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Speaking of Food: Indigenous Language Reclamation Through Fruits of the Earth

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Abstract

Within Indigenous struggles for "collective continuance" (Whyte, 2018) in the face of settler-colonial hegemony, three powerful forms of resurgence are Indigenous Land-based (or simply Land) education models; language reclamation initiatives; and food systems organizing for food sovereignty. In the interest of contributing to Indigenous resurgence generally and the literature of decolonization in agricultural education more specifically, this paper investigates sites where these three forms of resistance converge, sites where Indigenous ways of knowing are engaged through *language* and *food systems* work with young people on the *land*. Reviewing literature documenting projects on Turtle Island and taking a first look at food systems and language projects in Minnesota, the author proposes that gardens, even with the tension of their colonial traces, may be nurturing sites for collective continuance. Gardens may present learning spaces for language revitalization and Indigenous food security in the present to secure Indigenous food sovereignty for the future.

Key words: transformative food systems; language reclamation; land-based education; food sovereignty; Indigeneity; settler-colonialism; collective continuance; decolonization

Introduction

Indigenous languages are in peril globally (Henne-Ochoa, 2021; Hinton, 2011). Food security is a persistent challenge for Indigenous communities (Levkoe, 2019; Patel, 2009). Public education on Turtle Island (so-called US and Canada) fails to meet the needs and interests of the most marginalized populations, including Native Americans (Bagelman, 2018). Settler-colonialism thus continues to take its toll (Carroll, 2015; Wolfe, 2006). At the same time, Indigenous[31] peoples resist and resurge. "Deficit" conceptions of Indigeneity are taken to task (Bagelman, 2018; Henne-Ochoa, 2021). Within Indigenous struggles for "collective continuance" (Whyte, 2018) in the face of settler-colonial hegemony, three powerful forms of resurgence are Indigenous Land-based (or simply Land) Education models; language reclamation[32] initiatives; and food systems organizing for

[31] Brewer and Dennis (2017) define Indigenous as the following: Indigenous is the highly developed intellectual thinking and doing that distinctly ties past and present relationships of land and life to place.
[32] Leonard [Miami] (2020) has developed the framework of language reclamation which he uses "to describe and theorize efforts by Indigenous communities to claim their right to speak their heritage languages and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives" (p. 85). Elsewhere, Leonard (2019)

food sovereignty (Bagelman, 2018; Calderon, 2014; Hinton, 2011; Jarosz, 2014; Leonard 2019, 2020; Tuck, 2014). In the interest of contributing to Indigenous resurgence generally and the literature of decolonization in education more specifically, this paper investigates sites where these three forms of resistance converge, sites where Indigenous ways of knowing are engaged through *language* and *food systems* work with young people on the *land*. When I draw on the work of Indigenous scholar-activists, I, as a settler-scholar, do not claim to be a representative of their communities.

Positionality

I am a middle-aged, cis-gendered, white woman of European heritage living and farming on traditional homelands of Dakota, Hochunk, and Meskwaki peoples. I was born on the land called Mni Sota by the Dakota. I have benefited directly from Indigenous removal, in the form of land holding.[33] I believe my privileged landholding is a function of settler-colonialism which, by design, has a negative impact on Indigenous populations and, not coincidentally, the planet. Consequently, I take it as a personal mandate to critically examine my landholding and to agitate and to work for land reparations for Indigenous peoples. Still, an unavoidable aspect of being a settler and taking a critical stance is dwelling on unsettled and unsettling grounds, crying 'land back' while, as a lover of place, sinking roots ever deeper in the soil. Writing this piece involves critical self-examination. If I may use the metaphor of a "colonial garden" to refer to the planting of ideas in the rows of this paper, I follow Nxumalo (2019) who, while working with children outdoors in British Columbia, writes, "… the sociomaterial asymmetries enacted through presences of settler colonialism, racialization, whiteness, gender, and class are never erased from gardens and are an intrinsic part of my own situated, contingent, and embodied location as a racialized settler immigrant in colonial gardens and colonial garden histories"(p.73). Like Nxumalo, I seek connections that "might emerge and enact disruptions to visions of already demarcated, categorized, 'settled,' and defined colonial place" (p. 73). While I center Indigenous voices in the following examinations of land/language/food-based pedagogical projects, I choose not to leave my own voice behind: if I am implicated in the problems, I become involved in (the search for) solutions.

Food for Thought: On Homeschooling with Traditional Foods

> Perhaps all language teachers need pedagogies for learning and teaching that account for living in and through our languages. Ways of teaching that we can feel in our whole bodies, not just our minds. (Hermes, 2016, as cited in Henne-Ochoa et al 2020)

Scholars Toni House and Rebecca Webster, tribal citizens of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, may have had similar thoughts to those of Ojibwe language scholar, Mary Hermes (above), when they decided to school their children at home. In *Oneida People's Original Indigenous Instructions as the Basis for Curriculum* (hereinafter referred to as OPC), House and Webster (2021) present a flexible curriculum for Native (in this case, specifically Oneida) homeschooling parents. Because the "original instructions" on which the curriculum is based are for Oneida people, I rely on the words

stresses the difference between language reclamation and "language revitalization" (p. 3), which tends to focus on the language itself, overlooking social factors and power structures which affect language shift .

[33] An expression I use rather than "ownership" because of my own resistance to the ownership of land and the fact that I am one of a collective of persons with rights of access to "our" land.

of the authors to introduce themselves in their purpose of using this practice of giving thanks as a schooling tool. I quote them at length:

> We share our story as two Wisconsin Oneida mothers who based our homeschool curriculum on our original instructions. We also belong to the Wolf Clan and have responsibilities to create paths for those who come after us. In creating these paths, we acknowledge the existing paths we follow that were blazed by generations of people who came before us. (p. 188)

> ….Different speakers from different communities have different ways of giving thanks. Even speakers from the same community will often give thanks in slightly different ways… This article focuses on the Kanehelatúksla? as transcribed by Dr. House's late grandmother, Maria Hinton. Her grandmother worked with other first language speakers to help revitalize and document our language in the hopes of preserving it for future generations. (p. 189)

The curriculum House and Webster offer is based in the Kanehelatúksla?, which is a platform for giving thanks. According to the authors, each of the 18 sections "can serve as a comprehensive, scaffolded, homeschool curriculum for all ages and learning levels" (p. 189). Their interest is to provide a curriculum that meets and exceeds "modern educational standards" (p. 187). OPC focuses on a single example of planting corn as one of the "three sisters" (p. 189) components. The authors also provide examples and discussions of how curriculum might be developed. The sections are read counterclockwise, which is meaningful to the Oneida. Each section opens with thanks given in Oneida.

Figure 1. Sections of the Kanehelatúksla.

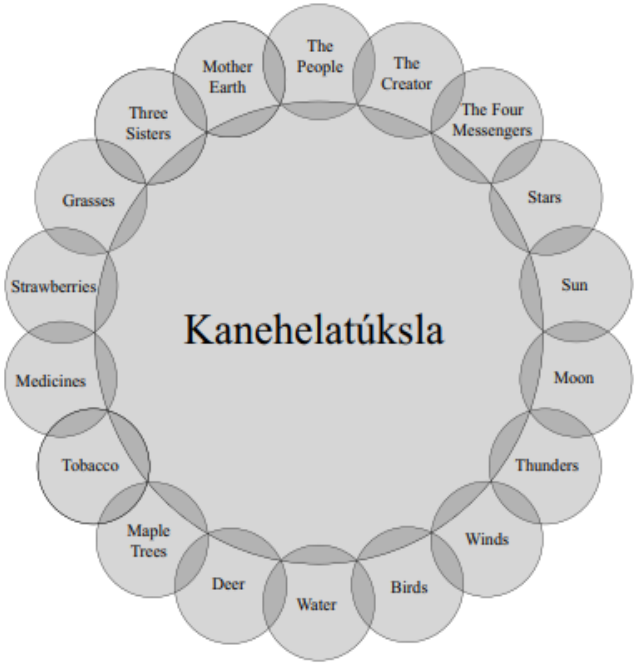

Figure 1. Sections of the Kanehelatúksla.

Source: House (2021, p. 190).

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For example:

> Three Sisters Áhsʌ nyaʔtekutʌhnu·téleʔ né· tyohʌ·tú neʔ akwe·kú kákhwaʔ kʌ·tho ohwʌtsyá·ke. Úskah tsiʔ ʌtwahweʔnu·ní· yukwaʔnikúhlaʔ. Ta· tho niyohtúhak yukwaʔnikúhlaʔ
> (The Three Sisters are the leaders of all the foods here on earth. Let's put our minds together as one. This is how it shall be our minds.) (p. 192)

The article includes a comprehensive corn-planting curriculum, including a detailed section on language arts.

Figure 2. Subjects for Planting Corn.

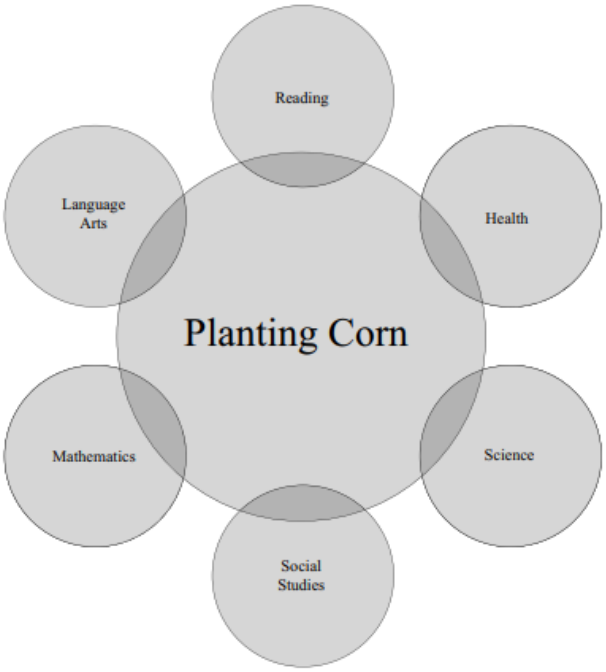

Figure 2. Subjects for planting corn.

Source: House (2021, p. 203).

Along with corn-planting vocabulary and journaling, the authors suggest that "This learning can be accelerated using Total Physical Response [TPR] language acquisition" (Koole & wâsakâyâsiw Lewis, 2018, cited in House, 2021).[34] Movement might enhance language learning: in other words, this is an embodied approach.

[34] TPR is a language-learning method rooted in the premise that physical action combined with language boosts learning (TEFL-NET, 2022). Meyers (2020) notes in endnote #128: "Total Physical Response: A style of learning that combines language input with physical movement, mimicking how babies learn language, reducing inhibitions, and lowering stress (Teacher Tool Kit, 2019). Later in Chapter Seven (Section 7.2.4), Lorna mentions TPR as 'jarring' or sometimes perceived as rude in First Nations cultures. At the WSÁNE Ć language nest, they are utilizing it in a way respectful to the culture, that allows for physical connection to

House and Webster close OPC with reflections on homeschooling and on the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum. While the weaknesses include the facts that parent cultural knowledge and linguistic skills may themselves be in awakening stages, that students still struggle with social acceptance (home is not a panacea), and that state standards still must be met (which feels like a win for colonialism), the authors maintain that the strengths of enhanced connections to culture, language, foods, land and community far outweigh the drawbacks (House, 2021, p. 206). In their indications for further study, House and Webster write, "This type of research could encourage families, communities, and nations to promote environments that socialize society and support diverse environments—linguistically, environmentally, spiritually, culturally, socioeconomically, and racially" (p. 207). The authors close the article thankful for the privilege of being able to homeschool, and with a positive outlook for their children taking on the responsibilities of their clan.

Reflective Digestion

> *Vignette: It is an afternoon on the farm where I live with my partner and two sons. We are harvesting potatoes, "Kartoffeln." I speak German with my children as a second language in our household. I am fluent, having committed myself early on (age 7) to learning the language that my (settler) grandfather spoke with his grandparents. Wanting my children not to suffer from "American" monolingualism, but rather to potentially gain some facility in language acquisition, I decided to speak my second language with them as much as I could while they were growing up. This turned out to be constant. There was something about having "our" language. And, sometimes, as farmers, we put our bodies into it. In the sunshine of the afternoon, I look for the dried-up stem of a potato plant, pull it up ("tu's aufheben"), and watch the loosened potatoes cascade from the roots ("die Wurzeln"). The boys have two buckets, one for firsts ("die Ersten"), to save, and one for seconds ("die Zweiten"), to feed the compost pile... In a telephone interview with my adult son about such early language learning, I learned that he has a hard time recalling how language grew out of our work together on the land. "I am sure we spoke," he said, "but I can't remember what language it was." To him, learning German in an English-speaking world was easy because "we just did it." And his German is not bad.*

I tell this story for two reasons. First is to note how effortless learning, especially of language, may be in early childhood. That Stan does not remember struggling to retain vocabulary words could mean we did something right. In her reflection on homeschooling, Rebecca Webster writes of the detrimental operation of public schooling on her children's psyches. "With individualized attention," she writes, "they don't feel as though they are learning enough to be competitive with other children. What they don't understand is that learning shouldn't be as hard as it had been for them in the public school system" (House, 2021, p. 205). I seize on two of Webster's words: competitive and hard. Her suggestion is that her children did not feel like they were *learning* unless it was so. Learning in the public school system becomes painful instead of joyful. What, indeed, do we learn through pain? If it is the pressure of state standards that prevents fun or play or the effortlessly embodied learning the like of which Hermes (2016) writes, and to which Stan attests, House and

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the plant and tree names, and that is an iterative, grounded learning process." She points out in endnote #129 that "kinaesthetic learning [another term for this type of learning] is a tactile learning style where students are engaged in active learning, including physical activities, rather than passively listening or watching"' The "passivity" of listening, however, as we shall see, may be debated.

Webster contest this possibility with their robust curriculum. According to them, their curriculum might "exceed" state standards (House, 2021). We might have fun *and* learn, they seem to say. Still, and this is my second note, both House and Webster concede that the fact that their Indigenous curriculum (intended for cultural and linguistic Oneida resurgence) must meet Wisconsin state standards is a kind of blow. They write, "The inherent message is that our ways are not valid unless measured and approved by Western standards" (p. 206). Thus, even though they have self-admitted privilege to school at home and in the ways that they feel are culturally appropriate and healthy for their children, they still feel to some degree *colonized*. What do we make of this? Can we imagine learning that is not subject to state control? Ethnic studies pedagogues, Au et al. (2016) argue that curricular self-determination, particularly for Native nations, is fundamental to decolonizing education. Control over determining what counts as knowledge as much as how that knowledge is gained is a basic to the exercise of sovereignty.

It is possible to learn language *outside of school and schooling constructs*, as substantial writing on linguistics (Clark et al., 2011; Quam & Hamilton, 2020), and Land-based Education (Bowra et al., 2021; Calderon, 2014; Wildcat, 2014) attest. Respecting the beautiful work that House and Webster did—and granting that it has flexibility, when I imagine Indigenous language learning in combination with food production—I admit I do not think of scaffolded lessons that meet state standards. I imagine seasonal and regional vocabularies. Cherokee ethnobotanist Clint Carroll (2015) writes, "One could describe elements of a Cherokee 'seasonal round' with the appearance of ripe hickory nuts (the main ingredient in kenvchi) and wild mushrooms in the fall, hunting deer and turkey in the winter, the arrival of wild greens (cochanny, poke, wild onions) in the spring, and the availability of huckleberries and crawdads in the summer months" (p. 143).[35] I imagine movement, sensation, reciprocity. Kimmerer (2013) describes the anticipation of discovery, the smell and the flavor of an abundance of wild strawberries, a gift from the earth which she honors with her own gifts. I imagine a learning situation like the one Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2014) depicts in her emphatic treatise "Land as Pedagogy." Describing the political resistance within the learning experience of "Kwezens," a seven-year-old Nishnaabeg girl tapping maple trees and boiling deer meat with her mother and aunts, Simpson writes:

> Kwezens learned a tremendous amount over a two-day period—self-led, driven by both her own curiosity and her own personal desire to learn. She learned to trust herself, her family and her community. She learned the sheer joy of discovery. She learned how to interact with the spirit of the maple. She learned both from the land and with the land. . . . She comes to know maple sugar with the support of her family and Elders. She comes to know maple sugar in the context of love. (p. 7)

Kwezens is an example of resistance to colonization because she is there, says Simpson, despite the land being occupied. If we want to recreate the world of Kwezens, Simpson insists, we have to recreate the conditions from which her world emerged, a context of loving relationships enveloped by land. For Simpson (2014), the land is both context and process, and politics are implicit. Decolonization, through language reclamation, through food sovereignty, through educational freedom, is land-based.

[35] Carroll (2015) continues, "In short, subsistence—as…. What is lost is an important opportunity for intergenerational bonding, cultural transmission, environmental education, and identity-building that was once a part of the Cherokee seasonal round" (p. 143).

Food as Cultural Sustenance

> We are all headed toward the center. (Liz Cates [Dakota], 2022)

Liz Cates has a fantasy about Dakota language learning in Minnesota: "That our only option is not written!" (Interview with author, November 17, 2022). Liz is a lineal descendant of the Dakota through her grandmother. She is one of two people in charge of the education department at NATIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems), a non-profit in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I interviewed Liz and her partner, Andy Adams [Minnesotan settler], on November 17, 2022, to learn how they envision bringing food systems work together with language reclamation, and to what degree this work may have a land focus. Until colonizers forced literacy on the Dakota, Cates noted, their language was an oral one that emerged from relations with the land. Liz's comment that she wants language learning to be "not written" speaks of immersion learning that is experiential, even sensual: I think of Kwezens using language in the woods while sucking maple sap; I think of my son Stan kicking through "Kartoffeln" in his bare feet. Indigenous scholars (Diaz, n. d., 2012; Robinson, 2020; Teaiwa, 2021) write about such non-verbal perceptual experience, *through the senses*, as stimulus for thought and action. I wonder, then, if the pairing of the gastronomical with the linguistic could be likened to the pairing of the physical with the linguistic, as in the TPR mentioned by Oneida scholar Toni House? Cates and Adams, in any case, dream of the potential for food to *stimulate* Dakota language use.

According to Chef Sean Sherman [Oglala Lakota], the non-profit NATIFS, with its mission to "Promote Indigenous foodways education and facilitate Indigenous food access" (https://www.natifs.org), has global potential. Mr. Sherman speaks in a short video[36] on the organization's website about the Indigenous Food Lab, a non-profit restaurant model in Minneapolis' Midtown Global Market which brings "people into the kitchen" to learn not just Indigenous food preparation, but "all facets of Indigenous food systems: farming, agriculture, ethnobotany, medicinals, language…" While Mr. Sherman, now an internationally recognized spokesperson for Dakota foodways, speaks expansively, Cates and Adams in the education department are just finding their words. Cates has been with NATIFS a year, Adams for six months, and, though they have their own values and vision coming out of years of working in Indian charter schools, such as seeing food and language as "inseparable," as "building blocks of culture," they wait for guidance from NATIFS's board of Indigenous leaders before defining their pedagogical strategy.

When asked to speak philosophically about NATIFS' purpose in bringing food systems work together with language reclamation particularly when land reparations are critical to Indigenous agendas, Cates had a few thoughts to share. She acknowledges that the amount there is to do to decolonize Turtle Island can be overwhelming. Sometimes, she says, she is caught by the thought, "Oh my god, are we doing it in the right order? Do we need to be simultaneously seizing lands and burning forts in order to actually make this happen?" (Interview with author, November 17, 2022). But then she realizes that all components are related; to work on one is to work on all. "Education as a first step, yes," she says, "But it can come from any angle. We are all headed toward the center." To that end, or, shall we say, in that direction, Cates and Adams talk about building language curriculum for all ages for intergenerational learning. They want to build on existing relationships

[36] "Chef Sean Sherman on Indigenous Food Lab:" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_aQwCl_ql

with Little Earth, where they take healthy breakfasts to the early childhood program and where there is an elder-youth garden project, and with Bdote Learning Center and Red Cloud School, two Minneapolis schools that have refused government funding for schools lunches.[37] "Eventually, we will have curricula that we have built with them," says Adams (Interview with author, November 17, 2022). Further, they imagine communities incubating language so Indigenous (in this case Dakota) people grow up hearing it before they go to school. Until then, they play around with the "backwards design templates" that Adams finds "colonial-made," and "lacking."

Cates and Adams are in the "start-up" phase in developing their part of NATIFS, what they call "a huge endeavor." It seems that part of this early stage in NATIFS' decolonizing work will involve naming the colonial constructs to be overcome, constructs that delimit the realm of the possible, such as those that are deeply embedded in curriculum templates, for example. They still feel colonized, just as House and Webster do. While the education department waits for their mandate from the NATIFS board to outline their working pedagogical philosophy, Cates and Adams are echoing the persistent questions in Indigenous language reclamation:

- How can we teach all ages so that children can grow up immersed in their language?
- How can we build the verbal capacity and confidence in adults to use the language in all spheres of life?
- Can we learn language while restoring relationship to land?
- Can we, following Simpson, create "learning environments based in networks of loving, land-based relationships?"
- Can we do this without reproducing colonial constructs?

Food Literacy

> *Vignette: My first born, Chester, developed his literacy through food production. He has keen taste buds and began developing recipes at an early age. As an "unschooled" child, every interest became curriculum. Chester wrote cookbooks. His first, a classic, tasks the standard English-speaker's brain, but ultimately pleases both heart and palate: "Lov Fewd."*

I tell this story because it brings together food and literacy…and love, three components that might reinforce each other in an optimal learning environment. But what if the space of your learning environment is one whose outlines speak of generations of displacement, replacement and imposition? Can such "traces" (Nxumalo, 2019) be overlooked or overcome in the interest of Indigenous collective continuance? Should they be? Following Shelley Saguaro (2006), Nxumalo writes, "…there are many variations of gardens in settler colonial places,[38] but they are all imbued

[37] This is a recent trend in taking a stance against poor-quality, government-issued food commodities.

[38] I will be discussing garden projects on reservations. Whether or not reservations can or should be considered 'colonial' spaces is complex and certainly controversial. This discussion is outside the realm of this paper. I will say that for the purposes of this paper's exploration of the role of garden spaces within Indigenous movements toward food security, I wish to assert an underlying and unquestioned respect for the sovereignty of Native nations and their relationships with their lands. However, history has shown that the politics of observing sovereignty have been tenuous *at best*, and that, accordingly, the practices of sovereign nations on reservation lands have been in no small part spatially influenced by or in conjunction with governing bodies of colonizing nations. The garden projects that I consider here have been colonially influenced, despite their being on reservation lands.

with colonial histories, including displacements of people, plants, and animals" (p. 79).[39] Throughout the remainder of the paper, I grapple with the notion of gardens as *settled spaces*, as in spaces which recall colonial boundary-making (Nxumalo, 2019; Peach et al., 2020) and which may therefore psychically reproduce colonized relationships based in the Western separation of humans from "nature," which is antithetical to Indigenous relational ontologies[40] (Bang, 2017; Kimmerer, 2013). At the same time, I propose we consider the merits of a few Indigenous land-based education projects, documented by critical settler scholars, that rely on both, on *garden spaces* and on wild food programs. I want to proceed on the premise that, yes, as Cates claims, *we* [as in Indigenous and non-Indigenous critical scholars alike] *are all moving toward the center.*

Ada Smith (2020), a settler PhD student at the University of Montana, noted that Gitxaala people, also known as Git lax m'oon, or "people of the saltwater," have lived on the northwestern coast of North America without interruption for millennia (p. 49); they continue to learn language from their native speakers of Sm'algyax and to practice traditional foodways despite the increasing challenges that come with remoteness (a 30min flight or 2-hour ferry ride to a coastal island) and settler-colonial pressures.[41] According to Smith, the Gitxaala community leaders believe that "wellness implies wholeness" (p. 53), and have consequently (since 2007) developed a community garden program and a "Food of Our Own" traditional food workshop. Despite the historical "cognitive imperialism" (Battiste, 2000) and "culinary imperialism" (Kelm, 1999 cited in Smith, p. 47) of schools, Smith believes that schools today might instead contribute to "food literacy," and, through it, to language reclamation and the mental well-being of Indigenous youth.[42] According to Cullen and colleagues, *food literacy* is:

> the ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across the lifespan in order to navigate, engage, and participate within a complex food system. It's the ability to make

[39] Indigenous peoples have been managing lands as agriculturalists for millenia, which leads me to ask: are they gardeners?

[40] Noting that what constitutes nature is an important (i.e., critical) discussion that is absolutely relevant to the subject-matter of this paper, I choose not to attempt to present this very dense and heavily contested debate (at least among Western scholars) for lack of space. I will say that I fall adamantly in with the Indigenous standpoint that humans are "natural" beings and therefore cannot have a viewpoint that is *outside* of "nature" (Bang, 2017).

[41] Nxumalo notes that even organic gardening projects which purport to provide chemical-free, optimally healthy produce are "still located within a locus of sociomaterial stratification, racialized class privilege, and individualized neoliberal relations to food access…" (Nxumalo, 2019, p. 76). Smith's perspective concurs: "Even in a community that is engaged in food literacy efforts with the support of public education, there are larger forces such as political interests and the grasp of corporate food marketing that continue to undermine community goals and actions" (p. 73).

[42] She writes: "For Indigenous students, learning language and having meaningful cultural experiences early in life provides a foundation for lifelong personal development and formal educational achievement despite continued adverse conditions (Atleo and Fitznor 2010; Cummins 1991 and 1994; Hornberger 2009). This points to important reasons for building upon ongoing efforts to revitalize heritage languages to produce multilingual competence in schooling. Lach Klan School is part of School District 52, which has one of the most progressive Aboriginal Education programs in British Columbia and is the only district in Canada that teaches an Indigenous language to all students. Thus our approach to developing food literacy curriculum aimed to work toward the tandem goals of Sm'algyax language and English language learning and competence at Lach Klan School" (p. 58).

> decisions to support the achievement of personal health and a sustainable food system considering environmental, social, economic, cultural, and political components. (Cullen et al., 2015, p. 143)

Smith details some of the challenges and opportunities in developing three *food literacy* resources with teachers and community members at Lach Klan School over the course of a five-week summer program for third graders in 2017: (a) hands-on garden and Gitxaała food activities; (b) Gitxaała foods handwriting and reading worksheets in English and Sm'algyax; and (c) a Gitxaała Summer Foods book in English and Sm'algyax. To remain within the scope of this paper, I summarize Smith's findings about language learning through food systems work. [Yet I make some resource examples available in Appendix A.]

Smith found that integrating Indigenous knowledges into food literacy education is one that is "continuous, ongoing, and contextual, and the desired outcomes are no doubt diverse and unique to particular contexts and places" (p. 56). Combining the Lach Klan summer reading program with food literacy (and thus food security interests) started with guidance from members of the Gitxaała Band Council who were involved in discussions of the objectives of the resources created before, during, and after the summer reading program (p. 59).[43] The pedagogy was based upon "Land Education" (Styres, 2013) and "land as pedagogy" (Simpson, 2011) approaches.[44] The goal was to educate in the out-of-doors, but heavy rains prevented the class from being in the garden more than twice a week. While Smith concluded that the Lach Klan summer reading project was "an example of a specific, local action that addresses global concerns around how Indigenous food sovereignty can be 'operationalized' in practice, how Indigenous knowledge is used in food systems education, and the role and relationship of education or food literacy to achieving the goals of food sovereignty" (p. 48), she also identified four categories for program improvement, lessons worth noting. These included:

(1) harnessing local knowledge of "own foods;"

Smith follows Short et al. (2007) in noting that a garden inventory that looks at "healthy" foods falls short of addressing food sovereignty. Culturally appropriate foods, based in collective knowledge of Native foodways, not only improve the landscape and diet, but, in a language program, vocabulary as well.

(2) accessing stable funding for critical garden materials and to support garden coordinators;

Food-growing is labor-intensive. When funding sources are temporary or intermittent, sustainability is weakened.

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[43] Guidance from leading elders is a theme in developing programming for cultural revitalization; I am taken back to Cates and Adams whose patience with the NATIFS leadership board promises to pay off in the spirit of collective endeavoring.

[44] "List of Lessons: Garden Introduction: Walk, Listen & Learn; Seaweed (fucus//paatsah) Harvest; Planting Seeds; Transplanting Strawberries; Weeding; Mint Harvest/Tea-Making; A Day Indoors: Strawberry Smoothie Celebration & Garden Stakes; Spruce Tree Storytime; Potato Planting; Jarring Salmon" (Smith, 2020, p. 60).

(3) increasing flexibility in lesson plans and scheduling to accommodate place-based and culturally relevant activities;

At Lach Klan, Smith noted well-established food traditions that happened outside the space/time of the community garden. Furthermore, weather was a constant issue within the garden. She believed intentional development of lessons and plans that were attentive to these factors could have strengthened the program.

(4) and supporting language and cultural training for educators. (Smith, 2020, p. 65)

As Cates and Adams (Interview with author, November 17, 2022) stressed, many Indigenous language educators are still learners themselves. Attention to consistent training for educators to enrich capacity is therefore important.

Conclusion

The myriad possibilities and politics of integrating Indigenous land and language reclamation with food are tantalizing and complex. I have focused on a few examples of work in a growing field, leaving more detailed exploration of promising approaches such as that explored in Alice Louise Meyers' (2020) dissertation, *Blossoming Multiliteracies: Stories of How W̱SÁNEĆ, Quw'utsun, Gitga'at, and Líl̓wat Nations Reclaim Indigenous Languages and Food Systems Through Pedagogies of the Land*, or that reviewed by Brewer and Dennis [American Indian and/or Alaska Native] (2017) in "An Offering: Lakota elders' contributions to the future of food security" for another paper. Meyers (2020) finds that multimodal land-based curricula take students not only out of doors, but encourage, for example, harmonic connections as well as physical connection to plants and land in conjunction with language learning. "Speaking, writing, and singing plant names can be a way of connecting with the plants that reinforces language acquisition," she writes (Meyers 2020, p. 275). Regarding coloniality and gardens, Brewer and Dennis find that gardening on a Lakota reservation, seed saving and trading, preserving and storing cultivated and traditionally (wild) harvested foods are ways of reshaping "tools of assimilation in their image in order to stay connected to the values and spiritual beliefs that sustained their ancestors" (p. 17). Meyers' *ways* and Brewer and Dennis's *whys* are provocative and relevant for future work in ethnic studies/decolonizing pedagogies. Indigenous scholars take it for granted that decolonizing work today involves navigating and negotiating colonized spaces, however much less-than-ideal that may be. Indigenous peoples are survivors of colonization (Pewewardy et al., 2018), and their stories of survivance (Vizenor, 2008) offer ways forward. Meanwhile, I offer this paper as my own gesture of compromise within colonial constraints…as an imperfect accomplice working on allyship (Carroll, 2020; Kluttz: 2020) …until we all meet in the center.

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Appendix A

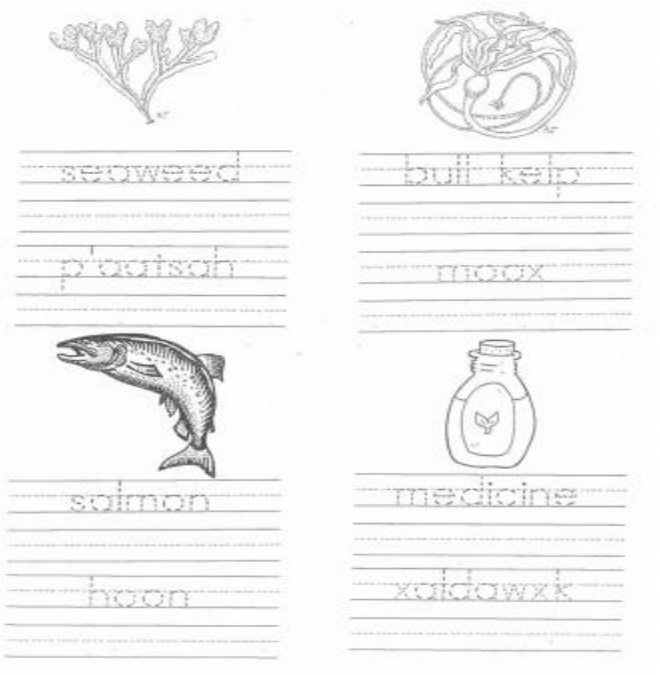

Fig. 1. Sample, Gitxaała Foods Handwriting and Reading Worksheet

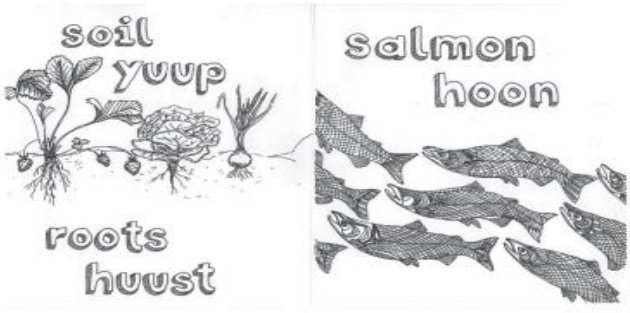

Fig. 2. Sample Book Page: Soil/Yuup, Roots/Huust, Salmon/Hoon

Fig. 3. Sample Book Pages: Seeds/Nawa'na, Leaves/'Yens

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Appendix B

Table 1. The importance of seasonal local food harvesting and the impact of the Churchill River Diversion[4]

Season	Seasonal traditional food and method of consumption	Health significance as understood by OPCN members	Cultural significance of harvesting and consuming the food	Stories of traditional food-related activities	Perceived damage due to CRD
Summer and winter	Fish (smoked, boiled and fried, dry fish with berries, fish head boiled, fish broth for soup)	White fish is good for diabetes and blood pressure. Jack fish guts are cold medicine. Fish head and broth are good sources of and calcium. (Jennifer Linklater)	Act of fishing teaches us that we need to work hard. (Fisherman Wilbur Wood)	'In summer spending time in the fish camp was like a ritual in the community. Youth loved playing by the beach and chasing fish.' (Louis Dumas)	Continuous fluctuation of water hampers fish egg spawning. Fish taste mushy. People need to travel to inland lakes to fish
Spring	Beaver and muskrat (smoked and boiled meat)	Beaver meat has pain relieving and anti-inflammatory element Muskrat meat is quality protein. (Roger Moose)	Trapping teaches focus, hard work, and respect for elders. Beavers are hard-working and youth must be too. (Elder Ross Moose)	'Trapping beaver and muskrat was a favorite past-time for us before the CRD. We used to catch hundreds of muskrats, now we can only catch a few if we are lucky.' (Steve Durcharme)	Continuous fluctuation of water froze and killed many beaver and muskrat
Spring	Ducks, geese, and other waterfowl (boiled meat and broth for soup with oats)	Duck and goose meat is good for heart health and high blood pressure. (Roger Moose)	Hunting ducks and geese can teach about determination, focus and is a form of meditation. (Barb Spence)	'We always like to save some of our birds for feasts and gatherings. Goose broth with oatmeal is a favorite dish in every gathering.' (Delia Dysart)	Loss of marsh and shoreline changed waterfowl migration paths
Summer	Seagull eggs(boiled)	Good sources of protein and is good for bones. (Barb Spence)	Harvesting seagull eggs teaches the rules of conservation. (Elder Vivian Moose)	'In summer before CRD fishermen used to bring baskets full of seagull eggs. It was a treat for us.' (Barb Spence)	Seagulls lay eggs in small rocky islands in Southern Indian Lake. After CRD many of these islands were drowned

Table 1. Continued

Season	Seasonal traditional food and method of consumption	Health significance as understood by OPCN members	Cultural significance of harvesting and consuming the food	Stories of traditional food-related activities	Perceived damage due to CRD
Summer	Berries (Blueberry, moss berry, raspberry, and cranberry)(mixed with dry meat and fish, raw and making jam with sugar)	Medicines for colds, diarrhea and other stomach problems, diabetes and detoxifying body. (Elder Florence Donkey)	Berry harvesting teaches sharing and caring for family. (Linda Baker)	'Women used to go out for berry picking with their families and children, make tea and socialize all day long sharing their harvest.' (Hilda Dysart)	Erosion of shoreline damaged and drowned berry patches.
Summer	Tea (Labrador, wild mint)	Medicine for cold and headache. (Elder Vivian Moose)	Spending time with medicinal plant is healing, and teaches generosity, peace, kindness and respect for the land. (Roger Moose)	'After you use a medicinal plant, you need to throw it on fire or somewhere safe where people will not walk on it. You also need to leave something behind when you pick them. I still do that. People leave tobacco when they pick wild mint.' (Shirley Ducharme)	Loss of land; shoreline drowned many medicinal plants
Fall	Moose (meat, lard from bone marrow, nose) (Boiled, smoked, dry)	Dry moose meat with berries is good for stomach and bones. (Elder Helen Moose)	Hunting moose teaches responsibility for feeding family and allows for sharing. (Shirley Ducharme)	'The common saying is one should not eat his first kill. This is to teach the young hunter about kindness and sharing.' (Shirley Ducharme)	Erosion creates debris and requires long travel to hunt moose.

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