

Indigenous food systems and food sovereignty: A collaborative conversation from the American Association of Geographers 2022 Annual Meeting

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Abstract

Indigenous scholars and their allies increasingly contribute to food systems debates and practices through pursuing and interrogating ideas of

Indigenous food sovereignty. This essay adds to this ongoing conversation by providing a synthesis of and reflection on a panel session on Indigenous food sovereignty held at the American Association of Geographers (AAG) 2022 Annual Meeting. We place this conversation in the context of a growing body of scholarship on food sovereignty and Indigenous food systems. Organized by the AAG's Geographies of Food and Agriculture Specialty Group, with support from the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development*, the session engaged Indigenous scholars in a discussion about the meaning of food sovereignty, different ways of knowing, relationships and reciprocity, and systems of power. The panelists emphasized the relationship between all elements of creation at the core of food sovereignty, the importance of valuing different ways of knowing and expertise, making visible histories of settler knowledge appropriation, and critically assessing how power manifests, operates, and is understood in different food systems and

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worldviews. Building on the scholarly literature and the evolving place-based grounding of food sovereignty movements, we argue that it is critical to address ongoing realities of genocide and settler colonialism in North America/Turtle Island by forging respectful relationships with all of creation

and to work through collaborations led by Indigenous people and grounded in reciprocity.

Keywords

Indigenous Food Systems, Food Sovereignty, Reciprocity, North America, Turtle Island

The Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen—A Thanksgiving Address

The Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen or “The Words That Come Before All Else” is a form of giving thanks delivered at the opening and closing of all gatherings among the Haudenosaunee. This Thanksgiving Address is a way to bring all our minds together as one in acknowledgement of creation and its significance. Our food systems are a part of this process.

We start with the people and bring our minds together and give thanks, and we acknowledge our relatives, our families and those around us and give our greatest greetings and thanks and now our minds are one. We will turn our minds and give thanks to our mother earth, it is the mother that sustains and supports us, and so we give our greatest greetings and thanks to our mother the earth, and now our minds are one.

And we will turn our minds and give thanks for the water that flows on the earth and quenches our thirst and helps to nourish the plants and the animals, and so we turn our minds to the waters and give our greatest greetings and thanks and now our minds are one.

We turn our minds and give thanks to the fish. The fish move about in those waters and they act like the immune system for the water and keep it healthy. And so, for providing us as human beings with food and nourishment, and for keeping those waters healthy, we give our greatest greetings and thanks to the fish and now our minds are one.

We'll turn our minds and give thanks to the plant life on our mother the earth, from the grasses that grow and the foods that sustain and support us. As Haudenosaunee, we acknowledge the food for providing substance and for supporting human life. We recognize the three sisters, corn, beans, and squash, as being the sustainers of life. So, to those foods and to those plant life, we give our greatest greetings and thanks and now our minds are one.

We'll turn our minds and give thanks to the berries, we believe that the strawberry is the leader and hopefully soon we'll be seeing those berries again. The strawberry is like a gateway to all those other berries, and as the different berries present themselves they gradually move away from the Mother Earth, and move higher and higher as the season goes. And so, to those berries, we give our greatest greetings and thanks and now our minds are one.

We'll turn our minds and give thanks to the trees, we acknowledge the maple tree as the leader of the trees because it provides us with the sweet water in the spring that helps to cleanse our bodies. The trees provided us with medicine, food, and the heat to prepare our foods. And so, to those trees we give our greatest greetings and thanks and now our minds are one.

—*Excerpt from the Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen (Thanksgiving Address, 2022) offered by Suzanne Brant*

Introduction

For several decades, the global food sovereignty movement has celebrated the knowledge and experience of peasant farmers and fishers, and has sought to preserve land-based relationships and remake systems of power (Desmarais, 2007). Much of this work is rooted in the right to food (Patel, 2009) and grounded in social and environmental justice that seeks to make deep structural changes in the dominant capitalist food system (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). More recently in North America/Turtle Island, there has been growing attention to long-standing efforts toward food systems resurgence in Indigenous communities.¹ Indigenous scholars and their allies increasingly contribute to food systems debates and practices through pursuing and interrogating ideas of Indigenous food sovereignty (Coté, 2016; Morrison, 2011). This scholarship, and the traditional knowledge and practice upon which much of it is grounded, posits that food systems, the environment, and all of creation benefit from Indigenous communities asserting their self-determination and taking control of food systems.

In recognition of this essential area of focus and at the request of members of the Geographies of Food and Agriculture Specialty Group (GFASG) of the American Association of Geographers (AAG),² a plenary panel session was organized at the 2022 AAG Annual Meeting to bring together Indigenous food systems scholars and practitioners to be part of a collaborative conversation. This paper presents a synthesis of that conversation in order to expand understanding about the foundations of Indigenous food sovereignty, ongoing related debates, and implications for action. By presenting the plenary conversation in the context of a growing body of scholarship, we argue that it is necessary to expand the ways we think about healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems in North America/Turtle Island, particularly through addressing histories of anti-Indigenous racism and settler colonialism and working in collaborations that are led by Indigenous people.

The AAG session focused on the meaning of food sovereignty, different ways of knowing, relationships and reciprocity, and systems of power. We began the session with the Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen, a Thanksgiving Address that recognizes the connections and contributions of all living beings in sustaining life. (An excerpt has been provided at the beginning of this article.) During the Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen, each element in creation is acknowledged for its role in the creation process and our continuance as human beings. The Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen gives thanks to all elements of creation and recognizes their interconnectedness. These words are very powerful because they remind us of our responsibilities to the natural world and how we fit within the web of creation. The address reminds us of our interdependence with all creation and the great abundance we have been given. It is through the Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen that we are reminded that we are unable to exist without all of creation and, specifically, those food systems within creation.

The Ohénton Karihwentéh'kwen excerpt demonstrates the importance of reciprocity within human and more-than-human relationships, especially for building more equitable and sustainable food systems. Throughout this paper, we intentionally forefront the voices of the plenary speakers, but we also recognize that they provide only two perspectives from a diversity of approaches and ways of knowing. As such, we place their comments in conversation with the growing literature on Indigenous food sovereignty.

In what follows, we begin with a brief review of food sovereignty and Indigenous food systems literature. We then describe in greater detail how the collaborative conversation came together and provide synthesized text from the plenary session. There follows a discussion about how the conversation can further food systems scholarship and practice by expanding how we think about healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems in North America/Turtle Island. We conclude with recommendations for moving these insights forward.

¹ The term “Indigenous” is used to refer to the original inhabitants of what is now known as North America/Turtle Island. This includes over 1,500 groups that have distinct cultures, languages, and histories.

² For more information on the GFASG, see <https://gfasg.wordpress.com>

Food Sovereignty and Indigenous Food Systems Scholarship

At the landmark Forum for Food Sovereignty in Sélingué, Mali, featuring grassroots activists and food producers from all over the world, food sovereignty was defined as follows:

the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. ... Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal-fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007, para. 3)

The history of food sovereignty can be traced to political movements in the 1960s–1980s in response to globalization and market liberalization and associated with ideas of food self-sufficiency (Chaifetz & Jagger, 2014; Coté, 2016). Following La Via Campesina's call for food sovereignty at the 1996 World Food Summit, the concept was taken up by activists, growers, and academics worldwide (Grey & Patel, 2014; Wittman et al., 2010). Those active in early transnational social movements viewed food sovereignty as a fundamental challenge to neoliberal models of capitalist agriculture along with the recognition of food's social and cultural connections to people and place.

As food sovereignty has come to be approached in different ways worldwide, debates have emerged to question the meaning and applicability of the term “sovereignty” in different contexts (Agarwal, 2014; Edelman et al., 2014; Wittman, 2011), including questions about the applicability of food sovereignty in different geographic contexts and scales. For example, Fairbairn (2012) argued that food sovereignty in North America/Turtle Island lost its radical potential as it became co-opted by more mainstream food initiatives and associated with fair trade. Some scholars have questioned the applicability of food sovereignty in urban food movements, including efforts toward

food justice (Block et al., 2012). Others have pointed out that a focus on local food or fair trade ignores food sovereignty's foundations in land reform, market relations, and political sovereignty (Kepkiewicz & Rotz, 2018). There have also been questions raised about the agro-centric nature of the ways that food sovereignty has been described and applied (Levkoe et al., 2017).

Because food sovereignty is context-specific and place-dependent, food movements have been animated by a nexus of localized concerns. For example, movements have focused on agricultural production, the restoration of environmentally friendly agricultural methods, and Indigenous health (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014; Ray et al., 2019). Others have emphasized the rejuvenation of cultural practices surrounding food and renewed focus on Indigenous foodways as a means of cultural restoration (Daigle, 2019; Grey & Newman, 2018; Robin, 2019). For example, Kamal et al. (2015) present the *O-Pipon-Na-Piwin* Cree Nation's a community-based food program, *Ithinto Mechisonwin* (“food from the land”), in northern Manitoba that emphasizes a reconnection with land and culturally appropriate healthy food as an inspiring example of strengthening Indigenous food sovereignty.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Debates about the applicability of food sovereignty call attention to its place-based dimensions. Scholars have emphasized that food sovereignty movements must contend with the particularities and histories of different contexts (Wittman et al., 2010). In North America/Turtle Island, this demands an engagement with Indigenous food systems, in theory and practice, along with the ongoing realities of settler colonialism and genocide (Coté, 2016; Levkoe et al., 2019; Martens et al., 2016).

Among Indigenous scholars, food sovereignty has encompassed a plurality of methods for reclaiming Indigenous cultural autonomy, self-sufficiency, and land (Whyte, 2016). Indigenous food sovereignty is an approach to understanding how the regeneration of Indigenous food systems and practices contributes to decolonizing efforts, resisting state power, and achieving self-determina-

tion (Daigle, 2019). It brings everyday practices of resurgence and reciprocity, Indigenous ontologies, and human and more-than-human relationships to the forefront. Whyte (2016) argues that despite the potentially Pollyannaish language of food self-sufficiency and cultural revitalization employed by some activists and scholars, the movement is understood by at least some Indigenous people in North America/Turtle Island as an attempt to reclaim the ecological value of foods undervalued by settler colonialism.

In this paper, we use North America/Turtle Island as the geographic unit of analysis. This is appropriate for two reasons. First, the border separating present-day Canada from the United States is a colonial construct; second, both Indigenous authors are of Kanyen'kehá:ka, or Mohawk, ancestry. The Mohawk are one of six nations united under the Haudenosaunee Confederacy whose traditional territories span the aforementioned colonial borders. This approach, while potentially eliding some distinctions, is present in the scholarship. While there is more Indigenous food systems scholarship emerging from Canada (e.g., Daschuk, 2013; Robidoux & Mason, 2017; Settee & Shukla, 2020), there is increasing research from the United States as well (Mihesuah & Hoover, 2019; Ruelle, 2017). Building on this literature and practice, we argue that it is essential to address the gaps in food systems scholarship through increased learning about Indigenous food systems, which should be pursued through collaborative action led by or with Indigenous peoples and supporting Indigenous peoples to advance self-determination and sovereignty.

Methods

This paper emerges from the GFASG plenary session at the AAG Annual Meeting in February 2022. This session was organized by the GFASG in collaboration with the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* (JAFSCD). JAFSCD has long been a supporter of GFASG scholar-activist sessions and of scholar-activist work through publishing reflective essays about similar discussions among scholars and practitioners focused on critical food systems topics (de Witt et al., 2021; Hammelman et al., 2020; Klassen et al.,

2022; Levkoe et al., 2016, 2018; Rice & Goldberg, 2021; also see the JAFSCD special issue on Indigenous Food Sovereignty in North America, volume 9, supplement 2, 2019).

In 2021, GFASG and JAFSCD leadership surveyed their members to identify topics of interest for the 2022 plenary session. The same electronic survey was sent separately to the membership lists for each group. At that time, there were approximately 450 GFASG members and 260 JAFSCD shareholders as well as editors and advisors, a majority of whom are located in North America/Turtle Island. Forty-five people completed the survey that requested input on potential topics and speakers. Indigenous food systems, food justice, and academic-practitioner collaborations were ranked in the top three most desired topics and/or speaker focus. In response to the survey results, the GFASG session organizers (Colleen Hammelman and Jesse Andrews) invited several scholars and practitioners dedicated to Indigenous food systems and sovereignty in North America/Turtle Island to participate in the session. The organizers invited Charles Levkoe to facilitate the session as the past chair of the GFASG. Colleen, Jesse, and Charles are all settler scholars based at academic institutions in North America/Turtle Island with research programs aligned with food sovereignty, justice, and sustainability.

Co-authors of this paper (Suzanne Brant and Keith Williams) agreed to share their work and discuss how it intersects with multiple systems of power, place-based relationships, scholar-activism/activist-scholarship, and political ecology. Suzanne is Mohawk from Tyendinaga and is president and CEO of First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI), providing leadership and innovation in Indigenous post-secondary education. She earned a master's degree from York University in environmental studies, concentrating on Indigenous post-secondary programming. Suzanne is an accomplished visual artist and photographer and a seasoned gardener and grower, specializing in Haudenosaunee traditional food systems and medicine plants. Keith is the director of research and social innovation at FNTI and a member of JAFSCD's Indigenous Editorial Circle. He is Mohawk and Dutch on his father's side and is interested in

better understanding how Indigenous ways of being and ways of knowing can help to create a more equitable future for humanity and all our relations.³

In preparation for the plenary session, the speakers and organizers (all co-authors) met several times to identify specific topics of discussion grounded in their expertise and experience. Collectively, they decided to dedicate the plenary discussion to questions regarding the meaning of food sovereignty, reconciling different ways of knowing, and how power operates in food systems work. The session was recorded and transcribed. The co-author team reviewed the transcript for emergent themes and identified the contributions the conversation makes to Indigenous food systems and sovereignty literature. More specifically, co-authors Jesse Andrews, Colleen Hammelman, and Charles Levkoe coded the transcript for recurring themes. The overarching topics and key passages were revisited by co-authors Suzanne Brant and Keith Williams for confirmation and further explanation.

Our objective in developing this paper was to share session learnings with a wider audience through making available the conversation that occurred during the session (in part through directly quoting session comments, in the next section). While speakers provided their specific perspectives during the session, it took a more conversational format, which we aim to replicate here. This approach is important for enabling the speakers to directly share their expertise while also recognizing the relational nature of knowledge production.

The Conversation

In this section we present a synthesis of the conversation, categorized into key themes centered on (1) human and more-than-human relationships, (2) reconciling different ways of knowing, and (3) intersections with systems of power. The speakers argued that food sovereignty is best understood as a natural system of human interaction with plants and animals grounded in respect and reciprocity. Its foundation is in interdependence and self-

determination, but those are not possible without establishing webs of relationships. They also discussed disconnects between Western/European and Indigenous ways of knowing, such as the ways in which colonial approaches to science seek to categorize and sort while Indigenous systems emanate from interconnections among everything. It is also important to recognize settler colonial systems that have supported Western/European science often at the severe expense of Indigenous peoples, through, in part, appropriation and redistribution of their lands (see Nash, 2019 for further elaboration on how the institutionalization of Western/European science has produced such oppressions). Finally, this conversation points to differing systems and ideas of power. The speakers identify power as the ability to continue our existence in concert with more-than-human life. We argue for the need to draw on Indigenous understandings of power as part of decolonizing food systems.

Human and More-Than-Human Relationships Grounded in Respect, Responsibility, and Reciprocity

Suzanne Brant: In our traditional practices we go through the Thanksgiving Address. You can see in every element that there is a relationship between all those elements of creation, and all those interconnected elements that support us as human beings. For our foods, when we look at the relationship that we have with the foods, they have a certain way of growing and a certain relationship with one another and with the rest of creation. When we eat those foods, they become a part of us and eventually support us through our own interaction with creation. And eventually, when we are done with this body, we will feed the soil, which then feeds the plants again. There is a reciprocity that takes place. *Food sovereignty is about supporting that natural system of interacting and working with foods, using them, and respecting them.*

We have different ways and practices among Indigenous cultures around the world. We had amazing trade routes, and we would share foods

³ Latashia Redhouse, American Indian foods director at the Intertribal Agricultural Council, also helped to conceive of the plenary panel topics and format. While she was not able to participate in the formal discussion, we are grateful for her insights.

and other trade goods from north to south and vice versa. This understanding is based on both our traditional teachings, and Western/European scholarship (Baugh & Ericson, 2013; Fritz, 2022). It was a way to nurture our collective well-being and to support ourselves. Suggestive evidence of these north-south pre-Columbian trade routes can be seen, for example, in the morphological similarity between the Kahnawake bean named after the Kahnawake Mohawk community in southern Quebec and the Rarámuri Ojo de Cabra bean from Chihuahua state in northern Mexico. Those interactions between one another and with the plants are critical to maintaining a good mind, or *ka'nikonhriio*, which allows us to make good decisions and to understand our relationship with all of creation. Those foods communicate directly with us. They have phytochemicals that interact with our bodies. And we are bringing our connections with the plants, our food, and each other back by reintroducing our traditional methods of growing, preparing, eating, and preserving our traditional foods. This reinforces food sovereignty. Today, we eat only a few different varieties of food and tend to go to the grocery store every week where we purchase the same food each time. That's not sovereignty. Food sovereignty is when you can actually grow the seeds, harvest from the natural world, and prepare what has been provided by creation. Knowing the hardship of not being able to access our foods nurtures our responsibility for looking after creation.

Keith Williams: Foods communicate with us. Posthumanism, new materialism, as well as critical plant studies all recognize the animacy of the vibrant material world, including other creatures. But coming from a Haudenosaunee place, this is not post-humanism, it is pre-humanism. Much of what appears novel now has been on our radar for millennia. There is a traditional teaching that instructs us to share the harvest with our families, neighbors, and the animals. I take that seriously, during harvest season, and make sure that there's always something to share with others.

A member of the JAFSCD Indigenous Food Sovereignty Editorial Circle asked the question, when we're considering research ethics associated

with doing work with humans: "Why is it that we don't include seeds and other beings?" You could also extend that to all plants, rivers, rocks and animals. I'd love to see a shift away from the kind of human exceptionalism that frames so many conversations. Those beings that we call food also have lives and thoughts, dreams, and aspirations. Without relationships to those beings, we are nothing. I think of all the interesting findings that corroborate these ideas in contemporary philosophy and neuroscience, but what's at the vanguard in certain academic fields has long been understood by Indigenous communities.

It is important to give those plants space to have full lives. You could call these examples of affective reciprocity, affective in both the broad Deleuzian sense referring to a change in physical, psychological, emotional, social states, but also in a more restrictive sense, referring to the emotional register. Sarah Ahmed talks about how affect is sticky, and it preserves connections between values and objects. *I see affective reciprocity as the glue that makes food sovereignty work. There's something interesting here, food sovereignty is about independence and self-determination on one level. But we can't have that without webs of relationships.*

Reconciling Different Ways of Knowing

Suzanne Brant: There are lots of opportunities to bring knowledge systems together. The critical part is acknowledging the existence of those different knowledge systems. For us as Haudenosaunee, we recognize there are two paths and two minds in the way that we approach the earth and life. We talk about the canoe going down the river and there's a lot of things in that canoe that help us to understand relationships and how to interact: how to look at the world and how to exist within creation and ensure our continuance as human beings. Our interconnectedness with creation is critical to our continuance as demonstrated in the Thanksgiving Address.

Recent advances in scientific thought echo Indigenous understandings of the natural world. *But the challenge is that Western science puts ideas into boxes that don't often overlap. Through an Indigenous knowledge system that involves looking at the interconnec-*

tions among everything and how it all interacts, you can bring in those sciences to support interaction and interconnection. For example, in integrative food systems research, we can look at interactions between food-based biochemicals and the body and then consider extending that research and understanding to our relationships with place. Just watching the seed and observing, it gives you a different perspective. I honestly believe there is a great opportunity to merge these different knowledge systems.

Keith Williams: Talking about bringing knowledges together makes me think about the importance of transdisciplinarity. This has been inherent in Indigenous ways of knowing and ways of being since the beginning of time. Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall developed the notions of Two-Eyed Seeing to help Indigenous science students who walk in two worlds (Bartlett et al., 2012). It enabled them to embrace the best of Western science and of Indigenous traditional knowledge and to use those knowledges to make their way through the world. Considering how to reconcile those different ways of knowing raises questions about if and how the academy might be decolonized. *Indigenous knowledge systems—in addition to being actively suppressed since 1492—have not enjoyed the kind of political and financial support afforded to mainstream centers of knowledge production, such as universities.* Indigenous institutes have a lot of potential to articulate Indigenous knowledge systems with Knowledge Keepers and Elders in equitable conversation.

The academy could leverage their inordinate privilege to advance Indigenous self-determination. There are many ways to do this, and it must go well beyond targeted hiring. For example, most universities have extensive land holdings, many of which were donated as bequeathments. Most, if not all Indigenous nations' land holdings were decimated, or worse, by colonial governments. Land is the wellspring of life and food; but, also, land is the wellspring or foundation of Indigenous thought. Land is the foundation of everything. Most non-Indigenous cultures are far removed from that reality. University-owned land could be returned, or universities could develop customized training programs for local Indigenous institutions in collabora-

tion with the Nations close to them. This idea, Land Back, could begin to address gaps that are identified.

Indigenous languages are verb-based, and that reflects a process. A verb-based language like Mohawk is up against noun-based languages which work to calcify and fix identity categories. So, *they are literally and figuratively speaking two different languages.* I often wonder that if English is noun-based and relies on these fixed identity categories, what does that do for our ability to imagine a future in which we can adapt and change? How do we reconcile that?

Intersections with Systems of Power

Suzanne Brant: When we look at power as an Indigenous people, the Haudenosaunee use three principles: *skén:nen*, which is peace; *ka'nikonbrí:io*, which is a good mind; *kasasten'sera*, which is strength or sometimes referred to as power. For us, ultimate power is about having a good mind, carrying peace within ourselves, and having strength, which is the assurance for us as human beings to continue the cycle of life. When I look at these ideas of power, it's about all those interconnections and relationships and how they help us to be *Onkwehon:we*—a natural human being.

Today, the struggle over resources and power is a false perception. If human beings cannot have continuance on this earth, what's the sense of all of this? Many people look at power from a financial stance, which is an illusion. There are so many things that we've done as human beings for financial gain, like extraction of oil and toxic elements or the creation of synthetic toxins like PCBs, dioxins, and endocrine disruptors that stop our continuance as a human being. *From a Haudenosaunee perspective, the ability to continue life, the ability to bring forth life as a human being, as men and women, to ensure that humans continue our existence and interaction with creation is really the most powerful thing.*

As Indigenous people around the world, our lives were very fragile. We were solely dependent upon the earth to sustain us, and we had to work with the elements of creation: when we could have food available to us; when we could access those different foods; the timing and space that creation

allowed for those foods to be available; and the systems put in place. When those systems were available to us, we accessed and we honored them, and we gave thanks. That gave us an understanding of how to protect and look after those things that look after us. That is powerful. That is power.

So, when I think about power, I think about this strength and the ability to carry forward in life, to ensure that we have life as a human being for the next seven generations. And we have those teachings that help us to understand what we need to look at and what we need to weigh it against. And if we cannot ensure that whatever we are co-creating ensures life into the next seven generations, we should not be doing that. That is power.

Keith Williams: We see power manifesting in multiple ways. We can start by asking: Who sets the table and how? What are the underlying cultural values that dictate the terms of engagement within food systems? At FNTI, we are looking at speaking back to Empire, using the tools offered by critical theorists and the various posts like the post-structuralists, or post-humanists. But can decolonization be achieved by using those structures? That is where traditional teachings come in. *We can recognize the importance of Western responses to asymmetrical power dynamics, but we also need to draw on our own Indigenous power concepts to fully decolonize.*

Indigenous peoples have developed many ways to connect with what linguist Andrew Cowell (2018) calls more-than-human power. Cowell's work among the Northern Arapaho led to the understanding that:

a person is sacred and powerful because that person literally has within them—or has access to—power derived either from the natural world or from ancestors—both of whom mediate the general [more-than-human] power of the creator, which is immanent in the world. (p. 9)

More-than-human power, in the Haudenosaunee world, is exemplified by the principle of *kasasten'sera*, which is variously translated as strength or power (*Akwesasne Notes*, 2005). Oneida elder Bob Antone (2013) describes *kasasten'sera* as

the power of the collective, and the strength that comes from thought and action unified with all of creation and the cycles of life. More-than-human power is indexed to place and sustained through ceremonies and other activities that strengthen our relationships with all of creation.

At FNTI we draw on that more-than-human power by basing institutional practices, such as strategic planning, on seasonal and other natural cycles, as well as drawing on the logic of the gift economies to connect us to each other. And then with our more-than-human kin, through community gardening, community food sharing, and recital of the Thanksgiving Address. That is a way of speaking with all our relations, the medicine plants, the thunder, the rains, the waters, and the strawberries.

A Collaborative Reflection

Through discussions about the meaning of Indigenous food sovereignty, the conversation pointed to the relationship between all elements of creation at the core of this work. This included working in relation to natural systems, engaging with food from a deep level of respect, involving ceremony and tradition, learning and using Indigenous practices, and sharing foods across spaces and places as a way of sustaining and feeding oneself and the community. For Suzanne and Keith, Indigenous food sovereignty is about moving away from a reliance on the market, and instead growing and harvesting food as part of relationships. This also aligns with the Indigenous food systems literature discussed above that has centered reciprocal relationships between humans and the more-than-human life that sustains them.

Suzanne and Keith also discussed the importance of valuing different ways of knowing. Nonetheless, there has been much conflict as to whether researchers are stealing and/or appropriating Indigenous knowledge or devaluing expertise that does not conform to Western/European knowledge systems. European settler-colonial ways of thinking about relationships in the natural world (with an emphasis on sorting and categorizing) dominate, but bringing together different ways of knowing is essential. For the Haudenosaunee, the Kaswenta or two-row Wampum is a powerful heuristic for guiding Indigenous-settler relations. The

Kaswenta represents the original treaty, from the early 17th century, between the Haudenosaunee people and the Dutch in what is now New York state. It is often depicted as a beaded belt, consisting of two purple rows separated by white wampum beads. The purple rows symbolize boats: one row represents the Dutch and their ship or sailboat, and the other is the Haudenosaunee and their canoe. Both vessels are depicted traveling down the river (or way of life) together, but apart (Parmenter, 2013; Ransom & Ettenger, 2001). This apparent contradiction describes the respective sovereignty of both Indigenous and settler communities but with an obligation to work together to address issues of significant mutual consequence (Hill, 2013). Rather than instantiating and re-entrenching a colonial binary, the Kaswenta can be viewed as structured around the settler-Indigenous duality.

Although the difference may appear semantic, Murphy et al. (2017) assert that dualities are interdependent and not exclusive, whereas dualisms are strictly oppositional. Other Indigenous scholars have brought Indigenous, non-dualistic ways of knowing to the fore. For example, Kimmerer (2013) highlights Indigenous ecological knowledge that centers healthy, balanced relationships between humans, plants, animals, and the more-than-human world. While there are many similarities between the teachings of different Nations, there are also foundational differences because of the place-based specificity inherent in Indigenous knowledge systems. This kind of knowledge is both complex and nuanced, and we advocate for greater attention to this highly localized specificity in order to avoid erasing differences between Nations and to realize fully the potential of Indigenous knowledge to support the resurgence of interest in pre-colonial and self-determined foodways.

In the context of this paper, making visible different ways of knowing and histories of knowledge appropriation is especially important for those working with academic institutions through research partnerships, teaching, and publishing. The conversation noted that respectful and meaningful relationships are essential, which include recognizing that different knowledge systems exist and are dynamic. Suzanne explained that Haudeno-

saunee knowledge is specifically about going out and looking for connections as opposed to reductionist Western/European science approaches that put things into boxes. Bringing in all the different ways of knowing and perspectives is an opportunity to merge different knowledge systems. As a starting point, Keith suggested that this might involve engaging with calls for Land Back. As colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands is well documented, Land Back efforts seek redress for legal and regulatory dispossessions and also for the alienation from land, water, and community caused by the theft of Indigenous territories (Yellowhead Institute, 2019). These efforts include calling upon the many universities that occupy Indigenous lands to return those territories and work toward Indigenous self-determination.

Power and settler colonialism are essential parts of discussions about Indigenous food systems and food sovereignty. It is important to critically assess how power manifests, what it looks like, and how it operates in different food systems and worldviews. Moreover, we need to rethink definitions of power. Power need not be thought of as a zero-sum game and Indigenous people are not victims. Despite centuries of assimilation, marginalization, and genocide, Indigenous peoples and traditions endure. We can look to many Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and communities that have taken leadership and advanced the struggle for self-determination, resurgence, and justice. Considering these issues, Suzanne and Keith pointed to inequities surrounding who gets a seat at decision-making tables and how those processes work. Moreover, they reconceptualized power through Haudenosaunee principles of peace, the good mind, and strength, and the idea that power is the ability to and ongoing work of carrying forward life for the next seven generations.

Conclusion

Through presenting a synthesis of the Indigenous Food Sovereignty GFASG plenary session at the 2022 AAG Annual Meeting, in conversation with relevant literature, this paper seeks to further scholarship on Indigenous food systems and sovereignty. We argue that efforts to build healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems in North Amer-

ica/Turtle Island must center the histories, learnings, and experiences of Indigenous peoples. Given the place-based groundings of food sovereignty movements, it is critical to address ongoing realities of genocide and settler colonialism in North America/Turtle Island, the ongoing impacts of dispossession on food systems and all of creation, and work through collaborations led by Indigenous people and grounded in reciprocity.

In practice, this means building meaningful relationships and seeking out interconnections and breaking down knowledge systems focused on categorization and separation. The plenary speakers provided examples from integrative food systems research that attend to relationships between food-based biochemicals, bodies, and places. There are many opportunities in food systems work to merge different knowledge systems and call out and nurture webs of relationships. Taking learnings from this conversation forward could include integrating more-than-human power into institutional practices. Examples offered included ceremony and giving thanks, aligning with seasonal and more-than-human rhythms, and reworking Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Research Ethics Board (REB) protocols to move us away from human exceptionalism.

Indigenous food sovereignty can also be pursued through leveraging the privilege and power of university research, teaching, and action to advance Indigenous self-determination. Leveraging includes research and teaching practice led by or pursued in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, and also returning stolen lands (i.e., Land Back). In addition to supporting Indigenous individuals in this work, it is equally important to support Indigenous organizations involved in food- and/or land-related work such as the First Nations Technical Institute, the NDN Collective, and the Traditional Native American Farmers' Association. In all of these examples, the speakers called for pursuing practices that sustain life into the future.

The conversation presented here focused on

the meaning of food sovereignty rooted in relationships, respect, and reciprocity, reconciling different ways of knowing, and interrogating meanings and systems of power. When asked how to take these learnings forward, Keith told a story that he heard from an instructor from a Puebloan community in New Mexico, at a training supported by the Traditional Native American Farmers' Association:

Sometimes when he's out in the woods behind his community, he's out there looking around at stuff in the bush and one time he came upon this patch of some medicinal plant and just based on the way that this was sort of situated, and the level of abundance and the state of the soil around the patch, he could tell that it was anthropogenic, like a person had created it and it was probably one of his ancestors. And he said as soon as he saw that, he imagined his great-great-grandfather up in the sky world looking down with a big smile on his face saying, "Oh, I'm so glad you finally found them. I put them there for you." And for him, having that thought when he's out in the bush and looking at these relatives, with great tenderness and passion, one of his ancestors that can put there for him and his descendants to find. It made him think about how he can be a good ancestor, for the people that are coming next. We need to ask ourselves: What are we leaving behind? How can we be good ancestors, and not just the ancestors to our direct lineage but to others' lineages and the lineages of plants and animals and insects and fungi that share this earth?

Suzanne also added her suggestions: "Plant. Just plant whatever. Create edible landscaping. Encourage life."

The session, and this paper, closed with a Thanksgiving Address from Suzanne that emphasizes the human-environment families that sustain life.

When we came together, we brought our minds together and gave thanks. So now we'll unbraided those minds and acknowledge all those elements in creation to send us on our way and nurture us as human beings. We bring our minds together and we'll give thanks for the human beings and that we return to our families and loved ones in a good way and that they are healthy.

And we turn our minds and give thanks to the Earth, to the plants upon the Earth, the water that flows, fish within those waters, and to the animals that are roaming upon this Earth. And we bring our minds together and give thanks for those elements in creation and give thanks to the trees, to the birds that sing. And we move up into the higher levels of this world, into the four winds that bring the seasons and to our grandmother the moon that rises, to the eldest brother the sun that rises, and to those stars which we refer to as cousins, and to the grandfathers the thunders that come and bring those rains. We give our greatest gratitude and greatest thanks to those elements and now our minds are one.

And then we turn our minds, and we give thanks to the four beings that they say are with us at all times, to help guide us as humans and to the creator that gives us that breath of life. And for all of these we give our greatest greetings and thanks and now our minds are one. And now as we travel back to the things that we are doing, we hope that everyone carries a good mind and carries peace, and that we allow for that continuance of life in this world.

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