

FEED THE CULTURE, FEED THE PEOPLE:

Understanding the Role of Indigenous Young People in Revitalizing Food Systems

by

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Executive Summary

Food insecurity, summarized as a lack of access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, is often depicted as being driven by systemic poverty and inequality. As a result, it is a major issue of concern in Canada, especially among Indigenous households with children and youth (i.e., young people). Amid drivers of food system changes such as climate change, there is a need for multi-level resilience that has Indigenous Peoples as central contributors. Indigenous Peoples living in what is now known as Canada, continue to uniquely grapple with the effects of past colonial systems (e.g., the residential school system) and government policies (e.g., the Indian Act) that have impacted their present-day relationship with their culture and food systems. Before colonization, Indigenous Peoples were primary stewards of the land and water systems and had governance structures that especially valued women and the intergenerational connection between Elders and young people. The physical removal of Indigenous children from their territories, via the day/residential school system, severed the connections between family members and eroded the community-level cultural support systems that were vital to intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Globally, nationally, and provincially, there has been an acknowledgement of the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to their territories, traditions, and foods, with an interest in paving a pathway toward reconciliation through Canada's adoption of the globally founded United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and British Columbia's implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. The provincial-level act led the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food to work with Indigenous members comprising the recently established British Columbia Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food to enhance the equitable participation of Indigenous Peoples in food systems. The ministry and council have identified a priority to strengthen Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and build food system resilience to advance Indigenous self-determination, further self-sufficiency, improve resilience to climate change, prioritize the revitalization of cultures, and advance lasting and meaningful reconciliation. There is particular interest in understanding the role Indigenous young people play in meeting this priority due to their perceived vitality among Elders and Indigenous leaders in sustaining food systems for future generations and ensuring food system resilience and cultural continuity.

The objectives of this paper were to (1) investigate the challenges and opportunities in strengthening Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and food system resilience within Canada, while assessing the relevance to food system participation of Indigenous young people in British Columbia; and to (2) provide recommendations to the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the British Columbia Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food to aid in their mission to promote Indigenous young people's equitable, active, and meaningful participation within food systems in British Columbia. The objectives were met through a semi-systematic literature review. This paper intends to lay the foundation for future work that directly engages Indigenous young people in research and decision-making related to food systems in British Columbia.

The challenges facing Indigenous young people and their communities related to Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and food system resilience are interconnected and particularly complex given the blending of past and present realities. Though experiences differ between individuals and communities, colonization and its legacies have generally interfered with Indigenous knowledge and food systems, environmental protection, and the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous governments. Furthermore, the increase in large-scale industrial human activities has made carrying out cultural practices and ancestral approaches to natural resources management more difficult. Similarly, changes to climate, landscapes, and the connection of food with culture, traditions, and history among Indigenous Peoples have made it more difficult for hunters and gatherers to acquire local foods of cultural importance and support the knowledge transfer to younger generations in the process. The friction between Indigenous and Western-based knowledge systems makes collaborating on addressing these challenges particularly sensitive.

There are opportunities open to the participation of Indigenous young people in food systems. Notably, Indigenous-led educational reform and the immersion of living generations in language and place, and structural reform through self-determination and self-governance. Elders are especially integral to food and cultural education and benefit from the support of broader social networks (i.e., family and community leadership) to ensure cultural connection among those living within and outside their territory. Indigenous food sovereignty programs are a successful platform for deconstructing and reconstructing colonial structures within communities. However, their success could still benefit from the political and financial support

of non-Indigenous governments. Ultimately, shifting economic and decision-making power to Indigenous Peoples is a sure way for all actions to be culturally relevant, specific, and determined.

This paper concludes with audience-based recommendations that may aid non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples, the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the British Columbia Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food to take action to promote the participation of Indigenous young people in food systems. Lastly, guidelines for the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food were included to help them navigate their sensitive role as a non-Indigenous government.

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Positionality Statement

I identify as a mixed-ancestry female born and raised in what is now known as British Columbia, Canada. While I have matrilineal ties to Kwakwaka'wakw territories, specifically Da'naxda'xw First Nation and Tlatlasikwala First Nation, I note I am mostly European and Asian. I acknowledge my standpoint as an educated youth, privileged to live, learn, work, and play in the many territories of the uniquely diverse Indigenous Peoples within my home province. I believe that Indigenous Peoples are not homogenous. Therefore, they do not all have the same perspectives or experiences. Everyone has an identity which may only be fully understood and described by them. As such, I do not aim or wish to speak on behalf of any individual, community, or population.

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1. Introduction

Food physically sustains all living things on Earth and connects people and culture. Yet, millions of people worldwide suffer from food insecurity, particularly Indigenous Peoples (FAO, 2021; FAO et al., 2021a; FAO et al., 2021b; Hutchinson & Tarasuk, 2022). *Food security* is considered to exist “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2003, p. 28), and *food insecurity* exists when such criteria are partially or entirely unmet (Richmond et al., 2021). In present-day Canada, Indigenous households with children and youth experience a higher prevalence of food insecurity than those without (Bagelman, 2018; Batal et al., 2021a; Tarasuk et al., 2019). The children and youth themselves are also at disproportionately higher risk of hypertension and obesity compared to non-Indigenous children and youth (Bhawra et al., 2017; Kolaheedooz et al., 2020). Hence, food (in)security is among several social determinants of health that affect Indigenous health and well-being, including physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of health (Bagelman, 2018; McGavock et al., 2018; Settee et al., 2020). Furthermore, the health of individuals and the state of food security is largely understood as overlapping and embedded within a wider system of determinants (i.e., sociocultural, economic, and environmental factors) that have an indirect effect on individual-level health and well-being (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2020; Government of Canada, 2022; Greenwood, 2016; Kolaheedooz et al., 2015). Evaluating food insecurity, among other food system challenges, requires researchers to situate Indigenous Peoples within broader systems to adequately evaluate the compounding factors that have interfered with past and present relationships between people, culture, food, and place (de Finney, 2017; Fan et al., 2021; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2020; Richmond et al., 2020; Richmond et al., 2021; Yumagulova et al., 2020).

Despite efforts at multiple scales to achieve food security through improving human nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture, the prevalence of global food insecurity among populations has been steadily increasing since 2014 (United Nations, 2021). This continued increase is largely due to drivers of food system changes, such as the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the presence of climate change and its impacts (FAO et al., 2021a; FAO et al., 2021b; Lam et al., 2019). Following the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the

number of people experiencing hunger, food access difficulties, mental health stressors, and food worry increased (FAO et al., 2021b; McAuliffe et al., 2021). Meanwhile, climate change has continued to affect historically established cycles and weather patterns through environmental disruptions caused by competitive land use (FAO et al., 2021a). Especially vulnerable are Indigenous populations living in the rural and coastal regions of Canada (Marushka et al., 2019). These conditions exemplify that the interconnectedness of food systems and culture increases the vulnerability of their human and non-human dependents across time and space differently, not unlike all other forms of complex social-ecological systems (Jackson et al., 2020; Tendall et al., 2015; Tremblay et al., 2020). They also emphasize a need for multi-level resilience to combat direct and cascading impacts on food systems that may not present themselves until years later (Fan et al., 2021; Folke, 2006, Liu et al., 2007). *Food system resilience* is the “capacity over time of a food system and its units at multiple levels, to provide sufficient, appropriate and accessible food to all, in the face of various and even unforeseen disturbances” (Tendall et al., 2015, p. 19). Indigenous Peoples are considered by countries around the world as central contributors to both the resilience and sustainability of complex food systems amid changes and uncertainty, due to their food practices that inherently harmonize the sustainment of humans and biodiversity (FAO, 2021; FAO et al., 2021a; FAO et al., 2021b). However, they continue to be disproportionately affected by system perturbations (Domingo et al., 2020; James et al., 2021), given the disruption system changes cause to cultural practices that are otherwise protective of their health and well-being (Power et al., 2020).

Indigenous Peoples have been defined by the Canadian government as First Nations (both status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit, each with their own unique and diverse cultures, languages, and histories (Statistics Canada, 2021). However, they all share a colonial history and legacy with Canada (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017; de Finney, 2017; Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019; Howe, 2022; Loukes et al., 2021; Rowhani & Hatala, 2017). “Canada’s food system is built on a foundation of settler-colonialism” (Laforge et al., 2021, p. 199), whereby agriculture “has historically been used to dispossess Indigenous Peoples” (James et al., 2021, p. 33). This has been done through the amendments to the Indian Act prohibiting homesteading and the sale of agricultural products by Indigenous Peoples (Gauthier & White, 2017). The Indian Act also severed the revered role women had in influencing the protection of biodiverse food resources and traditions through non-hierarchical and matriarchal societies (Delormier et al., 2017;

Kuhnlein, 2017; Michnik et al., 2021). As of 2016, Indigenous operators (i.e., individuals responsible for the management decisions of an agricultural operation) represented 1.9% of all operators in Canada, were mostly First Nations from British Columbia and were more likely to be female than non-Indigenous operators (Gauthier & White, 2017). Settler-colonialism, power shifts, broken treaties, and the imposition of assimilation policies, such as reserve systems, day/residential schools, and the Indian Act, have all led to a dislocation of Indigenous Peoples from their territories and disrupted the relational ways of knowing and being that existed between Indigenous Peoples and nature pre-contact (Andrée et al., 2019; Domingo et al., 2021; Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019; Michnik et al., 2021). Ultimately, Indigenous Peoples sustained themselves on the land and water systems since time immemorial (Ray et al., 2019).

The day/residential school system in British Columbia (BC) was especially focused on eliminating Indigenous food practices by forcibly removing Indigenous children from their homes, severing the connections to family and culture, and eroding cultural support systems (de Finney, 2017; Neufeld et al., 2020). Specifically, Indigenous children were taught to dislike their cultural foods, contributing to unhealthy food associations later in life (Neufeld et al., 2020). Though personal experiences of survivors vary, colonialism and territorial dispossession, as well as environmental degradation, have exacerbated food insecurity and affected subsequent generations by decreasing access, availability, and usage of Indigenous foods – also termed cultural foods, country foods or traditional foods (Cidro et al., 2018). *Indigenous foods* are defined as “traditional foods harvested from the land or water” and are not only physically sustaining, but also socially and culturally valued (Settee et al., 2020, p. 4). For example, abalone has been valued for generations by coastal First Nations in BC, and fondly described by members of Heiltsuk Nation and Haida Nation as a “culturally keystone species” especially important for intergenerational knowledge transmission (Lee et al., 2019, p. 12). Thus, Indigenous foods are major contributors to the holistic health of Indigenous Peoples and are considered “central to [their] identity, culture, and self-determination” (Settee et al., 2020, p. 4). Still, the changed food relationships prompted by BC’s colonial history have severed the essential transfer of knowledge and skills between Elders and young people for the sustainment of language, health, and cultural identity (Domingo et al., 2021; Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019; Hanemaayer et al., 2020; Marushka et al., 2021; Mikraszewicz & Richmond, 2019; Miltenburg et al., 2022; Neufeld et al., 2020; Richmond et al., 2021; Rowhani & Hatala, 2017). The

transgenerational effects of cultural discontinuity have also created historical trauma at the individual, family, and community levels and resulted in a higher burden of social and health inequities among Indigenous children and youth compared to other demographics (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017; Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019; Howe, 2022; Power et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2021; Wilk et al., 2017; Woodgate et al., 2017).

Today, the Indigenous population in Canada is one of the youngest and fastest growing populations in the country, focalizing a widespread interest in understanding the conditions of Indigenous young people (Anderson, 2021). This paper considers Indigenous young people to include children (under 15 years of age) and youth (15 to 30 years of age inclusive), the latter accounting for variation across programs in terms of how youth are classified. Indigenous youth, aged 15 to 24 years according to Statistics Canada (2021), make up one-sixth of the Indigenous population. Hence, based on a larger proportion of Indigenous youth (17%) compared to non-Indigenous youth (12%), it is predicted that the Indigenous population in Canada will grow to approximately 2.5 to 3.2 million people by 2041 (Statistics Canada, 2021). Indigenous children account for more than one-half (51%) of all foster children and are more likely to live in multigenerational households with parents and grandparents than non-Indigenous children in the same age group (Statistics Canada, 2018). Indigenous children also typically experience higher rates of food insecurity than non-Indigenous children (CCHS, 2012; Riediger et al., 2022), although the extent of food insecurity is considered by some Indigenous Chiefs and leaders in BC as underreported in government statistics (personal communication, April 11, 2022). Discrepancies are affirmed by the fact that surveys measuring Indigenous food insecurity in Canada typically do not include participants living on reserves (Bagelman, 2018), despite notable differences between rural and urban households in Canada (Piaskoski et al., 2020).

Reserves are considered by some scholars as *food deserts*, meaning areas that lack access to affordable healthy foods, are largely low-income, and underserved in terms of transportation sites and food distribution (Lemke & Delormier, 2017; Schnitter & Berry, 2019). These conditions affect distance/time to travel, reliance on transportation, and food costs for communities differently (Batal et al., 2021a; Domingo et al., 2021; Piaskoski et al., 2020; Richmond et al., 2021; Robidoux et al., 2021; Sarker et al., 2019; Wendimu et al., 2018). Reserves or rural communities typically lack access to grocery stores and year-round road access, whereas Indigenous Peoples living in urban communities generally lack proximal access

to social networks that support the learning and retention of ancestral knowledge across generations (Richmond et al., 2021; Wendimu et al., 2018).

The realities for Indigenous young people today are rooted in the past suppression of Indigenous values and worldviews which have changed the relationship between the environment, spirituality and people, and a community's ability to culturally nurture its youngest generations (Michnik et al., 2021). In the face of inequities embedded in history (Connor et al., 2019), Indigenous Peoples are “known to survive historical and contemporary adversities, demonstrating resourcefulness and resilience” (Power et al., 2020, p. 3). Further, the involvement of Indigenous young people has enhanced efforts among Indigenous communities to reclaim and revitalize Indigenous food systems, governance, language, and livelihoods (Delormier et al., 2017; Robidoux et al., 2017; Spiegel et al., 2020). For example, a study involving Tsleil-Waututh Nation in BC discussed the Indigenous youth-led movement, Idle No More, as having drawn public attention to fossil fuel extraction on their land (Spiegel et al., 2020). Similarly, young people on Kahnawà:ke territory in Quebec started a grassroots community garden project that directly addressed community responsibilities and built positively upon community food security (Delormier et al., 2017). According to Greenwood (2016), the earlier children are exposed to positive experiences and social influences in their environments, the healthier and more equipped they will be to face challenges as they age, and the more likely they are to lead others similarly in their adult life. Therefore, many Indigenous Peoples, notably Elders, believe young people will be central to continued cultural and food system revitalization (Bagelman, 2018).

Efforts have been made on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia to reconcile the effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples. Canada adopted the globally defined United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to create a path forward that acknowledges the human rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007), and BC became the first province in Canada to enact UNDRIP through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) (Province of British Columbia, 2021). A relevant intended outcome of DRIPA is a BC where “Indigenous food systems are recognized and supported in their foundational and interconnected role in providing for cultural, social, environmental and economic well-being” (Province of British Columbia, 2021, p. 11). The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) has sought to act on this legislation by assembling the BC Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food (IACAF), made up of

Chiefs and leaders across the province. Together, MAF and IACAF are working to mobilize IACAF's 2021-2024 strategic plan, aiming to enhance the equitable participation of Indigenous Peoples in BC's food systems and advocate for food sovereignty (IACAF, 2021). *Food sovereignty* is "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 agricultur[al] systems" ("Declaration", 2007, para. 3). While Indigenous food sovereignty is in and of itself an opportunity to address food system challenges (Coté, 2016), it is the complexity of interconnected system challenges that interferes with sovereign efforts – warranting a range of approaches to address them (Martens et al., 2020).

IACAF has identified three priority action areas to support their overall vision to advance Indigenous self-determination, further self-sufficiency, improve resilience to climate change, prioritize the revitalization of cultures, and advance lasting and meaningful reconciliation – the first being to "strengthen Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and build food system resilience" (IACAF, 2021, p. 9). According to one member of IACAF, young people are the future of sustainable food systems and play a huge role in food system resilience (personal communication, July 14, 2022). Another IACAF member shared their interest in knowing what resources are available to young people and their community to participate on the land, considering that connecting with the land is integral to work within food systems (personal communication, July 14, 2022). In short, the involvement of young people ensures hands-on work towards food security, food sovereignty, food system resilience, and cultural revitalization continues (IACAF personal communication, July 14, 2022).

This paper is part of a project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Land and Water Systems. The primary motivation for this paper was the identification of a need to involve and support Indigenous young people in advancing IACAF's first defined priority action in their strategic plan (IACAF personal communication, April 11, 2022). This paper aims to realize two objectives which may serve as a step on a pathway to realizing equitable, active, and meaningful participation of Indigenous young people within food systems in BC.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this paper were (1) to investigate the challenges and opportunities in strengthening Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and food system resilience within

Canada, while assessing the relevance to food system participation of Indigenous young people in BC; and (2) to provide recommendations to MAF and IACAF to aid in their mission to promote Indigenous young people's equitable, active, and meaningful participation within food systems in BC.

2. Methods

A semi-systematic literature review was conducted to meet the stated objectives. Quantitative and qualitative publications were collected through searching both the University of British Columbia Library and Google Scholar databases, using a combination of the following terms: “Indigenous” or “First Nation*” or “Aboriginal” and “youth” or “child*” or “young” or “household*” or “famil*” and “Canada” or “British Columbia” and “food” and “secur*” or “insecur*” or “adequate*” or “inadequate*” or “system*” or “agriculture” or “sovereignty” or “resilience”. Searches were limited to full-text available journal articles published between May 2017 to May 2022 inclusive. Only peer-reviewed journal articles in English were included. The results from Google Scholar were sorted by relevance, and all but the first 50 were manually excluded. Publications were excluded from both databases if they were duplicates, did not mention food or Indigenous populations, or were entirely focused on Inuit populations in Northern Canada (i.e., no reference to Canadian provinces). After sorting the results using inclusion/exclusion criteria, a total of 96 publications were stored using Zotero, read in full for the review, and analyzed using NVivo’s qualitative data analysis software.

Informal discussions with Indigenous individuals augmented the rationale for this paper. Formal consultation was not conducted as this paper accompanies internal work commissioned by IACAF and precedes future co-produced work involving direct, meaningful engagement with Indigenous young people living in BC.

3. Discussion

This section addresses the objective (1) to investigate the challenges and opportunities in strengthening Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and food system resilience within Canada, while assessing the relevance to food system participation of Indigenous young people in BC, and the objective (2) to provide recommendations to MAF and IACAF to aid in their mission to promote Indigenous young people’s equitable, active, and meaningful participation within food systems in BC.

3.1 Challenges to Participation

Challenges influencing the participation of Indigenous young people in food systems are discussed under the following categories: Changes to Ways of Knowing and Being and Changes to Land and Water Systems.

3.1.1 Changes to Ways of Knowing and Being

Historical policies and forced physical displacement have contributed to contemporary difficulties among both rural and urban Indigenous young people and their communities to retain participation and lead responsibilities to land, health, and food (Delormier et al., 2017; McEachern et al., 2022; Neufeld et al., 2020; Robidoux et al., 2021; Smith, 2020), creating culturally specific forms of food insecurity (Richmond et al., 2021). Though financial constraints and poverty are typically considered dominant contributors to and indicators of food insecurity (Borras & Mohamed, 2020; Dachner & Tarasuk, 2018; Lemke & Delormier, 2019; Tarasuk et al., 2019; von Braun et al., 2021), the resulting economically-centered approaches to understanding food-related challenges fails to recognize the roles Indigenous food systems and Indigenous food sovereignty play in the resilience of individuals and systems (Bagelman, 2018; Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017; Fast & Vézina, 2020; Fuller-Thomson et al., 2020a; Settee et al., 2020). Revitalizing food systems and the ancestral practices of Indigenous Peoples “is an act of resurgence and resistance” that differs from historically originated Euro-centric narratives regarding Indigenous Peoples as racially inferior (Joseph et al., 2022, p. 65).

Especially in more rural areas, hunters and gatherers who acquire food for their communities and pass along the knowledge to young people in the process, are inhibited by legal rights (often determined by non-Indigenous decision-makers), barriers to time on the land, and

access to food harvesting resources (Batal et al., 2021a; Batal et al., 2021c; Loukes et al., 2021; Marushka et al., 2021; Michnik et al., 2021; Neufeld et al., 2020; Smith, 2020). In many cases, forced settlements imposed by government legislation and treaty signings have damaged Indigenous ways of life, concentrated Indigenous populations in specific locations, depleted wild food sources within the immediate vicinity, caused hunters and gatherers to travel greater distances to acquire food, increased the need for resources (e.g., equipment and fuel), heightened the cost of Indigenous foods, and created a reliance on imported store-bought items (Robidoux et al., 2021). A case study focused on the Metro Vancouver region of BC affirmed the need to manage risk (e.g., of health inequities and climate change) to humans and their environment based on the location and the resilience of communities – which is largely determined by human relationships with ecosystems (Yumagulova, 2020). Ruptured foodways (i.e., a broken connection of food with culture, traditions and/or history), leading to a dependency on non-Indigenous foods (i.e., market or store-bought foods), can not only feed into health disparities and inequities but decrease time on the land among Elders and knowledge keepers who would otherwise facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer and participation of Indigenous young people in food systems (Batal et al., 2021b; Batal et al., 2021c; Blanchet et al., 2020; Domingo et al., 2021; Fuller-Thomson et al., 2020b; Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019; Hanemaayer et al., 2020; Marushka et al., 2021; Neufeld et al., 2020; Noreen et al., 2018; Sarker et al., 2019; Settee et al., 2020; Smith, 2020; Tsai & Lawrence, 2022; Wendimu et al., 2018).

Attempts to extract knowledge and adapt Western-based programs to fit Indigenous knowledge can perpetuate negative power dynamics, downplay the value and resilience of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, and distract from Indigenous-led initiatives needing support (Gaudet, 2020). Relationship-centered approaches to research design and educational programming that are Indigenous-led, lack the consistent funding and support needed to create and sustain a broad range of self-determined Indigenous food sovereignty efforts involving Indigenous young people in their food systems and culture (Gillies et al., 2020; Kennedy et al., 2021; Michnik et al., 2021). It has been argued that funding only for building conventional food skills ignores inadequate financial resources, systemic inequities and the cultural dimensions underlying food security (Bagelman, 2018; Pepetone et al., 2021). Similarly, support in the form of non-Indigenous educators and food charities typically only addresses food insecurity and participation of Indigenous young people in food systems temporarily, as non-

community members often only stay for a short term and food charities can only offer immediate relief from hunger (Delormier et al., 2017; Smith, 2020).

3.1.2 Changes to Land and Water Systems

The ecological disruption and resultant cultural disruption experienced by Indigenous Peoples is rooted in colonization and its legacies interfering with contemporary efforts to access and protect land and water systems (Eckert et al., 2018; Laforge et al., 2021; Levkoe et al., 2017). The persisting underlying power dynamics and biases have sustained a dominantly colonial culture that interferes with Indigenous knowledge systems enabling Indigenous environmental stewardship and the protection of biodiversity (Adams, 2021; Borrás & Mohamed, 2020; Martens et al., 2020; Michnik et al., 2021; Tremblay et al., 2020). In BC and beyond, this cultural shift has not only created a deep mistrust between actors and institutions with clashing worldviews (Andrée et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2019; Spiegel et al., 2020), but in some cases divided Indigenous communities regarding how to proceed in cultural revitalization and environmental protection for future generations (Delormier et al., 2017; Michnik et al., 2021; Smith, 2020). The government-induced disconnection from land has led to a loss of language, culture, and knowledge, which have changed relationships between Indigenous Peoples and their territories over time (Liebenberg et al., 2019; McCalman et al., 2017; Neufeld et al., 2020; Spiegel et al., 2020; Wilk et al., 2017), and created tension between economic development and the preservation of lifeways (Stewart-Harawira, 2018).

First Nations in BC are particularly affected by climate change and rapid and growing changes to large-scale industries and activities such as mining, hydroelectricity, forestry, and conventional farming, because of a consequent decrease in Indigenous food access and/or safety of such foods in their territories (Batal et al., 2021a; Batal et al., 2021c; Laforge et al., 2021; Martens et al., 2020; Marushka et al., 2021; Marushka et al., 2019; Wendimu et al., 2018). Physical land development, environmental contaminants and pollution all pose a threat to the water and food quality of neighbouring and downstream land and water systems (Richmond et al., 2021; Spiegel et al., 2020; Wendimu et al., 2018), by posing risks to culturally and nutritionally important species (e.g., wild salmon), thereby impacting the availability and quality of healthy, nutrient-dense foods that are essential for Indigenous food security (Blanchet et al., 2020; Whyte, 2018). Additionally, non-Indigenous forms of natural resources management, driven by colonial policy decisions, have led to often undesired changes to landscapes (Batal et

al., 2021a; Batal et al., 2021c; Loukes et al., 2021; Robidoux et al., 2021). For example, an Elder from Moose Cree First Nation shared that while the forestry industry in Ontario may replant trees for forestry, they may not do so to redevelop the habitat to its original state (Loukes et al., 2021). Similar concerns exist for First Nations in BC, where food insecurity prevalence is higher than that of Eastern provinces (Marushka et al., 2021), and the continuity of coastal cultures is threatened by industries (i.e., oil, commercial fisheries) interfering with their ability to carry out cultural practices and steward resources using the complex ancestral conservation strategies developed over millennia (Eckert et al., 2018; Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019; Lee et al., 2019). The changing dynamics of land and water systems affect the availability and access to Indigenous foods that would otherwise be shared among generations through the protection of cultural and social food networks (Batal et al., 2021a; Batal et al., 2021c; Lemke & Delormier, 2017; Loukes et al., 2020; Richmond et al., 2021).

3.2 Opportunities for Participation

Opportunities influencing the participation of Indigenous young people in food systems are discussed under the following categories: Directly Influencing Indigenous Young People, Indirectly Influencing Indigenous Young People.

3.2.1 Directly Influencing Indigenous Young People

Among the most discussed ways to address changes to land and water systems and ways of knowing and being is to improve education systems, such that food systems are emphasized through an Indigenous worldview and made both convenient and desirable for Indigenous young people (Bagelman, 2018; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2020; Richmond et al., 2021). This includes modifying school-based education programs (Gillies et al., 2020; Hanemaayer et al., 2020; Howe, 2022; Powell & Wittman, 2018; Sarker et al., 2019; Smith, 2020; Yumagulova et al., 2020), and developing non-school based education programs (Chase, 2018; Cidro et al., 2018; Delormier et al., 2017; Eckert et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2017; Michnik et al., 2021; Njeze et al., 2020; Yumagulova et al., 2020). Ideally, all programs are created and led by Indigenous Peoples, but some education programs have had success in incorporating Indigenous methodologies (Bagelman, 2018; Gillies et al., 2020; Smith, 2020), and using technology to engage youth and community through video, story, photos, and maps (Delormier et al., 2017; Michnik et al., 2021). Non-Indigenous-led programs that incorporated Indigenous methodologies were considered

successful when they were developed with Indigenous health determinants in mind (Peppetone et al., 2021), and were not examined through a Western lens of viability, success, and sustainability but from a context that had Indigenous young people on their lands, connecting them to their identity, working with Elders, and sharing cultural stories, food, knowledge, and language (Gaudet, 2020; Gillies et al., 2020; Mikraszewicz & Richmond, 2019). Intergenerational knowledge transfer in all education programs promotes the passing on of language, knowledge, and skills, and facilitates cultural healing for both the Elder and the younger recipient (Eckert et al., 2018; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2020; Hatala et al., 2019; Hatala et al., 2020).

Educational reform through reconnection to the land and language immersion for all living generations disrupts colonial education structures and serves as a method for taking care of future generations (Gaudet, 2020; Howe, 2022). The learning environments themselves, must offer respectful guidance and provide safe, inclusive, and value-based methods of promoting cultural identity (Gaudet, 2020). Lil'wat Nation, Siksika Nation, and Akwesasne Mohawk Nation offer the following key factors enabling community-led Indigenous educational initiatives for reclaiming resilience: local champions and leaders, strong support from local organizations and communities, partnerships, flexible format, and youth involvement (Yumagulova et al., 2020). These Nations also emphasize in Yumagulova et al.'s (2020) study, that holding space to bring together Elder ancestral knowledge and youth-led action within educational programming is particularly important for developing safe, decolonial environments and affirming hope and possibility. Typically, the education methods involving Elders and Indigenous young people are participatory and creative, using art in various forms as a medium for reflecting, healing, and expressing values of reciprocity, relationality, and responsibility (Bagelman, 2018; Eckert et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2017; Miltenburg et al., 2022; Njeze et al., 2020; Richards et al., 2019). Harvesting, planting, cooking, and sharing through wildlife, gardening and food education further instills the value of responsibility to the land, markedly when teaching is revitalized through ceremony (Andrée et al., 2019; Delormier et al., 2017; Michnik et al., 2021).

Decolonizing education exemplifies a cycle of intergenerational and cultural learning that reinforces the importance of programs rooted in place and healing. The more Indigenous Peoples can engage on the land, the more they can restore local food practices and practice Indigenous knowledge, and the more likely they are to defend those practices. Furthermore, the more their cultural identity and ties to their territories improve, the more likely they are to share their

knowledge with others, and the more likely younger and future generations can reinforce intergenerational knowledge and cultural continuity (Michnik et al., 2021; Mikraszewicz & Richmond, 2019). The earlier that adults facilitate creative, place-based experiential learning environments for Indigenous children and youth, the more likely they are to pursue similar education or opportunities in their adult life (Hanemaayer et al., 2020; Woodgate et al., 2017).

Programs and initiatives involving Elders and Indigenous young people are enhanced by the inclusion of broader social networks, including family and community leadership, and Indigenous knowledge systems that support both economic and cultural dimensions of food security and food system resilience (Gaudet, 2020; Halselth & Greenwood, 2019; Richmond et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2021). Building social support networks can act as a buffer against poor health and well-being, reinforce cultural identity, and maintain connections between people living within and outside of their territory (Fuller-Thomson et al., 2020a; Fuller-Thomson et al., 2020b; Howe, 2022). This aligns with the notion that “[everyone plays] a role in raising children in the community to live their lives in a good way by helping others, giving back to the community, and prioritizing healthy relationships” (Howe, 2022, p. 105). For those living in urban environments and/or outside of their territory, access to Indigenous knowledge and foods is considered more difficult due to poor proximity to or inadequate development of community social networks (Richmond et al., 2021). Though impactful in all contexts, displays of Indigenous languages (e.g., in community gardens and other city signage) and community hubs are especially valuable learning and networking opportunities for those living in urban areas (Martin & Hanson, 2020). Likewise, food sharing in all settings is a cultural strength that reinforces Indigenous knowledge, fosters cultural pride, and promotes Indigenous food security, food sovereignty and food system resilience in a contemporary world (Delormier et al., 2017; Skinner et al., 2018).

Deconstructing and reconstructing colonial structures may benefit from culturally appropriate involvement on behalf of non-Indigenous allies to engage Indigenous young people in food system efforts. *Talking, Learning, or Sharing Circles* (Circles), are best defined by Indigenous Peoples within each unique community, but have generally been defined in the context of food as a community-based participatory engagement practice with “a collective aim to promote partnership among community members with a common interest in food” (McEachern et al., 2022, p. 5). Standard practice in many Indigenous contexts, Circles have been

a culturally relevant way to include Indigenous young people in community decision-making, ethics, and protocols, but also non-Indigenous collaborators in the project and program development process (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Martens et al., 2020). They are also an opportunity for all participants to form caring relationships, build trust and transparency, co-create an ethical space, steer the conversation, discuss pertinent topics, respect Indigenous values, and use storytelling in programs, research, inter-governmental relations, and more (Adams, 2021; Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Montesanti et al., 2021). *Storytelling* is a form of oral history that places a focus on action and reflection and offers an outlet for telling neglected realities of food insecurity that are to be respected by all involved (Bagelman, 2018). Circles and the inclusion of storytelling in practices involving both non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples are best determined as an appropriate fit by the Indigenous Peoples involved so that multiple generations are present, the community benefits from the collaboration, and Indigenous values are recognized and prioritized (Batal et al., 2021a; Bhawra et al., 2021).

Co-development and the inclusion of Indigenous young people in the design, investigation, and analysis of all stages of policy and program development led by non-Indigenous people is secondary to having Indigenous Peoples be the ones to collect and monitor data and lead research and decision-making (Adams, 2021; Batal et al., 2021a; Bhawra et al., 2021; Spiegel et al., 2020). However, improvements to participatory research methodologies can be made if Indigenous young people and their communities are involved in defining the concepts relevant to food system research, establishing group guidelines, and informing future directions from the onset (Batal et al., 2021a; Bhawra et al., 2021; Rowhani & Hatala, 2017; Spiegel et al., 2020). Similarly, according to a community-based case study involving Squamish First Nation, all researchers aiming to be anti-oppressive can benefit from practicing ongoing self-reflection regarding their privilege and bias (Joseph et al., 2022). Photovoice is an example of a method to undergo community-level participatory research that involves community members leading the process of visual exploration, alongside the inclusion of ceremony, group sharing (via Circles), meal sharing, and the establishment of group guidelines (Spiegel et al., 2020). Even higher-level multi-governmental collaboration can benefit from collecting and sharing data and establishing partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and their youngest generations to improve data quality, coverage, and cultural appropriateness (Halselth & Greenwood, 2019). For science to holistically

inform decision-making, Indigenous knowledge needs to be included among the natural and social sciences, revealing trends, patterns, and processes using context-specific methods (Berkman et al., 2022).

3.2.2 Indirectly Influencing Indigenous Young People

Contemporary governments have an opportunity to address oppression and inequities, and influence anti-colonial sociocultural structures more effectively, by reframing their perceptions from needs-based to strengths-based and not imposing ethnocentric ideas, narratives and definitions of agriculture, health, and success (Borras et al., 2020; Fan et al., 2021; Joseph et al., 2022; Kim, 2019; Martens et al., 2020; McCalman et al., 2017). This could include a paradigm shift surrounding agriculture by focusing on how food is produced, where it is produced, and for whom it is produced (Gliessman, 2020). Also, developing and implementing food system solutions with the inclusion of an Indigenous lens (Bhawra et al., 2021). Nevertheless, structural reform is preferred by many communities to shift power imbalances between non-Indigenous and Indigenous governments, and overcome divides between worldviews (Fan et al., 2021; Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2020; Lemke & Delormier, 2017). There is a timely opportunity to learn from and work with Indigenous Peoples to improve current policies and programs and develop strategies to action government commitments promised in recent legislation (Batal et al., 2021a; Domingo et al., 2021).

Policymakers may act on their support for reclamation, self-determination, and sovereignty by creating equitable space for knowledge to be shared between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples (Wendimu et al., 2019). For example, through the avoidance of top-down decision-making to ensure policymakers and decision-makers cannot ignore or devalue the importance of local, context-specific relationships between people, food, land, and health (Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019; Lee et al., 2019). The following principles of Indigenous food sovereignty describe political priorities through the lens of an Indigenous author in BC: “a sacred responsibility to the land that must be prioritized over colonial law; community needs should be self-determined; active participation in [the] food system is necessary; and policy reform is required to guide and support these principles” (Morrison, 2011, as cited in Cidro et al., 2018, p. 28). Other authors similarly emphasize the need to promote self-determination, and policies that decolonize food and knowledge systems, enable resilience, and both honour and support the

creative ways Indigenous Peoples have mobilized the food sovereignty movement (de Finney, 2017; Delormier et al., 2017; Priadka et al., 2022).

Self-determination and internal governance systems have worked to address the inherent power imbalance, and interlinked dynamics between colonization and resource depletion in a way that highlights the resilience and authority of Indigenous Peoples (Eckert et al., 2018; Martens et al., 2020). Chandler and Lalonde (1998/2004) found that 111 of 196 First Nations surveyed in BC had not documented a single suicide due to self-governance as the greatest protective factor (as cited in Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2020). Other markers of cultural continuity associated with lower suicide rates include land claims, education, health services, cultural facilities, police and fire services, women in government, and community-run child welfare services (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2020). When Indigenous Peoples are the ones exercising power and governing their food systems, grassroots leadership and actions intensify movements around language, food, and culture amid colonial pressures (Andrée et al., 2019; Delormier et al., 2017; Domingo et al., 2021). Self-governed industry actions also promote accurate and improved communication regarding environmental health and threats (Willows et al., 2019). Non-Indigenous governments can encourage Indigenous Peoples' stewardship efforts to improve food security, food sovereignty and food system resilience, and maximize Indigenous control over the planning, design, and delivery of programs, by tailoring funding for local food contexts (Batal et al., 2021a; Fan et al., 2021; Gillies et al., 2020; Halselth & Greenwood, 2019).

Indigenous food sovereignty programs are considered a successful community-level way to promote Indigenous values and pave a pathway toward self-determined and self-sufficient food systems (Miltenburg et al., 2022; Wendimu et al., 2018). For example, programs that reintroduce Indigenous foods, champion efforts for knowledge transfer to future generations (e.g., cultural camps and school curricula), and pay individuals to hunt or gather full time (Batal et al., 2021a). Providing funding to hire hunters and gatherers full-time creates a long-term opportunity for knowledge transfer and reinforces Indigenous food-sharing practices by providing food for those who cannot afford or are physically incapable of getting out on the land (Kennedy et al., 2021; Loukes et al., 2021). Examples of ways to financially address barriers to subsistence hunting include providing transportation, equipment, and consumables to facilitate harvesting (Sarker et al., 2019). The more time hunters and gatherers can harvest food, the more training and food that becomes available for community members, the more such jobs become

desirable, and the more likely young people will remain on their territory and participate in their community (Loukes et al., 2021). Funding for food growing supplies, community gardens, Indigenous food programs, culture camps, and education programs offer similar benefits at the community level (Chase, 2018; Cidro et al., 2018; Delormier et al., 2017). The provision of technical expertise can also benefit larger-scale projects surrounding Indigenous-led horticultural food systems (e.g., cultural education, tourism, farming models, aquaponics, edible landscapes), to make them more economically viable (Delormier et al., 2017).

In all cases, there is value to transferring the decision-making power to Indigenous community representatives so that they may manage their lands and allocate funds in a way that enables them to define success, ensure the projects are for communities, by communities, and evaluate their effectiveness based on their needs and ideals (Gillies et al., 2020; Richards et al., 2019). A notable example is providing funding for an Indigenous food market to generate economic returns from local harvesting activities. Some individuals in Loukes et al.'s (2021) study understood monetizing Indigenous foods as going against cultural norms, and so careful deliberation among community members would be important before funding and creating the market. The transferring of funds management to Indigenous Peoples benefits from an increased public literacy to reduce the effects of racial discrimination and increase the likelihood of public funding support for Indigenous Peoples to regain control of their lands (Barnes & Josefowitz, 2019; Lowan-Trudeau, 2021). Conclusively, there needs to be an understanding among those holding political power that responding to systemic changes requires the dismantling of structural racism (Settee et al., 2020).

3.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in the discussion, various audiences need to take action to promote the participation of Indigenous young people in food systems. Table 1 includes audience-based recommendations aimed to provide general recommendations for Indigenous Peoples and their allies and more specific direction for IACAF and MAF. Table 2 includes guidelines for MAF to consider when acting on their specific recommendations, considering their position as a non-Indigenous government. The guidelines are particularly relevant to non-Indigenous individuals.

Table 1: Audience-Based Recommendations

Audience	Recommendations
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decolonize decision-making • Empower local champions and leadership • Encourage cultural practices, food harvesting skills development, and intergenerational knowledge exchange • Foster the development of partnerships, social networks, and community engagement • Improve physical and economic access to Indigenous foods • Include young people during all aspects of developing projects, programs, and policies • Provide infrastructure and equipment for inter- and intra-community transportation
IACAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively maintain meaningful connections with community members living outside of their territory • Build and sustain relationships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous government networks • Develop media (e.g., a video) showcasing Indigenous young people participating in food system initiatives to share with potential funders • Encourage youth in council efforts and initiatives • Explore opportunities to collaborate with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations specifically targeted at children and youth • Prioritize hiring opportunities for youth and those with knowledge of food harvesting skills within communities • Undergo community-level engagement and collaborative research to better determine gaps/interests among young people to participate in food systems • Utilize technology and contemporary forms of communication in community efforts to revitalize language and cultural knowledge
MAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden definitions of “agriculture” and “health” in policy and practice • Coordinate inter-governmental efforts affecting Indigenous Peoples (i.e., reduce siloed service delivery) • Engage in Indigenous-led, context-specific research to evaluate “needs”, particularly before funding allocation and program development • Familiarize oneself with Indigenous territories, historical and present-day policies related to Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous-led initiatives in BC • Fund community-level initiatives focused on strengthening Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and food system resilience

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for recurring (e.g., annual) Indigenous-led staff training and skill development focused on cultural safety and Indigenous engagement in the sector • Secure staff and program resources to support ongoing Indigenous-led food system engagement and intergenerational education opportunities • Seek Indigenous-led opportunities focused on understanding Indigenous narratives
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Note. Bullets are sorted in alphabetical order.

Table 2: Guidelines for MAF

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach collaboration and co-management with Indigenous values and worldviews in mind (i.e., decoloniality) • Co-develop expectations, guidelines, and best practices throughout all stages of partnership and engagement with Indigenous Peoples • Honour Indigenous cultural protocols and commitments outlined in DRIPA and UNDRIP • Invest the time in building relationships and visiting communities • Promote pathways toward Indigenous self-determination, self-governance, and self-sufficiency • Recognize the strengths, expertise, experiences, and contexts of participants in research • Reflect on personal biases and assumptions relating to Indigenous Peoples • Respect boundaries and capacity of Indigenous Peoples to collaborate and share knowledge
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Note. Bullets are sorted in alphabetical order.

3.4 Research Limitations

The findings in this paper are not representative of all people. Publicly available non-academic resources and personal communications with Indigenous individuals were only included in the introduction. While efforts were made to find literature focused on Indigenous young people within the context of BC through exclusion criteria, they were written by academics with often research-based approaches to collecting information, not necessarily Indigenous-led, or solely focused on BC’s context. Additionally, not all perspectives or conclusions included are shared by or agreed upon by all people. Thus, this paper serves as a reflection of how some individuals perceive the role of Indigenous young people and highlights the need for independent research on behalf of IACAF, with the support of MAF, to explore this topic in a way that directly engages and reflects the diversity of Indigenous young people and their communities in BC.

4. Conclusion

This paper was written to support IACAF in the advancement of their 2021-2024 strategic plan by investigating the interconnected challenges and related opportunities in strengthening Indigenous food security, food sovereignty, and food system resilience within Canada, and providing recommendations specific to promoting the participation of Indigenous young people within food systems in BC. The semi-systematic literature review highlighted the impact food insecurity has had on Indigenous well-being and physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health dimensions, thereby affecting Indigenous food sovereignty and food system resilience. Colonization and its legacies are a foundational driver of contemporary challenges to revitalize culture and restore relationships between Indigenous Peoples and nature.

Challenges to participation, related to changes to ways of knowing and being, include retaining responsibilities to land, health, and food, legal rights to land and food acquisition, dependency on non-Indigenous foods, friction between knowledge systems, culturally inappropriate research approaches, and lack of funding for cultural revitalization. Other challenges to participation, related to changes to land and water systems, include ecological and cultural disruption, power dynamics sustaining a dominantly colonial culture, mistrust between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples, climate change, large-scale industrial development, threats to Indigenous food access and quality, and risk of environmental contamination/pollution. Opportunities for participation, directly influencing Indigenous young people, include improving and reforming education systems by decolonizing education and supporting Indigenous-led programs focused on intergenerational learning, language immersion, and flexible place-based experiential learning, and involving Indigenous young people throughout all stages of research, policy/program design, and decision-making. Opportunities for participation, indirectly influencing Indigenous young people, include structural and policy reform by prioritizing self-governance, self-determination, and self-sufficiency efforts, and transferring decision-making and economic power to Indigenous communities. IACAF and MAF are recommended to engage directly with Indigenous young people in BC to gain a more in-depth understanding of their unique needs and interests in participating in food systems.

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