

# **Indigenous Environmental Justice Podcast**

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### Abstract

This project examines the use of podcasting as a platform to advocate for Indigenous Environmental Justice. In this research I aim to generate an understanding of how colonialism and climate change impose upon the movement for Indigenous food sovereignty through environmental injustice. Primary academic research for this project consisted primarily of conducting interviews with relevant knowledge holders, mostly from the local Anishinaabe community, which were recorded, edited and overdubbed with commentary in order to create a cohesive narrative for knowledge mobilization. Secondary academic research for this project included extensive literature reviews and case study considerations across global contexts. Empowerment of Indigenous peoples in their self-determination and governance over their respective territories is necessary for developing climate action strategies that are rooted in the reclamation of traditional practices and is identified as essential to adopting a decolonizing approach to community development and environmental conservation.

*Keywords:* Indigenous food sovereignty, environmental justice, climate change

[ <https://soundcloud.com/iejproject/iej-podcast/s-5BVHR> ]

## Foreword

This research project has been created to satisfy the requirements of the Master of Environmental Studies program at York University. By addressing the learning objectives highlighted in my plan of study as well as accounting for and exploring the ideas put forth in my research proposal, this work represents a culmination of my studies within the degree program. Contained within this report are the ideas of scholars I have been introduced to throughout the program by way of faculty led-courses and self-directed learning alike. This report also features critical dissection of my own ideas and reflection upon my learning process while being engaged in this work. Most importantly this project serves as a practice in community-based, participatory research that functions to document the perspectives of Indigenous peoples thus facilitating the incorporation of this important information into academic knowledge systems. Through the production of an educational podcast this project mobilizes knowledge as a contribution to my efforts in advocacy for Indigenous Environmental Justice and food sovereignty as a non-Indigenous ally.

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## **Introduction & Background:**

### **Considering Environmental Injustice:**

#### **Colonial Context & Contemporary Food Systems**

In this project I analyze the idea of Indigenous food sovereignty and consider the impositions of colonialism upon this movement. Through this analysis I provide an understanding that the pursuit of Indigenous Environmental Justice can be understood as a platform for climate action and a way of addressing the systemic factors associated with colonialism that in turn create environmental injustice. Within this analysis I also identify that the pursuit of Indigenous Environmental Justice is an essential aspect of Indigenous food sovereignty. Through engaging in both primary and secondary academic research I developed a nuanced understanding of Indigenous food sovereignty and the importance of conducting research focussed within the context of a specific Indigenous community in order to avoid reference to a supposed pan-Indigenous identity as much as possible within the work. Studying the Indigenous food systems of Sámi people in Finland served as an important point of contrast and comparison in an international setting for me and has been a critical learning practice for reconciling my identity and worldview as a settler with an initial lack of understanding for the nuances of how different, though not without similarities, cultural attitudes can be towards different food practices amongst Indigenous peoples globally. With the guidance of a research

assistantship with the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project* I centred my research within the local context of the Anishinaabe community and I have undertaken the production of a podcast that can serve as an educational resource for the public to better understand the context of Indigenous Environmental Justice in the Great Lakes region. The podcast examines how Indigenous Environmental Justice is inextricably linked to the empowerment of Indigenous peoples in their self-determination, self-governance and sovereignty in their relationships with Land<sup>1</sup>. The adherence of the Canadian government to the rights of Indigenous peoples and the cessation of political and industrial activities that interfere with such rights is crucial to the abilities of Indigenous peoples to continue practices associated with traditional place-based food systems that can provide a sense of identity as well as a source of healing and ecological resilience.

Growing up as a Canadian urban youth in the 1990s, I ate a diet that consisted entirely of food produced through the industrial food system. As I chose my path of study, I took an interest in agriculture as a way to investigate the way food may connect people with Land. My journey into this field left me disillusioned with more than just conventional industrial agriculture, as even the ecological agriculture movement is often limited by the colonial, capitalist paradigm. This paradigm is typically characterized by a worldview that perceives people as being separate from nature and food as a commodity rather than as sacred aspect of the complex and intimate relationship with the rest of creation that connects people to Land (Friedmann, 2005). Friedmann

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<sup>1</sup> Land is capitalized in order to honour and understand the idea that Land possesses personhood as both an ancestor and a relative for Indigenous peoples, which is a concept that has been examined and explained in detail by White (2018).

(2005) explains how the problematic aspects of the ecological agriculture movement function to create increasing disparities in access to quality food products between privileged and marginalized consumers. These experiences have led to the development of my interest in considering the role of contemporary Indigenous food systems in the ecological agriculture movement. I have focussed my research into this topic around a hypothesis that Indigenous food systems have the ability to provide a framework for establishing equitable and ecologically resilient food systems that operate within the long-standing, spiritual and ecological relationships that have been established and continue to be maintained by Indigenous peoples where I live. The imposition of colonialism upon the continuation of traditional practices within Indigenous food systems is intensified by climate change, thus urging a consideration of response strategies that are developed within the worldview of the Indigenous people in the place where such development is happening. Documentation of existing knowledge in Indigenous communities for creating resilience to climate change is important, as residential schools and other aspects of colonialism have disrupted traditional knowledge transmission across generations (Talaga, 2017). By conducting this investigation and acknowledging the way that my own ancestry and worldview shape my perspective, I have come to understand that any adaptive response strategies to environmental injustice must be created within the Indigenous worldview associated with the environment in which they are being applied.

As a member of the European diaspora that makes up a large proportion of the settler population on Turtle Island, I have experienced a longing for a connection to Land that I think many diasporic people can relate to (Friedmann, 2005). In particular, as an Ashkenazi Jew, my culture has been alienated from our traditional ways of relating to Land through food for a very

long time. The stories and traditions that have been passed down through my family relate to a place that we have long been estranged from. These cultural practices provide a vehicle for creating cultural continuity and a resilient response to evading persecution and assimilation throughout the historical pressures faced throughout our diaspora. When I engage in the practice of maintaining a cultural connection to my ancestral lands through my family's food traditions, I believe that my ability to make use of the traditional local foods in the place I currently live as a way of being in relationship with Land can often become compromised. Through with excessive reliance on the global food industry that allows people to eat anything anywhere at any time of the year, contemporary food systems can enable diasporic people like myself to enjoy a comforting aspect of the places we've had to leave behind, while also potentially alienating us for the environment that we live in now. There is a careful balance which must be maintained amongst diasporic peoples in order to continue to practice our own cultural traditions and also live in good relationship with the Land which we currently live upon.

Through the imposition of foreign food systems, which enable relationships that can alienate people from the Land they live on, settler colonialism displaces existing ecological relationships that have long existed amongst the Indigenous food systems of Turtle Island (Whyte, 2016). Ecological equilibriums within Indigenous food systems thus become compromised through the imposition of food systems that have been established through settler colonialism (Turner et al., 2003; Whyte, 2016). Whyte (2016) suggests that Indigenous food sovereignty can be a process of negotiating the ways in which settler colonialism erases the important ecological function of Indigenous foods. In response to the devastating impacts of imposing industrial agriculture systems upon Turtle Island, it has been necessary for me to



consider the ecological value in developing Indigenous food systems to replace the overly-commodified agri-food industry that currently functions to feed the majority of people living on the Land today. When considering the ongoing impacts of environmental injustice, colonialism and climate change, it is evident that ecological destabilization, as illustrated by O'Flaherty et al. (2009), has led to scarcity as well as lack of access to and knowledge of how to engage with traditional food systems. O'Flaherty et al. (2009) discuss the need to create environmental stewardship systems based in an Indigenous worldview wherein Indigenous people reconnect with and preserve traditions as well as innovate and establish new stewardship practices through opportunities associated with incorporation of contemporary technologies. By embracing new opportunities and remaining rooted in traditions, Mantyka-Pringle et al. (2017) illustrate how a methodology, which embraces a two-eyed seeing approach can be useful in addressing the challenges of colonialism and climate change within Indigenous food systems and communities. A two-eyed seeing approach integrates the worldview and perspectives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and thus, as Mantyka-Pringle et al. (2017) suggests, this approach provides a critical framework for application in theoretical considerations concerning the culturally mixed communities that exist on Turtle Island today.

While Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island have long histories of engaging in trade, cultivation and economic activities associated with their food, the relationships that exist within these Indigenous food systems are based in a worldview that does not see the food as a commodity that can be exploited (Whyte, 2016). Food is only one aspect of the relationships that exist between humans and the other beings of creation that provide humans with the gift of sustenance. Sustenance must be viewed as a gift that is received, not taken, and is only offered to

humans through the establishment of reciprocal relationships where humans practice proper conduct to ensure that sustenance is provided for these other beings as well (Forbes, 2009; McGregor, 2018). In this way, Indigenous food systems operate upon a vastly different set of ethical principles than the imperialist colonial principles, which generated industrial agriculture, and continue to shape global trade in the dominant food systems that support the economies of wealthy nation states all over the world.

Through the process of colonization, Indigenous peoples and their food systems have been pushed to the peripheries of society resulting in under development of their legal and economic systems (LaDuke, 1994). Winona LaDuke (1994) describes how this process of underdevelopment has positioned Indigenous societies as focal points for the environmental injustice of ongoing resource exploitation leaving them to face the frontline impacts of resulting pollution and ecological destabilization. In order to confront such abhorrent environmental injustice examining innovative response strategies for adaptation is essential. Colonialism and climate change are identified as forces that contribute significantly to the environmental injustice experienced by marginalized social groups including Indigenous peoples (Seck, 2017; Whyte, 2016). My agriculture and food systems research examines the multifaceted, systemic forces such as climate change and colonialism that impose upon the movement for Indigenous food sovereignty and considers what adaptive response strategies may be feasible to apply in the Great Lakes region where I live.

Kyle Whyte (2016) explains that restrictions imposed through the policies of colonial government agencies interfere with the economic, ecological and social aspects of Indigenous food systems (Whyte, 2016). One such policy that impedes the movement for Indigenous food

sovereignty is the restrictions on the distribution of hunted meat (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural & Affairs). By imposing limitations upon Indigenous peoples this prohibitive policy enforces injustice by both; (a) restricting access to culturally significant foods for Indigenous peoples in urban areas; and (b) restricting the potential for developing more ecologically sustainable economies associated with Indigenous food systems. Access to Indigenous food systems in urban areas is also becoming an increasingly important consideration as rapid growth of the population of Indigenous peoples living off reserve, in urban areas, has been recently documented by STATCAN (2017). Given the current changes underway in the dynamics of Indigenous populations, it is only logical to expect that the dynamics of Indigenous food systems will also change.

The ecological devastation that results from the imposition of settler colonialism and the associated industrial food systems upon Indigenous homelands is in and of itself a major contributing factor to the looming global climate crisis (Whyte, 2017). Eichler & Baumeister (2018) discuss how settler colonialism perpetuates injustice through hunting restrictions intended for wildlife conservation and criticizes the proposed dichotomy between wild and domesticated animals. Thus animals that are deemed wild by settlers may be perceived by in an Indigenous worldview in ways that more closely resemble a settler's conception of what is domestic (Eichler & Baumeister, 2018). When considering distinctions between Indigenous and settler food systems, it is important to remember that Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island have cultivated and maintained diverse and resilient ecological systems, which provide food and medicine as well as habitat for all of our other relatives in creation (Turner et al., 2003; Whyte, 2016). The movement for Indigenous food sovereignty can be considered a practical response to the imposition of

settler colonialism upon Indigenous food systems (Whyte, 2016). When confronting injustice that stems from the previously discussed complex forces, it is important to consider multifaceted responses that are also complex.

Whyte (2016) writes about new situations that are arising from the inscription of settler ecologies upon Indigenous homelands that will require innovations in adaptive strategies. Global trends of climate change also present particular challenges that require innovative adaptation for Indigenous food systems to maintain their ecological, social and economic value (Whyte, 2016). The ecological value of Indigenous food systems rooted in place-based traditional ecological knowledge is of critical importance when considering strategies for responding to climate change. Dawn Morrison (2011) proposes the perspective that Indigenous food sovereignty "... provides a framework for exploring, transforming and rebuilding the industrial food system towards a more just and ecological model for all."(p.98). Indigenous food sovereignty requires reimagining food systems in terms of the respect for the responsibilities that exist in the relationship we share with our environment (Coté, 2016). Improving access to Indigenous food systems for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, particularly in urban areas, could be considered a practical strategy for achieving environmental justice through decreasing reliance upon more destructive colonial industrial food systems.

**Considering Innovation and Adaptation:****Fields of Dreams, Greener Pastures & Ecological Commons**

When considering the shift to a more ecological food system I turn to Clarke, a pasture scientist whom I studied under at the University of Guelph's Ontario Agriculture College. Clarke argues that animal agriculture sustained upon perennial forage based pastures has the ability to transfer carbon from the atmosphere and store it in the soil, building soil organic matter and reducing the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change (Clarke, 1988; Clarke, 2004). This vision of a farm, functioning as a provider of both ecological services and rich, delicious, nutritious food, produced by ruminating animals who can consume these hardy forages that we cannot, has for many years shaped my understanding of ecological food systems. When contrasted with the ecology of annual crop cultivation, which is susceptible to erosion when the soil is consistently left bare, pasture-based agriculture certainly seems like the way to go in terms of ecology. It is also possible to cultivate pasture in many areas where crop cultivation is not an option, thus opening up significantly more terrain to food production. Examples of this can be seen all over the world where shepherds graze their goats on the sides of mountains.

Shepherding is a pastoral agricultural practice and typically operates outside of the restrictive boundaries placed upon farms (Ingold, 1980). The work of Ingold (1980) provides extensive details on the nuanced differences in cultural practices between farms that are entrenched in notions of private property and pastoralist agriculture systems that work with Land as a common resource. By considering a farm as separate from the ecosystem in which it is

encompassed, farmers often neglect to consider the problematic ecological relationships, which inevitably arise, such as externalized pollution as well as exploitive pest and predator problems. Considering my own cultural heritage, which includes an ancient history of pastoralist agriculture practiced by my ancestors with goats and sheep, has led me to investigate what the role of these pastoralist practices might be in contemporary ecological food system development where I live today. I feel that I must account for this idealized pastoral vision that shapes my dream for cultivating honourable relationships with animals and the ecosystems that provide us food. When attempting to reconcile the idea of Land as a common resource to be used for pastoralist agriculture with my interest in the food systems of the Anishinabek, John Borrows (2008) has made it clear to me that as humans, claiming ownership of our relatives in creation, such as Land (even when considered as a common resource as in pastoralism), is most often problematic. However, there are indeed similarities between the ecological benefits of pastoralism and woodland-based food systems of the Anishinabek. While ideas of ownership and commodification must be omitted from the structure of Anishinabek food systems, there are certain protocols that can be followed involving an offering of prayers to ask for permission before harvesting plants or animals from the Land for the provision of sustenance (Borrows, 2008). Thus, I will move forward in my work carefully and respectfully treading upon a path that I hope can avoid the dangers of cultural appropriation, remain rooted in place-based traditions of being in relationship with Land and lead to the establishment of optimally ecological food systems for the current population of Turtle Island, and in particular, the Great Lakes region.

When considering the limited efficacy of ecological agriculture practices, which are being implemented on Turtle Island today, it has become apparent to me that relating to Land

through concepts of private property is certainly a big part of the problem. An essential literary contribution on this topic was made by Hardin (1968) with a critique of the infamous parable, *The Tragedy of the Commons*, where in 1832, William Forster Lloyd provided validation for capitalist systems that operate on notions of private property, as a remedy to devastation of publicly held, common pastures. Hardin (1968) highlights the flaws in Lloyd's theories from 1832 with reference to a lack of morality, resulting from self-interest amongst humanity, which leads to the competition, exploitation and the pollution of the commons that still occurs within systems of private property. Buck Cox (1985) urges a reconceptualization of *the tragedy of the commons* as described by Hardin (1968) to instead be understood as a triumph, rather than a tragedy, in community management practices, which has existed unrecorded for great lengths of time. An example of such triumph can be found in the food systems of the Anishinabek, and their practice of *mino bimaadiziwin* as a means of maintaining respectful relations within their food systems and the other ecological relationships they are engaged in (LaDuke, 1994; McGregor, 2018; Whyte, 2016). Rather, it is actually a tragedy of industrialization that has been mistaken as a tragedy of the commons (Buck Cox, 1985). This tragedy that has resulted from exploitive practices and led to the rationalization of private property systems that would perhaps in the Anishinaabe worldview be considered as a force of the *Wiindigo*, or the spiritual force of one who consumes only for themselves (Meland, 2017). It is crucial to consider the epistemological foundations upon which the resiliency of Indigenous food systems that continue operate through use of the commons are built upon, especially as they respond to the challenges of colonization. In critical consideration of the theories of superiority, which have shaped the Euro-centric Western worldview and legitimized the colonial systems of dispossession that private property

regimes operate upon, Schorr (2018) teaches us that a society with a worldview based in Euro-centric Western ideology truly has much to unlearn if a transition to a more ecological, just and equitable land-based economy is to be undertaken. Buck Cox (1985) suggests looking for examples of successful, sustainable use of Land as commons that have been maintained for centuries can serve as a guide for lessons and practices that can be applied in our own time. One such prominent example of modern pastoralist agriculture that is practiced by Indigenous peoples is the reindeer herding practices carried out by the Sámi in Northern Europe.

Considering the relationship of Sámi and reindeer has provided me with a way of understanding nomadic pastoralist agricultural practices that have created cultural resilience and withstood colonization. This has been an important context for me to consider when integrating the ancestral animal relationships of my own culture with my goal of cultivating ethical and holistic food systems on the Land that I call home today. Paine (1992) discusses some of the government interference that is still creating challenges for Sámi in their reindeer herding practices, by imposing regulations under the guise of ecological conservation, for the prevention of a scenario that exemplifies *the tragedy of the commons*. However, Paine (1992) makes it clear that the reality is that much like the colonial governments of Turtle Island, Nordic government interventions are actually destabilizing the viability of Sámi traditions and protecting the government's own economic interest. This is evident in documentation of the development of the government's preferred economic industries, such as the extractive, exploitative development of competing land-uses, including tourism, mining and forestry (Benjaminsen et al., 2015). Nevertheless, Sámi reindeer herding practices have shown incredible resilience in their ability to



persist through the forces of colonization and climate change, providing a cultural cornerstone in the food systems and spirituality of Sámi people today.

### **Understanding Uniqueness:**

#### **Individualism Within Community, Sense of Place & Being Our Authentic Selves**

While remaining grounded in principles of self-determination and appropriate cultural worldview, careful experimentation and cultural collaboration remains an important consideration in climate change adaptation work necessary for creating strategies to increase community capacity in response to colonization. Hoover et al. (2017) provides the details on an interesting endeavour wherein all four of the Inuit regions of Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavut and Nunavik reindeer herding was adopted in the early 20th Century with financial assistance from the federal government as well as facilitation of education and instruction from Sámi reindeer herders. While reindeer herding was found to help provide local food security amongst the Inuit communities, it cannot be considered as a replacement for culturally significant animal foods, such as the caribou, which are facing devastating habitat loss (Hoover et al., 2017). Since the 1970s only one reindeer herding operation has remained on Turtle Island and is owned by Inuvialuit in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, while the rest have since been abandoned (Hoover et al., 2017). Another important caution associated with importing reindeer into the Indigenous food systems of Turtle Island is that this may result in the ecological displacement of caribou, as

these closely related animals make use of many of the same ecological niches and habitat. While these considerations have been based off of trials conducted in more Northern regions, as caribou are a part of the food systems of the Anishinabek as well, these considerations do remain relevant to this project (O’Flaherty et al., 2009). However, this is not to say that the food systems and cultures of Indigenous peoples must remain unchanged. As Porsanger (2011) notes, innovation has always been an important aspect of Indigenous traditions, which is all too often left out of considerations on cultural continuity. That being said, it is imperative that innovations be led by the self-determination of the Indigenous peoples that are undergoing such development in order to avoid repetitive patterns of colonial oppression.

The works of Pomedli (2014) and O’Flaherty et al. (2009) make it clear that interfering with the lives of animals through processes of domestication is not necessarily compatible with the Anishinaabe worldview. It is still important to make considerations of what changes in practice might be necessary in order to uphold social contracts with animals, given the changing political, cultural and environmental conditions of current contexts. Whatever these adjustments in practice might be, whether they be changes in the way animals are hunted and trapped, the way that the food which is produced through these processes is distributed, how habitats for animals are cultivated and preserved, or just how advocacy for the well-being of the animals and their habitats is intensified within the political arena, it is imperative that these efforts emerge from the self-determination of the Indigenous peoples whose food systems are being developed.

Through the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge, Indigenous agriculture practices have the potential to support the development of Indigenous food systems in sustaining current populations and also to allow for the reclamation of the associated Indigenous economies

(LaDuke, 1994). Whyte (2016) discusses the cultural and ecological value of wild rice for Anishinabek people. Not only does the cultivation of wild rice directly provide food for Anishinabek people, but also provides habitat for countless other species which comprise key elements of Anishinabek food systems (Whyte, 2016). By engaging in cultivating habitat for animals that hold cultural significance in Indigenous food systems, either through the control of predators or the provision of shelter and food sources as practices that can be understood as habitat cultivation, Indigenous agriculture principles can be applied as a mechanism for engaging in relationships of reciprocity with our relatives that sustain us. By understanding our place within our environment through fulfilling our social and ecological responsibilities with our human and more-than-human community members we can be more authentically ourselves.

Rediscovering one's self through the protocols of good relationships with rest of creation is a powerful tool for addressing the impacts of colonialism, healing and achieving cultural as well as environmental justice for Indigenous peoples (Niezen, 2009; Ross, 2014). Authentically embracing our individual identities, both within and across our respective communities is essential in order to be inspired, immersed and engaged in sharing our own unique gift that is given to us by the creator, an endeavour, which can be understood as a part of our responsibility to the rest of creation and an important aspect of Indigenous food sovereignty (Benton-Banai, 1988; Côté, 2016). As a settler, I perceive that understanding my own culture and heritage is both a privilege and responsibility, knowing that the colonial legacy that benefits me and allows me to practice my culture upon this Land has been built on the persecution of Indigenous peoples for practicing their own. As a non-Indigenous researcher working to support Indigenous peoples as an ally I aim to centre Indigenous voices, mostly from people in the local Anishinabek

community that I have formed personal relationships with, through participatory research and story-sharing for the production of an Indigenous Environmental Justice Podcast. Benton-Banai (1988) describes the process of learning the teachings of Ojibway stories as being a “journey to rediscover a way of life that is centred on the respect for all living things. It will be a journey to find the centre of ourselves so that we can know the peace that comes from living in harmony with the powers of the universe.” (p.2). Beyond cultivating an understanding of myself and my own culture, as a settler citizen I believe it is also crucial to educate myself and develop an understanding of local Indigenous cultures as well in order to effectively uphold my responsibilities under the treaties upon which Canada was founded, despite the inability of government to effectively do so (Mantyka-Pringle et al., 2015). Forming meaningful, authentic, reciprocal and respectful relationships with local communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous as well as human and more-than-human, alongside becoming well-informed and remaining humble while mobilizing knowledge through advocacy has been a powerful way for me to engage in the movements for Indigenous Environmental Justice and Indigenous food sovereignty as a supportive ally.

## **Research Methods**

In this research project I made use of mixed methods including both primary and secondary academic research. Literature reviews were conducted to facilitate in-depth examinations of case-studies that illustrate the complexities of conflicts related to Indigenous food sovereignty and Indigenous Environmental Justice in different contexts. One aspect of this research included a trip to Finland to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Sámi and reindeer as well as the associated social and environmental conflicts with Nordic nation-states and industry. Another aspect of this research included extensive literature annotations related to Indigenous Environmental Justice focussed both locally in Canada as well as in other global contexts. The focus of this literature review centred around ideas of climate justice, water justice and Indigenous food sovereignty. Indigenous methodologies outlined by Restoule et al. (2018), guided me to network amongst the local community situated around Tkaronto. In a respectful way I arranged interviews conducted in an open format with participants who were identified as having knowledge relevant to the topic of Indigenous Environmental Justice. Through using this community-based participatory research approach I have learned to allow the content shared by the community to guide the narrative, thematic focus and structure of the project. I will now go on to explain in more detail the process by which these methods were chosen and employed for this research.

I pursued multiple opportunities that I was made aware of through my networks at the University, two of which I was grateful and pleased to be awarded. I was presented with the opportunities to make use of a funding grant and a research assistant position, neither of which I

felt would be wise to decline. Although pursuing both of these opportunities did lead to some fragmentation of my attention and a broader, less focussed, scope of my research and learning within the MES program, I was supported by faculty to take advantage of the moment and make the most of the situation. Despite the challenge of creating a cohesive project, I am glad that I did pursue this approach as the diverse perspectives I have been exposed to have provided a complex and invaluable understanding. While the critical learning which contributed to this project was generated through both of these opportunities, the funding award did not contribute directly to the creation of the podcast material, which will be the primary focus of the following sections of this report. I will briefly account for the way in which the learning generated from the opportunity to study in an international context contributed to the perspective that I have brought into the creation of this podcast and then do my best to maintain focus within the context of the local Anishinaabe perspectives of most of the participants who generously shared their time, knowledge and consent with me.

### **Sámi Reindeer Domestication Studies**

With the support of a *Mitacs Globalink Award*, I was able to do a field course in Oulu Finland. I accepted this opportunity to study how domestication of animals for food within an Indigenous food system could be a response to habitat loss resulting from climate change and colonization. The intimate relationship shared between reindeer and the Sámi people came to my attention as an interesting case to examine for some insights into this complex inquiry. In my online searches I came across an interesting research project, which I proposed to collaborate

with, investigating the history of reindeer domestication titled, *Domestication in Action*, led by archaeologist Dr. Anna-Kaisa Salmi out of the University of Oulu, just South of the Arctic circle in Finland. I was granted this award and travelled to Finland for three months during the winter of 2019 where I was able to visit multiple reindeer farms and conduct extensive literature reviews. I was also able to spend an unforgettable weekend on a Sámi homestead witnessing an incredible showing of the aurora borealis.

I attended two conferences that offered insight and context to earlier research interests of mine, which centred around hastened climate change impacts in the Arctic region before I turned my focus more locally toward the Great Lakes region. I attended the *One Arctic, One Health* conference in Oulu as well as the *Circumpolar Agriculture Conference* in Rovaniemi, both of which provided opportunities for networking, cultivating community and inspiring unique approaches to climate action. While the archaeological work of the *Domestication in Action* project was much more quantitative than the more qualitative focus of my own research, they also feature inclusion of ethnographical research in the project, which offered key insights for my research relating to the way that reindeer pastoralism developed in many different ways throughout Sápmi as well as across Eurasia. While I did have the opportunity to conduct an interview with Dr. Anna-Kaisa Salmi for my research during my time abroad, due to language barriers it was her preference not to have the interview included in a podcast. The interview was very informative and insightful regarding the role of archaeology in understanding history and the contributions that such historical documentation can provide to the movement for Indigenous Environmental Justice. Through unearthing and analyzing ancient artifacts archaeologists can provide windows into the past that are able to assist Indigenous people in understanding the

specific significance of certain important sites and the practices associated with these places more deeply, which can in turn also provide leverage in legal battles for Land claims and resistance to development.

Through this thorough investigation into Sámi reindeer domestication I was able to form an understanding of the uniquely complex and specific circumstances that have led to the development of modern reindeer husbandry practices today. While there are many things that can be learned from the shared experiences of Sámi in the European Arctic and Anishinabek in the Great Lakes through their conflicts with local colonial nation states, the environmental and cultural situations are in many ways vastly different. While some of the same adaptive strategies may be useful in both locations for each of these very different Indigenous peoples, such as methods of transnational advocacy and resistance to pressures from colonial nation-state governments and industry as outlined by Roosvall & Tegelberg (2018), there are also many adaptive strategies, such as the domestication of reindeer (or caribou) as livestock, which could only be considered to be effective, appropriate and applicable in one circumstance but not in the other for reasons such as differing cultural attitudes that are antithetical to establishing such systems of relationship with animal relatives. Thus my experience studying abroad in Finland helped me to come to an understanding where I could put aside my fascination with the domestication of animals for pastoralist agriculture while engaging in my research for the pursuit of Indigenous Environmental Justice locally in the Great Lakes. Thus I moved forward turning my focus towards the impacts upon Indigenous food systems that occur because of environmental injustices resulting from ethically abhorrent colonial nation-state policies,



industries and the resulting global climate crisis that continues to negatively impact the livelihoods and well-being of Indigenous communities disproportionately.

### **Indigenous Environmental Justice Project**

As a non-Indigenous person my exposure to and knowledge of Indigenous culture has been limited. In the MES program, the course ENVS 6152, *Reshaping Research with Aboriginal Peoples*, taught by Dr. Deborah McGregor has been a crucial resource for me to begin to understand the complex relationship that exists between Indigenous peoples and academic institutions like York University, which simultaneously uphold ideologies and power structures of the colonial legacy while also attempting to be engaged in the work of decolonization. The more I learned about Indigenous food sovereignty and deeply considered the social and economic aspects of colonial power structures, the more I understood just how inextricably linked to Indigenous Environmental Justice the continuation of Indigenous food system traditions truly is. My classmate, and soon-to-be colleague Jayce Chiblow, then brought to my attention how little is being done to understand and adapt to climate change in Northern Ontario while the Arctic receives significantly greater global focus. Taking this prompt I began to shift my focus more locally where development pressures from resource extraction and urbanization are compounded with climate change to create extreme stress on local ecosystems.

Through creating authentic relationships and community with my classmates I gained some new insights into local issues effecting Indigenous peoples in the Great Lakes Region and began to centre my research mainly around Anishinaabe worldview. I was eventually offered the

opportunity to work as a Research Assistant in the Indigenous Environmental Justice Project led by Dr. McGregor through her cross-appointment between FES and Osgoode Hall Law School.

For me, this opportunity was a great honour to receive and I was very keen to participate in such a prestigious project that allowed me to access the necessary connections and resources to facilitate undertaking a project of such a scope as this Indigenous Environmental Justice Podcast. I would like to note that when I began this position as a research assistant I discussed with Dr. McGregor that I had applied for the *Mitacs Globalink Award* and she was supportive, both before and after my notice of approval for the award, that I would be able to do both things at once. Although she advised me to keep the Mitacs project separate from my work with the Indigenous Environmental Justice Project, it was indeed unavoidable to account for the influence and impact of that work and learning upon the perspective that I have thus brought into this project.

In my role as a research assistant I took on the responsibilities of arranging and recording interviews with knowledge holders, managing undergraduate work transcribing interviews, facilitating knowledge mobilization events and workshops, conducting extensive literature reviews for the creation of an annotated bibliography and more. Dr. McGregor suggested that the production of a podcast for publication on the project website would be a powerful way to mobilize the knowledge that is shared in the interviews that are being collected and that this could be a great idea for someone's major project, so I decided that I would take on the task. Kovach (2009) provides key approaches for Indigenous research methodologies as a process of situating myself and clearly explaining the purpose of the research. By working with sound I hope to connect with the hearts of those listening to what I share, as Jo-Ann Archibald (2008)

explains, “We have three ears to listen with. Two on the sides of our head and one in our heart.” (p.76). Connecting with listeners on an emotional level is a powerful tool when it comes to advocating for Indigenous Environmental Justice and thus working with audio media for this project is an effective method for knowledge mobilization. Through this work I have developed further my audio production skills. For the interviews I used a Zoom H6 Handy Recorder and edited the recordings through Ableton Live. I recorded my commentary through a Shure SM57 Studio Microphone. I scripted my commentary to create flow between the various interview sections creating more cohesion to the podcast’s narrative.

I have been fortunate to have my perspective informed in many ways through my work as a research assistant over the past year. The opportunity to conduct interviews has allowed me to be engaged in a very honest and special learning process unique to this time and place. Learning to conduct interviews has been an incredibly humbling process and given me a whole new appreciation for this practice as an art form in and of itself. The opportunity to facilitate workshops with high school students as well as the general public at library events, sharing parts of my research and what I have learned has also been an incredibly engaging process that has helped to develop my own skills as a story teller, doing story-work, sharing my knowledge and has even provided a platform for promoting the forthcoming podcast to intrigue potential listeners and offered me inspiration as the project has been in production.

While my original vision for the podcast was a bit overly ambitious, I will give myself credit for having high hopes for what I imagined I could achieve in creating for the production of a podcast without having any experience doing this previously. Campbell (2005) explains the origins of podcasting and its strengths of providing easily accessible means of publication and

subscription as well as enabling passive learning in diverse environments. Long & Teasley (2009) explain how podcasting enables the embrace of constructivist pedagogy that allows learners to engage in a process of critical reflection rather than dogmatic memorization, which tends to plague the educational efficacy of many academic institutions. Podcasting serves as an effective methodology to support both self-directed and active-learning throughout the process of conducting this research (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). The methodology of podcasting also aligns well with the oral traditions of Indigenous cultures and supports a decolonizing approach through embracing mixed media rather than subscribing to the conventional academic preference for the production of written work (Day et al., 2017). I listened to plenty of podcasts to get inspired for this project, notably the series entitled *Thunder Bay* hosted by Ryan McMahon was incredibly moving. I would recommend this podcast as essential listening and as a necessary appendix for the masterpiece of storytelling that is *Seven Fallen Feathers* written by Tanya Talaga (2017) as an exposé on the systemic racism faced by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation that has been claiming the lives of their youth for generations. Powerful works like these were highly influential in deepening my understandings of the multifaceted barriers that exist for achieving Indigenous Environmental Justice in Canada. While my ambitious creative vision aimed to produce a work that I hoped would embody a similarly moving and provocative nature, I needed to be satisfied with what I was able to produce with the limited resources and timeline that were available to me for this project.

Although my research proposal outlines commissioning music and artwork I came to understand the level of financial commitment required to commission artwork and music to accompany the dialogue I had been producing was not within the budgeting resources available

to me. Featuring both musical and visual art from local Indigenous artists was something I was hoping to be able to commission and to provide adequate compensation for contributions that would be made as a way of engaging in a more artistically curatorial part of this project.

Unfortunately I was not able to coordinate this aspect of the project due to limitations that arose largely due to necessary communication that was not able to be made in order to facilitate this throughout the production process. Thus I created a small original musical interlude myself in order to aid with creating breaks in the flow throughout the podcast. I was also graciously gifted a sample guitar recording from my advisor and interview participant Lisa Myers, which she gave me permission to use for podcast interludes as well. I also ultimately decided to exclude a visual component to accompany the publication of the podcast altogether for simplicity's sake. I was still able to find a creative outlet within the art of selecting which bits of interviews would be best to include in the podcast and how to arrange them.

Another aspect of the podcast production that was more challenging than I had anticipated was being able to direct the interview process in a way that catered to the themes I sought to explore in my research proposal. I found generating meaningful content pertaining to seasonal aspects of knowledge extremely challenging. My plan was to create multiple podcast episodes that related to each season and then broadcast each episode in the appropriate corresponding season during the following year. This challenge was one factor that contributed to my decision to shift the format of the podcast away from a series of four seasonally themed episodes as originally proposed, and rather record one stronger, more concise episode representing the core findings of my research.

Arranging the interviews was the most challenging aspect of this project. While I had sought to conduct interviews with Indigenous chefs as a key lens through which I wanted to examine the questions of food sovereignty I was considering, I found that chefs are very busy people and hard to get in touch with to schedule interviews. Most important to me was to approach participants in a respectful way and to avoid being pushy or persistent. Especially as a non-Indigenous researcher I was conscious that being too pushy in my pursuits to obtain this knowledge could possibly be perceived as extractive and that this would undermine the project. Given a longer time period to pursue interviews amongst the community, more opportunities for engaging in authentic relationships could have been cultivated in alignment with the work of Restoule et al. (2018), which instructs people in my position to engage in relationships of respect and reciprocity. I was able to make use of the connections that were made available to me through my networks at the University and conduct a number of excellent interviews which generated a great deal of meaningful content to share. My time in Finland was also a limiting factor in my ability to conduct as many interviews as I had initially hoped. While I considered using interviews conducted by my colleagues (during my time away in Finland), I decided during the production process that only using interviews that I conducted myself felt more appropriate and conducive to creating a cohesive narrative. It was important to allow participants to share what was important to them and allow discussion to emerge organically without being too pushy or allowing the guiding flow of my questions to shift our focus and ask people things that may not pertain to their own unique expertise. Though issues related to food were a central focus in the content that was being investigated, it became evident that food sovereignty is inextricably linked to, and arguably even a product of, environmental justice. As the

environmental devastation associated with colonialism and the global climate crisis effects every aspect of the interconnected web of life for Indigenous peoples, including food, the concepts of Indigenous Environmental Justice and Indigenous food sovereignty are essentially inseparable. Thus success in the pursuit for Indigenous food sovereignty must be built upon a strong movement for Indigenous Environmental Justice. Most of the interviews were conducted with participants who I connected with through the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project* and the community at York University as well as some other people who I met through networking at various community events including *Foodshare's Teaching from the Land* program series, which was led by Carolynne Crawley, who I was introduced to by my advisor Lisa Myers, both of whom were interviewed for the project.

This networking endeavour has been a challenging and humbling process for me in facing the possibility of rejection and the uncertainty of receiving responses (or lack thereof) from the potential participants who I had hoped to work with in the creation of this podcast project. While I had initially selected participants based on whose knowledge would be most useful to investigate the issues I found particularly interesting and relevant to my own life, I gradually realized that a more selfless, community-based approach to participant selection would be required to generate content within the allotted timeframe and with the limited resources available to me. While I had my own narrative in mind about Indigenous food sovereignty, that included eating seasonally and the potential for commercialization and domestication of animal relatives facing habitat loss resulting from colonization and climate change, as the interview process unfolded it became important for me as a non-Indigenous researcher to allow for the narrative to be led by what was shared by the Indigenous participants who generously shared

their time and knowledge with me. Being open to allowing the project to unfold naturally was important to my respectful approach. While I reached out to significantly more people than I was able to interview, it was critical that I did not get discouraged and make the best of the content I was able to generate with the participants who agreed to contribute their time. Understanding my role as a supportive ally became central to facilitating opportunities for Indigenous people to share what was meaningful and important to them.

Not being too attached to the less important aspects of the original artistic visions for the project became an important strategy to achieving effective execution of the project's core goal of mobilizing Indigenous knowledge and providing a platform upon which I could work as a supportive ally. I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to engage in this research as the people I had the chance to speak with were all incredibly knowledgeable and had many important insights to share. I am now able to mobilize this knowledge for a wider audience to listen online. I will now proceed to discuss what was shared in the podcast in the following section.



## Results

While keeping myself well-informed through extensive literature and media reviews, I was also able to seek out incredibly valuable first-hand knowledge by conducting interviews about Indigenous Environmental Justice. Many of the interviews that I conducted were used in the production of an Indigenous Environmental Justice Podcast. Producing this podcast allowed for an in-depth reflection upon and analysis of the interviews that were conducted as well as an opportunity to effectively mobilize the knowledge that has been generated and documented. The process of editing interviews was extremely important as considerably more material was shared with me in the interviews than could conceivably be included in this podcast. I sought to create a podcast with four episodes running at the advised length of 15 minutes each, as this is a reasonable length for the attention spans of the listeners. Following the advice of Archibald (2008), I listened with my heart to the interviews, using my intuitive senses and emotions while listening, which helped me select the most powerful content and identify connections between the different interviews. This intuitive and emotional process of editing interviews needed to be combined with a more cerebral and logical approach to select content conducive to creating a cohesive narrative within the podcast. This process required delicate concentration and cataloguing of captivating moments. Due to the learning curve for the production of a podcast I decided the best idea would be to produce only one episode instead of four. I decided that a length of just under thirty minutes would be an appropriate duration for this single feature podcast.

While in my research proposal I discussed plans for exploring Indigenous concepts of time as a way of guiding the themes to be explored in the podcast, and in particular doing so with a focus placed upon the Anishinaabe Moon Calendar, it turned out to be the case that conducting interviews to generate content that could have contributed to such a specific, complex and ontological dialogue was not possible. I was also keen to investigate the prohibited use of hunted meats in the culinary arts and how this related to Indigenous food sovereignty and the chefs who are creating Indigenous cuisine. Conducting interviews about this particular topic was unfortunately not possible for me so I had to be flexible and work with the opportunities that were available to me. I hoped to commission artists to work collaboratively with me to create a more vibrant and elaborate project, but this goal was evidently out of reach with my limited resources and it became necessary to let go of this plan. As I focussed on working with the people in my immediate community at the university and cultivating authentic relationships, the topic of Indigenous Environmental Justice became the main focus of the project. While I continued to pursue interviews throughout the production process it eventually became important to be able to work with the interviews I had and adjust the project accordingly.

Through my work with the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project* I developed deeper understandings of what issues and protocols are important to Indigenous peoples in my local community. Understanding that work in Indigenous communities and involving Indigenous peoples should be done by Indigenous people has been a powerful lesson for me. Working as a non-Indigenous research assistant with the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project* led to me to a situation wherein none of my Indigenous colleagues were available to facilitate a workshop with some high school students and this resulted in a discussion that I had with Dr. McGregor

about how it is not a great idea to teach Indigenous content without Indigenous people present. We decided for this one occasion we would do the workshop anyhow and I was able to address the fact that no Indigenous people were present for the workshop. In this address I included a discussion of the barriers to effective inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and people within academic institutions and thus the crucial need for research projects like the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project*. This is just one example of this same very personal lesson about my own place as an ally in this work that I learned repeatedly throughout the process of producing the podcast.

This research project helped me gain a deep understanding that as a non-Indigenous researcher, my role in the work of decolonization and community development within Indigenous communities must be the work of a supportive ally. Being a supportive ally requires diligently navigating the lines between offering expertise or creative suggestions with good intention and carefully making sure not to undermine the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. I learned through my research that I must do my part to honour my own gifts and be sure to share them in the work I do for cultivating the ecological food systems that I am passionate about. I also learned that as a settler person who benefits from the colonial legacy and power structures that continue to oppress Indigenous peoples, I must respect what my role within the movement for Indigenous food sovereignty should be. Through considering the application of practices developed within foreign contexts for addressing climate crisis mitigation actions I found myself at odds with my own cultural biases which do seem to inescapably effect my every thought and action. This led to development of an understanding that I must step wholeheartedly into the role of an ally to echo and advocate supportively for the climate action practices that

Indigenous colleagues are already developing and working on from within their own systems and strategies for addressing these issues.

I recorded interviews with Professor Lisa Myers, Ray Owl, Lewis Debassige, Carolynne Crawley, Joseph Pitawanakwat, Beebahbin Peltier, Andrea Bastien and Sara Seck along with receiving their written consent to make use of the recordings in the production of a podcast. Consent forms have been filed appropriately in the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project* office at the Robarts Centre as stipulated in the projects' ethics approval. I ultimately decided I would exclude the interview with Sara and feature only the voices of the Indigenous participants, aside from my own. All of the other participants had Anishinaabe heritage except Carolynne, whose heritage is mixed Mi'kmaq, African and Celtic. These interviews generated many hours of content that required careful listening to decide which parts would be most effective to present publicly in the podcast. As one participant, Lewis Debassige, passed away after the interview was recorded I took the appropriate time to deliberate on whether or not it would be appropriate to include his recording in the project. I ultimately decided that it was important to honour his spirit by making use of the recording and sharing a part of his story that I found very moving.

To develop questions for the interviews I focussed on addressing key issues that pertained to the research agenda of the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project*. Guiding topics for the research agenda included critical discussion about the terminology of Indigenous Environmental Justice, how traditional knowledge contributes to justice and the idea of justice for more than just humans, conditions that are required for achieving environmental justice as well as challenges to doing so. It was crucial that my questions not guide the narrative off topic or put participants on the spot by asking them about things which they do not know. Researching the work of each

participant before interviews and asking the right questions accordingly was thus a necessary and effective way to prepare and allow participants to guide the narrative with their expertise.

I prepared for my interview with Sara Seck by reading her publications analyzing Indigenous Environmental Justice issues within the context of Canada's Euro-centric Western legal system. I studied in Lisa Myers' *Food, Land & Culture* class and learned about her work using food in her fine art practice. With a diverse group of Indigenous and settler youth I participated in the *Teachings from the Land* program series that Carolynne Crawley led at Foodshare where we engaged in a range activities related to Indigenous food sovereignty including anti-oppression exercises and a weekend-long event filled with ceremonies where we heard from Indigenous community members who had travelled to be present from across Ontario, including from communities only accessible by plane. I spent time with Joseph Pitawanakwat and Beedahbin Peltier harvesting medicines with them in their home territory of the Wiikwemkoong First Nation learning extensively about their experiences working with traditional medicines and teaching about them in Indigenous communities. I met Ray Owl at an Earth Day demonstration in Tkaronto and followed his advocacy work with the Traditional Ecological Elders Group in leading a resistance against the aerial spraying of glyphosate herbicide as a part of the forestry industry practices being used around his home in the Robinson-Huron Treaty (Treaty 61) territory. I learned about Lewis Debassige's role in the consultation process throughout creation of preliminary Gichi-Naaknigewin developments, the modern codification of Anishinabek legal constitutions. I followed the work of Indigenous Climate Action closely on social media to keep informed about their grassroots activism initiatives as a way to learn about the powerful work of Andrea Bastien. By educating myself on the work of

each participant I was able to engage in candid conversations throughout the interviews that allowed for energetic dialogue to emerge organically. In this way the participants were able to feel comfortable and tell stories that were meaningful to them. It then became my duty as a listener of the stories to do the story-work, just as I had a facilitated with high school students, in order to pick out and highlight the key themes within what had been shared.

Myers describes food, or *mijim* in Ojibway, as an offering that feeds more than just your physical body when it is being considered within the context of its Anishinaabe understanding. This understanding illustrates the way that food is much more than just something to be consumed. Through this lens food can be understood as a sacred aspect of the intimate ways in which we relate with our ecological community. The industrial food systems that have been established globally through imperialist colonial systems subscribe to a very different philosophical understanding of food that is essentially entirely capitalistic (Shiva, 1991). The negative impacts of these extractive industries are experienced by disproportionately by marginalized demographics, including many Indigenous peoples in Canada (Seck, 2017).

Crawley describes Indigenous Environmental Justice as being developed within a worldview that considers humans as separate from our environment and doesn't clearly identify an aspect of relationship. She goes on to note that Indigenous Environmental Justice can be taken as a way of "... returning back to a relationship with Land..." and "... working in relationship with Land in a good way." She describes current relationships with Land as being characterized by a "lack of reciprocity", noting that "the Land has been damaged" and that reconciliation with the Land will be a necessary part of the healing journey. She also discussed eating seasonally and

observing natural laws as a way of working with the Land and achieving Indigenous Environmental Justice.

Joseph Pitawanakwat talks about picking bearberry for kidney medicine in Grassy Narrows in order to treat urinary tract infections and other ailments related to the kidney health epidemic resulting from mercury contamination in the environment. Joseph identifies bearberry as a critical local provision of kidney medicine for the people of the Grassy Narrows First Nation needed to treat the epidemic of mercury contamination that they face in their territory due to environmental devastation resulting from resource extraction developments (Da Silva, 2010). Joe proposes documenting medical trials involving the administration of bearberry as kidney medicine to help people and also convince the Canadian legal system to value the ecosystem that supports this medicine, therein preventing clear cutting forests and other devastating industrial practices. Ending this kind of development will support relationships with local medicines. Local medicine sources could also subsequently provide leverage for environmental conservation and prevent further environmental degradation. This would ensure access to this medicine, illustrating and emphasizing the point made by Da Silva (2010) that we must advocate for our relatives being effected by the devastation of clear cutting. The approach that Joseph takes in his work helps people understand the scientific explanations behind the efficacy of traditional medicine practices handed down to him through his Grandmother from his family's ancestral Indigenous knowledge. One such example of a scientific medical study is the evidence that supports the ability of bearberry to heal kidney ailments provided by Markell (2005). This approach taken by Joe is much like the work of Kimmerer (2013) in their shared ability to weave these different ways of seeing world together. In current culturally diverse contexts, as is made

clear by Mantyka-Pringle et al., (2017), this weaving of worldview will be an important step toward reconciliation, achieving environmental justice, food sovereignty and creating accessibility to Indigenous ways, well-being and livelihoods.

During the interview with Beedahbin, he shares a story from Pikangikum about some youth who learned to harvest medicine for the elders. Youth gained a sense of purpose as they gained knowledge and understanding of the environment and their community. As an important response to the impacts of colonization, this engagement with traditional harvesting has been a powerful practice for improving the mental and social well being of youth. These are very important practices of being in relationship with environment that are enabling youth to find their sense of place and purpose that has been displaced through colonization.

Ray Owl shares a sad story of the results of herbicide applications used to cultivate timber mono crops for the forestry industry in his home territory on the North shore of lake Huron. Ray discusses how these industrial practices are resulting in the loss of many species that his culture relies upon. Ray places emphasis on the value of all living beings in the forest, noting the important role of insects in the design of the creator for maintaining the ecosystem that supports the many larger plants and animals he relies upon for traditional foods and medicine. Ray refers to what is happening in his territory as slowly poisoning the Earth from the bottom up, stating that "... if you kill the tree, you kill the First Nations' food source because there's animals that Anishinaabe depends on. Moose, deer, rabbit, porcupine, bears, they all depend on that foliage." He describes the forest as being "scarce", illustrating the loss of biodiversity caused by current forestry practices and the impacts that this has upon the ability of his community to continue on in their traditional food and medicine harvesting practices in the forest.



Lewis Debassige shared a story of his family's farm and some community members who had been seen harvesting from their fields without permission. When Lewis's family went to confront these people about the situation, they fled. In response to this Lewis's family followed the people and went to their home, delivered a whole bunch more produce to them and offered to bring even more if it was needed without ever mentioning anything about stealing. They also offered the opportunity to work together on their farm and in their adjacent woodlots, which resulted in a long lasting and mutually beneficial relationship. As Lewis said, "Justice was not punitive!" His family's concept of justice based within their Indigenous Anishinaabe worldview restored honour in that family. From Lewis's story we find that restorative justice can be understood as a key principle of Indigenous Environmental Justice.

Andrea Bastien talks about the strength of providing for ones self as way to empower people and make them feel good about themselves. Such cascading benefits of Indigenous food and medicine harvesting traditions can in turn lead to less health issues and less involvement with Euro-centric Western health industries. She spoke about the success of Indigenous people to have exemplary relationships with the environment and emphasized the importance of identifying Indigenous leaders in this work. Andrea attributes the superior quality of relationships with the environment that are held by Indigenous peoples in comparison to settlers to the incomparable depth and history of these relationships that are held with Land.

These interview excerpts were combined with my own commentary in the production of the podcast to create a cohesive narrative and dialogue about the impacts of colonialism and associated industry conflicts upon Indigenous peoples, their culture and their systems for providing their communities with food and medicine. I hope that this podcast can serve as an

engaging and inspiring tool for education and advocacy surrounding Indigenous Environmental Justice. I have done my best to allow my commentary to merely act as supporting feature to clarify and emphasize the incredible stories that were shared with me by the participants that I interviewed.

## Conclusion

Through the production of this Indigenous Environmental Justice Podcast project I was able to explore themes of ecological conservation, decolonization and community development. Working upon a firm foundation of analyzing secondary academic scholarship, I also collected and mobilized primary academic research through community-based, participatory and Indigenous methodologies. What worked well in this process was allowing for discussion and relationships to emerge organically and meaningfully. Doing research regarding an Indigenous subject and involving Indigenous human participants as a non-Indigenous researcher has certainly been challenging and required constant consideration of what my place within the research should be while learning how best to be a supportive ally in the process of this work.

I will continue to use my work, skills and knowledge pertaining to food, ecology and the arts to amplify the Indigenous teachings I have received throughout the course of my research and advocate for Indigenous Environmental Justice. I will always do my best to centre Indigenous voices, worldview and ideas while acknowledging my own biases in my thinking and the limitations I face in this work as a settler. I will do my part to support the movement for Indigenous food sovereignty and environmental justice through actively being informed on current issues, building meaningful relationships with my ecological community, involving myself in advocacy and cultural appreciation with Indigenous peoples while being mindful of the dangers of cultural appropriation. By engaging with my local community and seeking out opportunities to participate in events when appropriate I have engaged in the process of building meaningful relationships with Indigenous people and developed a deeper understanding of what

my role as a supportive ally in community development processes with Indigenous peoples can look like. In alignment with the teachings of an important and relatable hero for me, Winona LaDuke (2017), who is both Anishinaabe and Ashkenazi, emphasizes the need to bring spirituality into matters of reclaiming sacred relationships with Land and all our relatives in creation. I will continue to follow my own spirit and be true to the path that feels right for me as a supportive settler ally doing my best to “work in a relationship with Land in a good way”, following the guidance of what Carolynne shared with me in her interview and the Anishinaabe teaching of *mino bimaadiziwin*.

The podcast I produced is scheduled to be published on the *Indigenous Environmental Justice Project* website (<https://iejproject.info.yorku.ca>) in 2020. New members of the project are continuing to do research pertaining to their own areas of interest, enabling more students to develop a deeper engagement with issues of Indigenous Environmental Justice and diversify the content in the project’s annual annotated bibliography publications. The podcast features content related to all the themes that I explored in my Plan of Study including Indigenous food sovereignty, climate change, environmental conservation, decolonization and community development, all of which are crucial considerations pertaining to Indigenous Environmental Justice.

Being able to let go of control enough to allow things to flow and take shape naturally without being pushy was an important part of my learning process to understand and respect my own role and responsibilities as an ally in the work of decolonization (Archibald, 2008; Whyte, 2017). This required acknowledging and understanding my own biases and putting them aside to learn that Indigenous communities must be the ones to develop their own ecological solutions

that are based in Indigenous intelligence and not centred within a Euro-centric Western worldview when developing responses to climate change in the movement for Indigenous food sovereignty (Dumont, 2002; Drugge, 2016). While I believe it would certainly be more ecologically beneficial than relying upon the Industrial food systems to make Indigenous foods accessible to the greater population, it is evident from the research that there is already too much stress on the environment and upon the community capacity of Indigenous peoples resulting from colonization that Indigenous foods and even clean drinking water are often inaccessible for Indigenous peoples living on reserves as well as off reserves (Hanrahan, M. 2017; White et al., 2012; McLean, 2007). Basic necessities for life like clean water as well as Indigenous foods and the adequate resources for continuation of cultural traditions need to be accessible to Indigenous people first so that healing in Indigenous communities can happen before considering the value of making Indigenous foods more accessible to the Canadian population as a whole. This prioritization of the rights and needs of Indigenous peoples is a necessary step in the healing journey that must occur before reconciliation can truly begin. This conclusion can be considered as a call to action for Canadian government authorities as well as settler citizens as individuals comprising Canadian society. In the wake of the incredible display of resilience that has been sustained by Indigenous peoples over centuries of resistance to the oppressive colonial persecution of the policies and actions of Canadian government, the rights, demands and needs of Indigenous peoples in Canada be must prioritized and only then can Indigenous peoples and their cultures truly flourish once again on Turtle Island.

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