E]ven if their family has been here for seven some odd generations or whatever, there is just still a lack of knowledge. Either a lack of access to that knowledge or an ignorance to not wanting to know that knowledge, not wanting to acknowledge those that we have those rights, those inherent rights. (JB)

In my experience it [relationship between First Nations and non-First Nations people] has been more of a positive influence on the non-First Nations communities because they see it as, me and my generation and the generations coming after me as, a retort to the residential school and its effects. . . . It's something that we can use to combat the effects of residential schools. (JB)

As it stands, non-Indigenous people lack information and understanding of the complex local environment and the food and medicines it can provide. This has unintended consequences felt by Indigenous people, such as restricting access to harvesting sites protected under treaty rights.

With my personal experience with working with Parks it has only been the ignorance of the employers and employees of not knowing the Treaty rights because they are outside this territory. All that's really has been required to let them know is that we have traditional Treaty rights to harvest these traditional plants and then there hasn't really been anything of it. . . . Some of the challenges that have been presented, but I haven't personally experienced myself is the lack of knowledge of our treaty rights within non-First Nations, but the people of authority, Parks officials and supervisors specifically.

Because a lot of those things that we harvest are pretty specific to certain places, so that means we have to more or less do certain things in secret. Say we're on Park<sup>18</sup> lands or something like that and they want to hand out a fine because we're doing something to certain areas. They always talk about conservation and that they're supposed to be looking after it in such a way and we're obstructing the area and they want to hand out a fine. So there's all these constant threats, these dangers that we're faced with. And it's one of the things that really threatens our people when it comes to going out and practicing. Some of our people are scared. They don't want to go out and do that stuff. Because they don't wanna get charged. So we have to cross those lines. (PENAC)

Urban development that damages the health of ecosystems reduces the resources of harvesting, fishing and hunting sites protected by treaty rights, thus affecting the livelihoods of First Nations people. For example, a salmon run near Daren Wolf's home had a culvert installed thus reducing water flow in the river. In addition, nearby residents planted bushes that shade the river, thus disrupting the salmon's' reproductive patterns. Shana discussed the effect that draining a nearby swamp has had on ducks, which were traditionally hunted by her people.

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<sup>18</sup> PENAC was referring to Parks Canada.



They have started development on the Salmon River that they've just put a big three-foot pipe. A three foot diameter pipe that's all that runs along that big and then it runs along from the ocean and up the river a whole bunch under a whole bunch of rock and then they [the salmon] have to jump over trees fallen down, whole bunch of stone that been placed as a dam. And then go through a pipe that's seven feet tall that's only has a little stream of water going through instead of full out creek or river going down. . . . It's sorta hard for some people. People go there just to watch them [the salmon] just to go up. But now people have pushed out a whole bunch of their land to this corner of it and then put bushes and whatever, so it grows over it from the dirt. It grows over and it doesn't give it any sunlight. And it gets cold. So when they [the salmon] get cold they start turning back cause they think, oh it's still winter or spring or just in between. (Daren Wolf)

All the non-Native people are complaining about our hunter men that are down at the beach shooting ducks in the wintertime. And they don't realize that we depend on those men to get those ducks so that we can have a good winter. We can use those ducks. When we use an animal, we use everything. We don't waste anything. And when you get those ducks you use everything that the duck has to offer. There's an ocean-side RV park down there on one of our biggest swamplands. And that's where our ducks used to go. They put a big flat slab of concrete pavement on that swamp. And all of our ducks left and they went far up north. They're gone now. Forever. We can never fix that. Even if you were to take out that parking lot, it'd still be messed up there. People don't realize that our own Native people won't vocalize that because they let it happen. They signed off on that. Gave their land away. Or sold their land. And now it's gone. (Shana)

Cause we're really removed from all that stuff<sup>19</sup> and part of the sad truth to all that is because of settlement. Because a lot of the homes that are in the places where they are obstructing the lands where our people used to go to. The streams have been drained. We've been we've been forced into poverty. Just by all of that. That's the way it is for our people now. (PENAC)

To promote the use of traditional foods as part of a regular diet, Maddie suggested incorporating traditional foods early on in childhood as important to acclimatizing people with traditional foods that have become less familiar. JB suggested encouraging Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to embrace healthy contemporary foods alongside traditional food practices, which can then help motivate people to help protect harvesting areas.

It's probably the best time to start them off, is young. Because not all of it looks so like yummy right, unless you've tried it before . . . or you tried it when you came right? But you're like "Yeah, I dunno", because it looks funny. (Maddie)

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<sup>19</sup> PENAC is referring to the lifestyle of his ancestors.

Well I think that the best way to do that would be to promote the fact that food sovereignty just isn't, like what I mentioned before that it being the Western introduced foods, it can include our traditional foods as well. Promote that mindset to our First Nations communities and non-First Nations communities so that we can create larger pockets for our Native foods. (JB)

Eydie, Maddie and Leonita shared their motivations to keep learning and passing on the knowledge they have learned. Significantly, Eydie and Maddie were both motivated by the notion that the teachings could be lost.

I think just realizing that it could be gone tomorrow. It's really opened my eyes cause I think it'd be weird without having teachings and stuff. I think I would miss it if it was gone. So just that. It keeps me trying to learn the ways that my Elders are doing. (Eydie)<sup>20</sup>

Well I know myself, I will continue on doing it, and teaching, whoever else that doesn't know right, but everybody does. (Laughter) I think that we'll keep it. We always have, we always will. Like, it's just a part of our community. It's something you can't forget. It's just we want to do it more, it's just, it happens when it happens. (Maddie)

I'm going to try and try and try until I get a fish. We went gaff fishing last year. And my sister, she was right on the water with the gaff. It was so cool. We got to see them out there trying, and to be out there trying myself was so fun. And that is my to do list; to get my own fish. (Leonita)

### **Summary of food sovereignty.**

Indigenous food sovereignty links together cultural knowledge, creates connections with the past and works towards healthier ecosystems. This counters assimilationist practices that threaten to erode opportunities for Indigenous people to apply their Indigenous knowledge and treaty rights. Empowering people to make use of traditional knowledge and make healthy lifestyle choices incorporating conventional and traditional elements supports self-determination and treaty rights while countering the effects of industrialization, colonization and environmental degradation.

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<sup>20</sup> JB is referring to Parks Canada

Residential schools have had widespread, devastating effects. This includes cultural disconnection leading to loss of traditional knowledge and skills, knowledge about treaty harvesting rights and has disrupted a time-honoured system of communication between generations. Non-Indigenous have a limited understanding of the consequences residential schools have had on Indigenous, neither do they understand the rights granted by the Douglas Treaties or the positive impacts that practicing traditional ways has on Indigenous people. Rebuilding relationships with non-Indigenous through teaching traditional practices and treaty rights serves to inform them about the effects residential schools have had and strengthens networks that can potentially inspire non-Indigenous people to support Indigenous in protecting traditional food sources. Most importantly, actively practicing treaty rights protects those same rights and provides opportunities to further explore traditional knowledge. Education is key to motivating new generations of Indigenous young adults to participate in their cultural heritage.

### **Conclusion**

In what ways do participation in Feasting for Change influence young peoples' perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty and their roles in building the health and wellness of their communities?

Going into interviews and asking about the influence Feasting for Change has on engaging young adults in building health and wellness within their community, the participants spoke unequivocally about the roles of learner, teacher, and other traditional roles such as helper and the role of being a traditional person, which are learned through family. Participants provided several compelling illustrations about how community programs like Feasting for Change build on these roles through providing learning experience and connecting young adults with broad networks of people engaged in learning about traditional foods. Family seemed to

have a more recognizable role in supporting young adults to be active in their community, yet participants explored solutions to stated challenges almost exclusively within the context of community programs. Therefore, it seems that programs like Feasting for Change represents a potential avenue through which stated roles, learned through family and Elders, can be enacted and built upon.

Exploring the concept of Indigenous food sovereignty revealed powerful methods for working towards self-determination and countering the effects of residential school and colonization. Indigenous food sovereignty provided insights into the complexities of achieving community health and wellness. Barriers and challenges are systemic and widespread, yet participants remain optimistic about maintaining their roles of learners, teachers, and other traditional roles such as helper and the role of being a traditional person by way of education through programs, within families, and across communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

## Chapter 5: Learner–Teacher Cycles

The notion of learner-teacher cycles emerged from the findings of this study as a consistent, non-linear sequence related to learning traditional and cultural knowledge. I named these cycles learner-teacher to reflect the process of learning explained by interview participants. The discussion centred on creating health and wellness through traditional foods. Corntassel (2008b) says, "the revitalization of traditional foods, as well as community roles and responsibilities, is critical to the future survival and regeneration of Lekwungen people" (Corntassel, 2012, p. 93). While one interviewee was Lekwungen, this statement applies to all Indigenous peoples. The learner-teacher cycles reveal one way in which community roles and responsibilities are transferred through generations and within a single generation. It shows that all people are learners and all people are teachers. Knowledge about 'the revitalization of traditional foods' is shared, as are community roles and the responsibilities that come with them. Analysing the findings through the lens of sustainable self-determination, we can see that these young adults are taking on ancestral roles of learners, teachers and the responsibilities therein, and are beginning to learn the traditional knowledge and skills needed to practice cultural ways and develop relationships with the land and waters.

The first stage of the learner-teacher cycle is Learning from Family, often during childhood; the second stage is Learning from Community and the third stage is Bringing Teachings Home. The sequence began with participants relating stories of learning from family, often through experiences on the land or water. When I asked what participants wanted to learn, they named community programs and respected Elders who were generally not within their family circle or village. Lastly, interviewees consistently spoke about sharing newly gotten food knowledge with peers and younger family members. When participants spoke about learning,

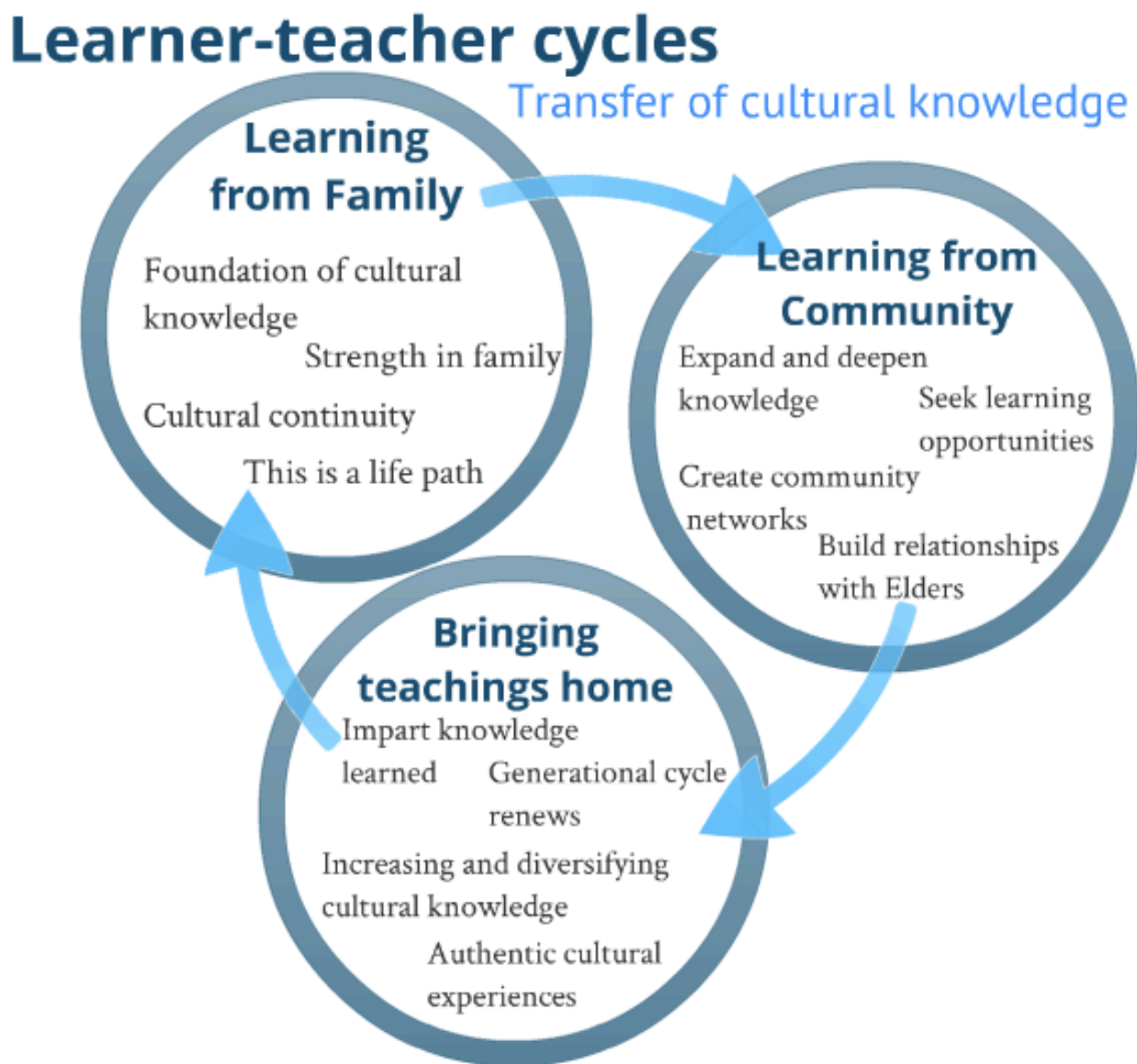
they also spoke about teaching. I named this part of the cycle ‘bringing teachings home’ as when I asked whom they would like to teach, participants mentioned younger family members. This chart shows how each of these stages interact with each other.

I believe that the age group of the participants, 14-30, was significant within the findings. Participants had been learning from family and were now entering or had entered into young adulthood. They desired to look outside the family circle and develop their cultural knowledge and identity, this made the learner-teacher cycle easy to identify. It is possible that if I had interviewed a different age group, I could have gotten different responses.

Despite the connotation of learning from family at a young age, this is not a linear model and the stages represent lifelong cycles. The cycles are also sequential and do not necessarily end at a particular age, thus learning is not limited to particular groups of people at specific life stages. This section explores the dynamics and application of learner-teacher cycles with regard to health and wellness through traditional foods within the three stages of learning from home, learning from community, and bringing teachings home.

The first stage, Learner, emphasizes the importance of family as the basis of learning cultural values, roles, and traditional skills and practices. The young adults are learning and accepting their ‘ancestral roles’ (Corntassel, 2008b). Participants shared numerous stories of learning practical food skills such as cooking traditional foods, hunting, fishing, and berry harvesting from family members. These teachings were imparted by going out to the bush and learning where the best berry spots were and which berries to pick. Or going out on the water and experiencing how or use a gaffing hook and kill, then gut a fish. These become lived experiences and are not forgotten. These skills are used again and practiced as a part of ones livelihood. Learning from family enables young adults to understand how their livelihoods are

connected to the complexity of the traditional food system. This understanding helps make knowledgeable food and lifestyle choices leading to health and wellness.



*Figure 3.* Learner-teacher cycles.

The findings show that roles are linked to protocol, responsibilities to the community, and spiritual understandings. These teachings also come from family. Protocols and responsibilities to the community are not explained, but are expected. It is expected that young

adults anticipate the needs of Elders and bring them food, drink, and other comforts without asking. For example, Shana is expected to know her role when hosting a meal in the bighouse:

“automatically we don’t get asked to do anything, we just know: we gotta be in the kitchen. You don’t have a choice. ... That’s how we were raised”.

Learning happens continuously as she fills her roles; therefore learning from family is not necessarily taking the time to impart a particular lesson, but is a part of culture and daily life.

A sense of belonging to ones family, community, and nation stemmed from learning from family in childhood and as a youth. Family provides a centre from which identity is formed. Family teaches one how to behave appropriately, how to distinguish what is right and proper, and shapes cultural and spiritual values and practices. Not all of these teachings are imparted as conscious teachings, as they are a part of life and are practiced on a day-to-day level. In short, family is the basis for learning and creating an authentic self.

Families who are rich in knowledge are able to pass that wealth on. PENAC describes himself as lucky to have family who can carry on the tradition of passing knowledge. Significantly, this also means that some families who do not have as much knowledge will not be able to pass as much on. Comments made by Shana, Sandy, and Raven reflect the lack of teachings had from within their own families. Acknowledging this disparity helps us understand the importance of the next part of the cycle “learning from community” in passing on traditional knowledge as a part of regenerating and recharging an entire community. The second stage, Learning from Community, focuses on learning from Elders, cousins or aunties, neighbours in the same village, or within community-based programs that bring people together who share interests and want to learn from one another. This section of the cycle begins when young adults start to learn from people outside of their close family circle. This stage is characterized by a deepening of the knowledge one has learned and the experiences one had as a child and youth. It



is understood that as one learns more about food systems and traditional knowledge, they acquire more responsibility. Therefore, learning is not to be taken lightly. It is a commitment to self, family, and community. Responsibilities are embodied as different roles. These roles include actually practicing teachings by going out to pick berries, harvest teas, and cook in traditional ways. They also include helping heal the community through gifting of traditional foods and medicines, and continuing to share knowledge.

Young adults in this stage actively seek out opportunities and people who hold the knowledge they want to learn. These young adults embrace situations in which one can learn from other community members and knowledge keepers, either alone or within groups. Within this stage, young adults begin to build a strong network of like-minded individuals who share interests in learning traditional ways. Learning from community is about strengthening knowledge one has, learning particular skills, and understanding cultural teachings from an Indigenous context.

Elders play an important role in learning from community. The knowledge held by Elders is especially valued as it enacts timeless relationships of cultural sharing. Teachings from Elders involve imparting social knowledge, but also deeper insights into the relationships between and within land. This also connects people with community and continues the tradition of imparting cultural teachings, ensuring that the deeper lessons are being passed on, through rigorous training and devotion. However, sadly, learning from an Elder is privilege that not everyone is afforded.

Community programs cannot replace the role that Elders have or the bond between Elders and youth or young adults. However, community programs can facilitate opportunities for Elders and knowledge keepers to provide teachings to anyone who cares to learn. In this way,

young adults can build connections to Elders who are outside of their immediate family or even culture. Diverse and dynamic teachings are shared, thus continuing a cycle of robust learning.

Community programs bring together community members of all ages and knowledge or skill levels to learn, share, and exchange knowledge. They also play a valuable role in supporting young adults to find peers outside of their close familial circle, as well as teachers. This creates a community network of people who are simultaneously learning and teaching. Community networks that stretch across Indigenous cultures show that teachings are not uniform across communities and when those teachings are shared, respect for each other and each others' ways grow.

Community programs work to strengthen the knowledge of everyone involved. They provide a platform to give individuals opportunities to experience cultural knowledge and practical skills. Community programs offer opportunities to broaden and deepen knowledge already learned. They introduce new concepts and new skills. This encourages young adults to look for teachers who can help them develop skills they desire. Participants become inspired to learn and experience more as they learn more.

Feasting for Change is an important example of a community-based program where communities are welcome to gather and learn traditional ways and skills around food. It is an example of how community-based programs that focus on foods can play an important role in creating traditional food sovereignty. The program brings people together from different communities to learn how to identify foods, harvest, and cook with traditional techniques and recipes. Indigenous people of all ages and knowledge or skill levels come together and learn, share and exchange knowledge. Feasting for Change recognizes that because of colonialism, traditional and cultural knowledge has been lost. The program purpose is to bring together

people who want to rebuild traditional food knowledge and revitalize communities, creating health and wellness. This happens throughout the day as people are working to create a feast of healthy, traditional foods where stories are shared. Everyday acts promote sustainable food systems and the regeneration of Indigenous food sovereignty and also play a role in transmitting the teachings and cultural values to both peers and future generations. Feasting for Change itself is not an everyday act, but inspires everyday acts leading to the caretaking of the land through bringing community together. These teachings are not forgotten; they are used.

The third part of the cycle, bringing teachings home, identifies and highlights the cycle of learning as teachings are brought back to the younger generations, and thus the learner becomes an informal teacher. Corntassel (2008b) and Morrison (2008) both highlight the importance of the transfer of knowledge to creating sustainable self-determination and traditional food sovereignty respectively. A key aspect within Corntassel's (2008) definition of sustainable self-determination is the role of passing on knowledge plays in regenerating communities.

The learner-teacher cycle maps the transfer of knowledge in detail and shows where young adults are learning and whom they are teaching. It also brings forth the understanding that transfer of knowledge is happening continuously and not only from Elders to younger generation. It is happening intentionally between young adults and family member, or peers, or other community members. The 'bringing teachings home' aspect of this cycle does not happen after knowledge is secured and learned. It happens when learning is occurring. It is simultaneous and is an example of how this cycle is non-linear and embedded in daily life.

'Learner' and 'teacher' are complex roles that can be embodied at any one time or simultaneously. This stage, bringing teachings home, is most often happening as the other two stages of the learner-teacher cycle are occurring. As young adults are learning, they are passing

on that knowledge. Passing on knowledge learned is a responsibility accorded to the learner. There is a sense of pride that comes with teaching. Maddie shares that teaching, “makes her feel good”. Raven says that she, “like[s] to teach people what I know so maybe I'll just keep teaching as much as I can”.

Teaching occurs when knowledge and experiences are shared through retelling of stories, taking family members and friends to practice skills, and sharing cultural teachings. Teaching often happens through sharing lived experiences rather than deliberate lessons. Daren Wolf takes on the role of teacher without questioning it. For him teaching is part of lived experience and also builds confidence in himself and the knowledge held by the learner-come-informal teacher: “And then you can pass on more knowledge to them and taken in more and keep passing” (Daren Wolf). This stage is not only about teaching younger generations, it is about sharing knowledge in general. The transmission of knowledge represents the ability to ‘renew relationships with’ language, medicines, hunting and fishing, traditional teachings, ceremony, craft and skills (Corntassel, 2008, p. 118)

This stage facilitates the exploration of the knowledge itself, thus making the teaching concrete by committing it to memory and manifesting it as authentic self-experience. The cycle culminates with younger generations entering anew into the first stage of the cycle, Learning from Family, thus gradually increasing, diversifying, and furthering the cultural knowledge family members are able to pass on. Within the context of family, learner-teacher cycles can encourage young adults to learn about the importance of ceremony and spirituality. Spiritual connections help to create or recreate one’s cultural identity and support opportunities to challenge the mantel of colonization (Alfred, 2005). This begins with personal transformation that can lead to change at the community level as healthy relationships to self, family,

community, and spirit and body are built and sustained through sharing knowledge and authentic experiences.

These roles are manifestations of cultural ways of being and are not questioned. The learner-teacher cycles are also embedded within culture and thus they cannot be separated from the cultural reality or life of the people who embrace them. To ignore these roles would, in a sense, be ignoring your cultural responsibilities and ways of being. This personal and community transformation lies at the heart of any strategy that aims toward sustainable self-determination (Corntassel, 2008b). The learner-teacher model shows how Indigenous peoples are continuously working towards sustainable self-determination through learning and teaching wherever they can. It challenges colonization and colonial authority on a personal and community level through focussing on ones daily practices and culture.

### **Chapter 6: Conflict transformation and learner-teacher cycles**

Working towards sustainable self-determination is a daily struggle and is linked to the concept of 'being Indigenous', defined by Alfred and Corntassel (2005) as being rooted in

“remembering ceremony, returning to homelands and liberation from the myths of colonialism that are the decolonizing imperatives” (p. 601). Sustainable self-determination perceives political-legal relationships with the state as continuation of colonial strategies and rejects developing those relationships. Sustainable self-determination instead focuses on the “transmission of traditional knowledge and cultural practices to future generations” (Corntassel, 2012; Corntassel, 2008b, p. 118).

Transmission of cultural knowledge features highly in learner-teacher cycles. Each facet of the cycle shapes the type of knowledge and ways in which traditional knowledge is transferred. This includes how family and Elders share knowledge as well as the ways in which knowledge is being transferred from young adults to their peers and younger siblings. The findings show that political-legal relationships are not featured in discussions of this transfer of knowledge.

Visibly missing from Lederach’s (1997) theory of conflict transformation is recognition of colonization and the importance of sustainable self-determination in addressing root issues caused by colonization. For example, conflict transformation does not acknowledge colonization as a root cause of systemic violence towards Indigenous peoples. Alternatively, learner-teacher cycles are part of Indigenous daily culture and confront colonization within the daily lives of young adults. They demonstrate the ways in which Indigenous culture works towards and therefore displays an understanding of how Indigenous individuals, family, and communities support the struggle towards Indigenous food sovereignty. Thus conflict transformation is not able to support Indigenous people in working towards Indigenous food sovereignty. For conflict transformation to be successful, it must represent a fully Indigenous process rather than being a part of a negotiation process.

Conflict transformation operates within the overarching framework of peacebuilding and without exploring or acknowledging the relationship with colonization the field runs the risk of rebuilding the colonial interface. Further, conflict transformation fails to recognize negotiation as being embedded in the political-legal structures of peacebuilding. As a result, the end goal of sustainable peace actually reinforces colonial structures rather than supports community to address core issues caused by those structures. Despite conflict transformation's intention of addressing oppressive protracted conflicts by empowering community, conflict transformation never gets beyond negotiation strategies to a true understanding of the community level.

Daily practice of cultural ways of being and the transfer of traditional knowledge are two basic aspects of creating sustainable self-determination (Corntassel, 2008b). Learner-teacher cycles demonstrate ways in which cultural knowledge is transferred between individuals and within a community, for the benefit of future generations and connection with ancestors and land (Corntassel, 2008b). Learner-teacher cycles also demonstrate how important the daily practice of Indigenous knowledge is for young adults and to establishing of Indigenous food sovereignty.

Learner-teacher cycles are used to build generational relationships with family, Elders, peers, and community. Sacred and traditional knowledge is shared and experienced within the dynamic of those relationships. By using the knowledge shared and learned, young adults continue the process of challenging colonial authority and control<sup>21</sup> over the lands and water that are the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. Unfettered access to traditional lands and water is essential to reclaiming and rebuilding traditional food systems. Through the learner-teacher cycles, young adults learn how to take care of their traditional territories and sustain

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<sup>21</sup> Taiaiake Alfred (2005) teaches the importance of challenging myths of colonialism by rejecting "colonial control and authority" (p. 32). He defines this as colonial powers creating definitions of "who we are and what our rights are, their definition of what is worthwhile and how one should live, their hypocritical and pacifying moralities" (p. 32).

themselves from the land. Traditional food sovereignty is not possible without sacred relationships with self, ancestors, family, community, and the land and waters.

Conflict transformation uses both personal ‘transformative’ processes and political state-level negotiations to develop relationships and achieve sustainable peace (Lederach, 1995). Sustainable peace encapsulates “increased justice and peaceful relations” and a reduction of violence (Lederach, 1995, p. 15). Justice is a laudable goal. However, increased justice does not mean full justice or recognition and reparation of the effects of colonialism by the state. Within conflict transformation, negotiations are used to determine the level of justice to be served to the colonized people. To have full justice, violence must be eradicated. The root problems related to colonization must be addressed fully and completely for the physical and spiritual violence of colonization to end. The narrow goals of “increased justice” or reduction of violence cannot address the everyday conflict of young Indigenous adults. Increased justice seems as though it is a justification for addressing only aspects of violence, rather than challenging the system that maintains colonial control and authority.

The goal of ‘mutually acceptable solutions’ is also a problematic and unrealistic goal. Young adults were focused on regaining knowledge that would create traditional food sovereignty and sustain their health and spirit. This entails having access to the lands and waters that make up Indigenous food systems. It also entails having the knowledge and experience to take care of those lands. Partial knowledge or practicing only part of Indigenous food systems is not conducive to creating Indigenous food sovereignty.

Cultural knowledge can become quickly lost. If Elders are not able to transfer their wealth of cultural knowledge to the next generations, the full understanding and practice of that knowledge is lessened with each generation and then becomes lost. When young adults are not



taught how to maintain cedar trees so the next generation can harvest the bark and weave it, the techniques are not shared or practiced. Similarly, when a family's food harvesting sites are destroyed through environmental devastation or modernization, the next generation loses access to those lands and finally the knowledge of how to manage the land, identify and harvest foods, and what the traditional uses were. The stories about the 'old ways' exist and are retold, however it is not enough to retell a story and regain lost knowledge. It is difficult to quantify justice within this context.

Conflict transformation was developed to help communities identify and address root issues within protracted conflicts. Overwhelming and seemingly insurmountable conflicts stem from colonialism and manifest within the daily life of Indigenous young adults. They must continually try to find ways to overcome or survive these conflicts. Daily choices and challenges met within one's day-to-day existence cannot be reduced to an issue on a negotiating table. Root problems include scarcity of cultural teachers, substance abuse, environmental destruction, urbanization, distractions caused by modernization, knowledge lost or only partially available, unhealthy foods, lack of access to traditional foods, and disconnection from lands.

Young adults also face detrimental root problems related to identity, such as a lack of entitlement to traditional knowledge, lack of pride in self and culture, uncertainty of traditional roles and responsibilities and therefore not being able or confident enough to practice traditional ways. These issues cannot be isolated from each other and addressed in a piecemeal fashion. The problem is systemic violence caused by colonization of people and their lands.

Lederach (1995) acknowledges that not addressing root structural causes of conflict can co-opt the process of resolution or bring it to a head prematurely. By ignoring the importance of addressing root issues that manifest in the every-day lives of Indigenous young adults, and by not

recognizing that these problems actively prevent young adults from working towards sustainable self-determination, Lederach does not acknowledge the root causes of colonization. Thus the goal of sustainable peace is not a marker of sustainability for Indigenous peoples. For young adults, sustainability refers to the ability to maintain traditional food knowledge for generations to come.

Creating traditional food sovereignty and the sacred relationships that facilitate that process, directly challenges colonization of the food system and Indigenous peoples. The findings show that relying on political-legal negotiations to change daily life is incongruent to addressing issues of colonialism. Conflict transformation cannot be used to address community level conflicts. The young adults must educate themselves in tandem with their community to create traditional food sovereignty and confront daily obstacles that stem from colonization. The destructive assumptions of colonialism are challenged as a result of many individuals reconnecting with their cultural foods and sharing that knowledge and experience.

In conflict transformation, negotiations work towards sustainable peace through restructuring political relationships and “deal with fundamental substantive and procedural concerns” with the goal of mutually acceptable solutions (Lederach, 1995, p.11). Broadly speaking, conflict transformation is based on the theory that relationships are key to building peaceful communities. However, it is not possible to mitigate dynamic and sacred personal relationships through political negotiations.

The relationships between the state and Indigenous governments are framed by previously negotiated treaties, and are for the most part, ‘peaceable’ relationships (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010; Lederach, 1997). The goals of ‘peaceable relationships’ are related to economic and political relationships and are not relevant to the root

problems facing Indigenous peoples in their struggle for self-determination: a spiritual crisis caused by disconnection from lands and traditional ways of being (Alfred, 2005, p. 31).

Alfred (2005) indicates that it is not worth negotiating with political and economic institutions, as they are bound by and cannot operate outside of colonial perspectives and therefore, re-create the colonial relationships they are trying to move beyond. Any negotiation processes would be with a more powerful entity not interested in sharing power or moving beyond colonial frameworks<sup>22</sup> (Alfred, 2005, p. 36). In contrast, learner-teacher cycles focus solely on transformation of Indigenous self, culturally and spiritually. Young adults did not trust the political-legal system to uphold treaty rights. They perceive that the treaty rights have not protected access to traditional lands and they have become disconnected from their lands and are challenged to fulfill cultural and traditional roles, skills, and practices.

Disturbingly, young adults did not fully understand how their rights might safely be applied when harvesting foods to sustain ones family. Even while knowing Douglas treaty rights protect the right to “hunt and fish as formally done” (PENAC), there was confusion about how the treaty should be interpreted. Is harvesting on private lands illegal if one is attempting to harvest foods from a traditional family plot of camas? Young adults did not propose going through legal systems to challenge the interpretation of their treaty rights. They either harvested foods in secret or were afraid to harvest at all.

Participants highlighted several key issues that could inhibit the use of treaty rights. These issues included feelings of despondency due to the magnitude of harm already committed. For example, swamps have been drained to make room for housing, ecosystems have been

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<sup>22</sup> The Douglas Treaties are an example of Indigenous peoples negotiating with the Dominion of Canada on a nation-to-nation basis. The treaties allow for use of natural resources for harvesting purposes. However, it later became “illegal to gather traditional foods outside of reserve lands and yet the practice of gathering the foods, processing and eating them . . . were what kept us alive both from the perspective of diet and culture” (Bryce, as cited in Cornthassel & Bryce, 2012 p. 159).

irreparably destroyed, and medicinal or food plants are becoming rare because of urbanization. Moreover, the overarching issues of poverty and the residual and generational effects of residential school were still felt by many of the participants. It could take years of young adults and future generations moving through the learner-teacher cycles to address many of these issues. Some, such as the mass destruction of habitat, might not be reparable at all.

Learner-teacher cycles can be used as a strategy to help address specific fears participants shared. Learner-teacher cycles can be used as a platform to share concerns and become inspired to challenge oppression, for example, by challenging urban encroachment and therefore, ensuring food security. Learner-teacher cycles can play an important role in confronting colonial inequities in the balance of power by connecting generations of Indigenous people and creating networks of communication and action leading towards social change. With regard to learner-teacher cycles, participants spoke about the empowering aspects of learning and practicing their cultural ways. They recounted personal struggles as well as ways they can confront the system of colonialism and work towards food sovereignty through what they were learning and who they were learning from.

While negotiations with state-level organizations figure largely in conflict transformation, conflict transformation (1995, 2012) does not focus solely on political negotiations. Conflict transformation develops workshops, in which personal stories are used to help people to develop connections between participants and those who are in conflict with each other. Conflict transformation focuses on stories as a method of creating and sharing spiritual experiences with the intention of encouraging participants to overcome fear and find resolution (Lederach, 1999). Conflict transformation invites those in conflict to look deep inside themselves, rather than follow a prescription that dictates how sustainable peace is created. The problem is that conflict

transformation only asks those people who experience the effects of conflict to look deep inside them and does not challenge the whole system of peacebuilding to do the same. It appears as though conflict transformation assumes that the unbalance is in the people, rather than the state.

While conflict transformation is used to continually question the causalities of oppression, the model does not overtly question the greater context of historical colonization of Indigenous lands and people (Lederach, 1997). Nor does it question the role of peacebuilding work in solidifying colonial authority over Indigenous peoples through economic and political policy. The goal of relating stories within the context of conflict transformation is two-fold. The first is to challenge one's own personal fears with regard to the conflict and the second is to develop relationships between oppressors and oppressed. The learner-teacher cycles do not promote reconciliation between colonized and colonizer. The learner-teacher cycles promote healthy relationships with oneself, family, community, and land and water. These relationships, together, create opportunities to develop traditional food sovereignty. Learning from community within the learner-teacher cycles show that the power of mutual education and sharing increase the number of learners and thus teachers. There are no prescribed solutions, rather individuals follow their passion and share their knowledge.

Learner-teacher cycles show how young adults focus on increasing their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture to work through personal problems related to issues resulting from modernization, deforestation, residential schools, and destruction of environment. They interpret these effects of colonialism as systemic issues to be addressed through transmission of traditional knowledge, learning from experiences gained through learning from family and community. Participants' recommendations related to challenging systemic conflicts revolved around creating educational programming so that young adults could learn and practice

traditional knowledge, as well as sharing the knowledge they have learned. The applicability of learner-teacher cycles becomes evident as participants broadly observed that the community as a whole needed to deepen cultural knowledge through learning and practicing skills, as well as creating personal connections through mutual sharing of accumulated knowledge.

According to Alfred (2005), transcendence from colonization can be achieved through individuals overcoming fear and disconnection by living authentically within the decolonized spaces they have created. The learner-teacher cycles facilitate the reclamation and decolonization of knowledge and relationships that supports young adults to ‘be Indigenous’ (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Alfred and Corntassel (2005) say ‘being Indigenous’ is rooted in “remembering ceremony, returning to homelands and liberation from the myths of colonialism that are the decolonizing imperatives” (p. 601). It is in ‘being Indigenous’ that decolonized spaces are created and Indigenous food systems might be reclaimed. These spaces are formed within relationships to land, language, relatives, and ceremony within a spiritual life (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005), rather than a solution found through state-based negotiations (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012; Corntassel, 2012).

For these relationships to be possible, we must draw on the elements of sustainable self-determination. Importantly, this includes the transmission of traditional and cultural knowledge and the manifestation of Indigenous ways of being on a daily basis (Corntassel, 2008b; 2012). For self-determination to be sustainable, it must be a part of daily life. It is the same for Indigenous food sovereignty. Learner-teacher cycles show that young adults are actively working towards sustainable-self determination constantly. Learner-teacher cycles is not a ‘theory’, it describes a process that is already taking place. These cycles show that young adults face the challenge of ‘being Indigenous’ every day.

Through his many experiences in working within protracted conflicts, Lederach described ceremony as an important event in which healing happens and peace is found. Lederach and Lederach (2010) suggest that healing happens through re-creating space for spiritual journeys (a cyclical and repeating process), those in need of healing look for what it means to “feel human again” (p. 143), finding understanding and a sense of belonging and purpose. Lederach and Lederach (2010) share stories of social healing in which mothers, neighbours, sons and daughters, and grandparents, who are both the victims and perpetrators of violence against each other, took brave steps forward to change relationships and feelings towards each other. This is both an empowering and humbling experience, as one must embrace humility and forgiveness, and work towards acceptance of self and other for the purpose of rebuilding one’s own local community.

However, within an Indigenous context, re-creating space means being able to find and heal harvesting site through repatriation of lands and recognition of treaty rights. Ceremony is an important part of reclaiming identity, power, and culture. Indigenous culture is tied to the land and practicing cultural ways out on the land. Ceremony is a part of land. Within the findings, participants lacked knowledge of ceremony as they had never learned or experienced the traditional way to catch salmon and the ceremony to give thanks. Ceremony is tied to spiritual and physical connections to the land, water, and relationships with ancestors. If these connections are lost, so is the true significance of the ceremony.

Alfred (2005) suggests the process of determining authentic existence starts with individuals making change through ceremony and traditions. Determining authentic experiences focuses on personal and spiritual transformation through one’s own authentic existence, which is then channelled into political action for social change (Alfred, 2005). Through the transmission

of knowledge, young adults learn who they are through ‘authentic’ experiences of ‘being Indigenous’, or going out and harvesting berries, using a gaffing hook, digging a pit cook. As their community networks grow and relationships deepen through the learner-teacher cycles, a sense of confidence builds and young adults begin to define themselves in relation to Indigenous context, rejecting colonial perspectives. Remembering one’s ancestors filters everyday experiences, thus Indigenous food sovereignty becomes a lifelong journey (Alfred, 2005).

Conflict transformation is based on the belief that each person must have the courage to change and confront entrenched ‘ways of being’ to balance power, confront destructive forces, and weave interdependence. The purpose is to force the oppressor to acknowledge the conflict and thus enter into negotiations. This stage is thought to be conflict transformation’s most powerful strategy in working towards social change (Lederach, 2005). Sustainable self-determination is a direct challenge to the notion that confronting ‘ways of being’ is necessary for social change. Sustainable self-determination focuses on bringing traditional ways of being into daily life. Indigenous food sovereignty focuses on creating health and wellness through ‘being Indigenous’ in the same way. Indigenous food sovereignty, like sustainable self-determination is a direct challenge to and must be created outside of the colonial framework (Corntassel 2008b; Corntassel, 2012). Learner-teacher cycles reveal the networks within community and family where knowledge about traditional foods is shared. Learner-teacher cycles can only exist within Indigenous frameworks and by their very nature challenge the colonial framework. The goals and processes that are required to achieve sustainable peace fall short of the goals and processes of sustainable self-determination.

Conflict transformation is purported to be a personal and spiritual path taken by and discussed between differing groups, within communities and cultures, and as individuals seeking



peace with themselves. Conflict transformation brings spirituality and ceremony into negotiations through using participant-determined and culturally - acceptable methods. Conflict transformation attempts to challenge oppression from within political-legal relationships by working towards mutual agreement, through personal and relational transformation. The end goal of sustainable peace is the result. This process is fully embedded within the field of peacebuilding and the development of political-legal relationships, which cannot address root conflict that manifest within the daily lives of the people who are affected by conflict. Conflict transformation does not incorporate ways to address issues stemming from colonization within the model, leaving room for continued oppression and conflict (**Lederach**, 1995; 1997; 2005; 2010).

In contrast, learner-teacher cycles are Indigenous systems that facilitate self-led sequences towards sustainable self-determination where Indigenous food sovereignty can become a daily practice. It is unclear why Lederach refused to acknowledge or address the importance of Indigenous and sustainable self-determination, but his failure to do so limits the application of conflict transformation to help Indigenous young adults work towards food sovereignty. As long as sustainable peace is the goal of conflict transformation, Lederach's (1997) model is limited as a tool to address all forms of protracted conflict.

## Conclusion

Through exploring young Indigenous peoples' perceptions of their roles in building health and wellness through traditional food sovereignty, I have refuted the relevance and applicability of John Paul Lederach's (1997) framework of conflict transformation in supporting young adults to create Indigenous food sovereignty within their daily lives. I have identified learner-teacher cycles and analyzed the findings through Corntassel's (2008) theory of sustainable self-determination and establishing cultural practices and traditional knowledge in day-to-day life of young adults, as well as the importance of generational learning in recreating Indigenous food systems and food sovereignty. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that conflict transformation and the role of negotiation in reality re-establishes colonial authority over young adults and the Indigenous food systems.

Community programs, such as Feasting for Change, are important for ensuring that interested young adults gain the knowledge necessary to begin a daily practice that supports a full understanding of cultural ways-of-being, or 'being Indigenous' (Alfred and Corntassel, 2010). . Feasting for Change supports young adults' choices regarding their desired roles in creating health and wellness within their communities and influences the development of roles through connecting community members, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers who have expressed interest in sharing cultural knowledge with young adults. Community programming can support young adults whose families have been affected by residential school and other strategies designed to destroy Indigenous culture. Through the learner-teacher cycles, the essential elements of sustainable self-determination are realized and through generational transmission of knowledge, traditional food sovereignty could be realized. Thus, learner-teacher cycles are a

culturally appropriate and powerful model in supporting young Indigenous adults in creating traditional food sovereignty.

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## Appendix A: Invitation to participate

Dear Chief, First Nation

Jen McMullen and the Feasting for Change: Reconnecting to Food, Land and Culture working group would like to invite youth from Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), Scia'new First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, and Pauquachin First Nation to participate as co-researchers in community based research with Feasting for Change and the University of Victoria. (For a complete description of Feasting for Change, please see attached document.) We are writing to you to ask permission to conduct this research with the youth of Pacheedaht First Nation.

**Broadly, the purpose of this research project is to see how Feasting for Change can be a tool for youth to connect with their culture through traditional food feasts where Knowledge Keepers and Elders share their traditions and knowledge.** We understand that research is political and that it has been used as a tool against First Nations and Indigenous Peoples. This is not our intention. It is Feasting for Change and Jen McMullen's intention to support youth in developing stronger relationships with their community, their culture and their Elders. We believe that Feasting for Change and this research can be one small link in supporting this.

Jen McMullen has been a member of Feasting for Change since its conception. With her knowledge of food systems and understanding of food sovereignty, Jen has worked for five years as LifeCycles Project Society's Indigenous Food Sovereignty Project Coordinator with Tsartlip First Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, Tseycum First Nation, Scia'new First Nation, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and Makola Housing. With community members, she has built backyard and community gardens, and community kitchens (please see attached resume). This experience led her to doing her Master's in Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria. The combination of working with Feasting for Change and with families on their own land enabled Jen to see that food brings people together and, more specifically, that it is an effective medium to connect youth with their Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

It is the intention of Feasting for Change and Jen McMullen to invite youth who have participated in Feasting for Change events including workshops, feasts, or youth group meetings and events to:

- Participate in a focus group that examines their experiences with Feasting for Change and shares their perceptions and priorities about what Indigenous food sovereignty is and how it affects community well-being and what their roles are as youth. (Questions are attached)

Through the youth's stories, Jen will evaluate how youth perceive learning about traditional foods can help build community wellness. The final draft of the thesis will be given to each Band Council and the participating youth for final feedback and any suggestions made will be honoured. Community members will be asked for permission to use quotes or images. A copy of the final thesis will be at the University of Victoria library and will also be given to each Band Council, VNFC, and the youth themselves. The results will be presented publically at a Feasting for Change event.

We would be more than happy to present this to you at your next Band Council meeting. The consent forms to do research with members of your community are attached, as are the consent forms for research participants and the questions to be asked.

Thank you for your time and energy in considering our proposal. I look forward to your reply.

Jen McMullen, BA.

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Feasting for Change: Sustainability Consultant  
University of Victoria, MA Candidate in Dispute Resolution

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Fiona Devereaux, RD  
Community Nutritionist for Aboriginal Health  
Feasting for Change: Project Coordinator

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Feasting for Change: Working Group Member

## **Appendix B: Permission to conduct research**

Youth from First Nation are invited to participate in a study entitled Feasting for Change – Connecting with Youth that is being conducted by Jen McMullen. Please see attached letter.

Jen McMullen is a graduate student in the department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by emailing at [mcmullen.j@gmail.com](mailto:mcmullen.j@gmail.com) or phoning 250-884-8529.

As a graduate student, she is required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Masters degree in Dispute Resolution. It is being conducted under the supervision of Drs. Leslie Brown and Charlotte Reading. You may contact Dr. Charlotte Reading at 250-853-3109.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to see how Feasting for Change can be a tool for youth to connect with their culture through traditional food feasts where Knowledge Keepers and Elders share their traditions and knowledge.

Youth from Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Tsawout First Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, T'Sou-ke First Nation, Songhees First Nation and Pacheedaht First Nation who have participated in Feasting for Change events are invited to:

Participate in an interview that examines young people's perceptions and priorities about what Indigenous food sovereignty is and how it affects community well-being and what their roles are as youth.

Through the youth's stories, I will evaluate how youth perceive learning about traditional foods can help build community wellness. The final draft of the thesis will be given to the participating youth for approval and any changes made will be honoured. Community members will be asked for permission to use quotes or images. A copy of the final thesis will be at the University of Victoria library and will also be given to each Band Council, VNFC, and the youth themselves. The results will be presented publically at the final Feasting for Change Visioning Feast.

This form is giving consent for Jen McMullen to come to your community and invite youth who were involved in Feasting for Change events to participate in the research as described in aforesaid letter.

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*Name of Chief/  
Councillor*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

## **Appendix C: Interview consent form**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Feasting for Change – Connecting with Youth that is being conducted by Jen McMullen. Jen McMullen is a graduate student in the department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. You can contact me if you have any questions by emailing [mcmullen.j@gmail.com](mailto:mcmullen.j@gmail.com) or phoning 250-884-8529.

As a graduate student, I have to do research to earn a Masters degree in Dispute Resolution. Dr. Charlotte Reading is supervising me and the research. You may contact her at 250-472-5449.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to see how Feasting for Change can be a tool for youth to connect with their culture through traditional food feasts and workshops where Knowledge Keepers and Elders share their traditions and knowledge.

Youth from Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Songhees First Nation, and T'Sou-ke First Nation who have participated in Feasting for Change events are invited to:

- Participate in an interview that looks at their experiences with Feasting for Change and share their thoughts and ideas about what Indigenous food sovereignty is, how it and traditional food practices affect community well-being and what their roles are.

Through the youth's stories, I will look at how youth could help build community wellness through traditional foods. The final draft of the thesis will be given to each Band Council or Executive Director and the participating youth for approval and any changes made will be honoured. Community members will be asked for permission to use quotes or images. A copy of the final thesis will be at the University of Victoria library and will also be given to each Band Council, VNFC, and the youth themselves. The results will be presented publically at a Feasting for Change Feast.

### **Importance of this Research**

The young people that participate will be able to share their interests in their communities, traditional knowledge and potentially what they see as ways to heal or strengthen their communities.

The purpose of this research is to:

- Strengthen communal network of knowledge around food systems, plants and animals.
- Support Elders and youth in building stronger relationships.
- Share youth's understanding of the importance of traditional knowledge of health and food.

### **Participants Selection**

Youth between ages of 15-21 selected to participate will have gone to a Feasting for Change event, such as traditional food feasts and workshops supported by Feasting for Change.

They will also demonstrate an interest in traditional foods by answering a yes or no question: Are you interested in traditional foods?

### **What is Involved**

You will be expected to participate in a one-to-two hour interview and member-check the completed transcript to ensure that the interview has been properly transcribed. With permission, the stories will be displayed on the Feasting for Change's blogsite [www.feastingforchangevi.blogspot.com](http://www.feastingforchangevi.blogspot.com)

### **Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to participating in this research.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of participation in this research include strengthening avenues for traditional food knowledge and community wellness to be shared amongst communities, including Feasting for Change.

### **Compensation**

**Participants will be given a \$25 gift and thanked for participation even if they withdraw from the study.**

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can choose whether or not you wish to participate, and you can decide at any time to leave from this study. You do not have to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you do not have to explain why. You can leave any of the meetings at any time without any negative consequences for you.

### **Anonymity**

The participants will be creating a photo-story showing their perspective of the Feasting for Change events within their community. Their story will be publically shown on Feasting for Change's blog, at events related to Feasting for Change and Jen McMullen's Master's program with University of Victoria. Please note that permission for use of photographs has already been obtained.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality of data will not be protected due to the nature of the research. In the consent forms, it is clear that the participant will be showing the end result of their story to family groups, Indigenous communities, and the Feasting for Change Working Group to encourage and strengthen traditional food practices, youth involvement and ways of resolving issues of Aboriginal health. Therefore, following Aboriginal tradition, the giver of the stories and knowledge shared will be acknowledged within the story.

Within the analysis of the data provided from the stories, confidentiality will be kept if a participant asks that confidentiality and anonymity be respected around a particular subject or issue. In this case, the subject or issue will be referred to as having been contributed by a "community member". The First Nation the community member is from or the participant's name will not be shared and a pseudonym will be shared instead.



Each participant will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on my final thesis before it is submitted to ensure that I have not breached the trust or confidence of the participants.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:

- At Feasting for Change events and to funders
- To Chief and Council
- Thesis publication or class presentations
- Journal articles

As stated previously, the creator of the story is the owner of the story. This permission form facilitates both Feasting for Change's and Jen McMullen usage of the outcomes of the research project.

### **Disposal of Data**

After three years, paper data from this study will be shredded and composted. Electronic data will be erased.

### **Contacts**

If you have any questions, please contact Jen McMullen ([mcmullen.j@gmail.com](mailto:mcmullen.j@gmail.com) / 250-844-8529).

If you have concerns, you can also call the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 / [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY] *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT*

I agree to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study.

I agree to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

OR

I agree to the use of a pseudonym in the results of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

AND

I agree to have my story/ name be displayed on the Feasting for Change blog.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

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*Name of Participant*  
*(please print)*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

If Participant is under 16 yrs of age, please sign to indicate that you were informed of this research:

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*Name of Parent or*  
*Guardian*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

## Appendix D: Topic Guide

This thesis will explore young Indigenous peoples' perceptions of building community health and wellness through traditional food practices and their own roles in the process. This study will attempt to answer the following research question: In what ways are young peoples' perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty and their roles in building the health and wellness of their communities influenced by their participation in FFC? The following are the proposed interview questions:

1. Please describe what "traditional food skills and practices" means to you.
2. Can you describe how you learned about traditional food skills and from whom?
3. What are the traditional food practices that you think are important and why?

Probes:

- Who is practicing and learning these skills in your community?
- What traditional food skills are important for young people to learn and why?

4. What is your perception of the barriers to young people participating in traditional food practices (in your community)?

Probes:

- What are some ways in which these barriers could be addressed?

5. In what ways, if any, do you think traditional food and knowledge impacts the wellbeing of people in your community?

6. Can you describe to me where you see your community right now in terms of practicing traditional knowledge around food?

Probes:

- How would you like to see your community in the future?
- Do you see yourself involved in making this vision a reality?
- What would be a good first step towards these first goals?

7. Do you see yourself as having a role in the community that relates to traditional food practices?

Probes:

- What roles for youth do you think are important and why?
- Have you had any challenges in reinforcing them within the community? Within yourself? Outside of the community?

(At this point, the conversation shifts from talking about food skills to talking about larger concepts like food sovereignty. To facilitate this shift, I will reflect back what we have talked about regarding food skills. I will then bring up how colonial leaders talk in terms of food security and point out that many Indigenous leaders speak in terms of food sovereignty and Indigenous food sovereignty. I will use Nancy Turner's chart to define Indigenous food sovereignty.)

8. What does food sovereignty mean to you?

Probes:

- Is there a link for you between traditional food practices and food sovereignty?

Can you describe it to me?

- Is this an important concept to work towards? Why/ why not?

9. Is Indigenous food sovereignty, in any way, being practiced in your community/ family/ self?

Probe:

- What are the challenges, if any, in being able to practice food sovereignty? (I want to know if people are having a hard time accessing land etc and if they recognize that this is connected to food sovereignty.)

- Does practicing food sovereignty affect relationships with outside communities like Parks, non-native communities, or other native communities?

10. What can we do together today that could make the most difference to the future of your community's basic food sovereignty. (I'm assuming that they are thinking on a community level).

11. How have FFC and other organizations like them made a difference for you?

Probes:

- What have you gotten out of working with organizations like FFC?
- Which ways have you learned the most?
- What have been the shortfalls of programs like FFC?

12. What more do you want to learn, do, teach about food? (vision of how communities can support youth). Look at the photos and pick out ones that are about what you want to learn, do, teach about food.

- Who do you want to learn from? Who do you want to teach?

13. Do you have any other thoughts you want to share? Something that I missed or didn't hit on? Something that you think is important?

## Appendix E: Feasting for Change

### FEASTING FOR CHANGE: RECONNECTING TO FOOD, LAND AND CULTURE

**Feasting for Change: Reconnecting to Food, Land and Culture** is a project guided by a broadly representative working group, collaborating since May 2007, who support urban and rural Aboriginal Communities in Southern Vancouver Island to enhance their food sovereignty and the sharing of the 'old ways.'

**Food Sovereignty** is the state of being in which "all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self reliance and social justice" (Hamm and Bellows, 2002)

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Feasting for Change: Reconnecting to Food, Land and Culture Project is to bring Aboriginal Peoples in South Vancouver Island together around Traditional Food Feasts to discuss food security and food sovereignty in their communities. The goal is to identify community-specific issues around food and inspire action to address these issues.

**Funding:** The Feasting for Change project has generously been funded by the Horner Foundation, VanCity Sustainability Group, BCHALA and the Tides Foundation.

Below are excerpts from some events in 2010. Please see [www.feastingforchange.com](http://www.feastingforchange.com) for detailed descriptions and a visual summary of these events.

**Event 1:** *On March 13, 2010 UVIC students, Feasting for Change, and SeaChange came together to celebrate the beauty and sacredness of Snit'cel, the old village site of the WSANEC people in the Todd Inlet Park. Everyone worked together to gather materials for the pit cook. After a small lunch, everyone split into two groups. One group helped remove invasive species and the other learned about medicines and indigenous plants. After the groups switched roles, the pit was opened. We feasted on root veggies, clams, apples and it was delicious. 60 people attended 5 young people, 20 UVIC students.*

**Event 2:** *On April 16 and 17, 2010 over 300 members from 30 Coastal First Nations communities attended the 3rd Annual Conference on the Traditional Foods of Vancouver Island First Nations. Feasting for Change presented our project and demonstrated traditional cooking techniques such as pit cooking skills, and smoking clams*

**Event 3:** *On May 11, 2010 Feasting for Change presented at the International Congress of Ethnobiology 2010 in Tofino, to over 100 people. It was truly inspiring to meet people from all over the world working hard on food issues and environment protection. It was a powerful moment. Youth from the Digital Harvesters were motivated to keep working on traditional food issues and became our strongest supporters.*

***This year, Feasting for Change hosted or supported several workshops focused on learning traditional knowledge and skills. Examples are below:***

*January 26: Plant Identification walk  
February 2: Anna Spahan taught about medicines  
November 13: Smoking Fish with Earl*

The expected outcomes of this project are many, below are the main ones:

- Increased Community Capacity Building
- Knowledge Translation from Elders to Youth, and between Communities.
- Cultural Pride and Enhanced Self Esteem
- Sustained Energy, Ideas and Knowledge to propel further projects.
- Linking communities.