

**FROM PRISON TO PLATE: HOW CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MEN IN
FEDERAL CUSTODY AND INDIGENOUS FAMILIES IMPACTS FOOD
SECURITY, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND WELLBEING**

by

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Abstract

For many Aboriginal communities in Canada, the legacies of historic and ongoing colonialism and the impacts of marginalization, dispossession and racism have produced barriers to meaningful and nutritious foods and foodways. This has resulted in high rates of diet-related diseases among Aboriginal populations. The same factors that impact Aboriginal food security also create barriers to employment and housing, and inequitable treatment within the criminal justice system. Founded in 2012, a prison garden based at a minimum security correctional institution in Mission, British Columbia (BC), attempts to address these correlates of crime and poor health by engaging men in federal custody in meaningful activity; specifically, the growing and subsequent donation of organic produce. The fruits and vegetables grown in the garden are donated to a variety of local organizations and Aboriginal communities, including the T̓silhqot̓in Nation of central interior BC. This ethnographic research, founded in critical social justice theories and the principles of food sovereignty, set out to understand the impacts of the garden on both the participating men and the recipient T̓silhqot̓in communities. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 participating men in custody, 10 T̓silhqot̓in recipients, and 5 program stakeholders. Iterative thematic analysis revealed multi-layered impacts for the participating men, starting with access to food and increasing over time to include gardening as a means to figuratively escape the correctional environment, to work productively, to give back, and as a means to begin imagining meaningful futures outside of prison. The distribution of vegetables within the T̓silhqot̓in highlighted a passive coalescence with histories of culinary imperialism, truncating impacts to two layers: access to food and connections with the men in prison. Drawing on the insights of both the men and T̓silhqot̓in community members and the theoretical principles of food sovereignty, decolonizing methodologies and food as social justice, potential ways to acknowledge the legacies of colonialism, increase connection between the prison and the communities, and increase impacts are discussed.

Lay Summary

The legacy of Canadian colonialism has resulted in barriers to nutritious foods for many Aboriginal communities, including economic vulnerability, unstable housing and racism, as well as disproportionate rates of incarceration. A BC prison garden program attempts to address these unfair processes by employing men in prison to grow organic vegetables that are later donated to communities and organizations, including the T̓silhqot̓in First Nation. Using semi-structured interviewing and participant observation I explored the impacts of the garden on the participating men and the T̓silhqot̓in people who receive the produce. My analysis, based in the principles of social justice, found many benefits of the garden on the men, but because the vegetable distribution process does not encourage connection between the men and the T̓silhqot̓in communities and fails to address ongoing colonialism, the impacts on the community are unable to reach their full potential. Possible ways to strengthen connections and increase impacts are discussed.

Preface

This thesis is the original and unpublished work by the author, Kelsey Timler. The fieldwork reported throughout was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate #H16-00697. Additionally, the Correctional Service of Canada Research Branch approved all fieldwork occurring within Mission Minimum Institution, and all research activities within the T̓silhqot̓in community of Tl'esqox occurred under an ongoing Memorandum of Understanding between the UBC School of Nursing and T̓silhqot̓in National Government, as well as formal approval from Chief & Council in Tl'esqox.

This work was conducted independently by the author, however was deeply informed by her role as the Research Manager on the Work 2 Give research team, led by thesis committee member Dr. Helen Brown and co-led by Dr. Colleen Varcoe. This wider research, which is defined in greater detail within the body of the thesis, often overlapped with the thematic analysis of this work. The insights garnered have been vital to this intellectual work.

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Acknowledgments

The opportunity of graduate school is clearly a privilege. But the everyday experiences of doing this work: driving home from the prison with jeans caked in mud and the voices of thoughtful and welcoming men echoing in my ears; cleaning and preparing fish with people in Tl'esqox, the smell of salmon caked under my fingernails; cottonwood smoke and warm grass lingering as I sat afterwards and wrote in my journal, and; the gifts of smoked salmon from Tl'esqox and beautiful tomatoes from the prison warming my kitchen and my home; it has all been a complete joy, an honour that I will always treasure. I would like to thank every person I spoke with, in the prisons and in the Tšilhqot'in; the thoughtfulness, kindness, and strength of these people was and will continue to be inspiring. I also want to thank the stakeholders that took time from their busy schedules to answer my many questions and clarify my many misunderstandings; in particular the farmer at Mission Minimum, who was a gracious host, making me feel at ease even on that first day as I wondered what the hell I was doing, always sending me home with beautiful vegetables I got to share, cooking at home while thinking of all things the men were teaching me. Thank you to Craig Kennedy and the Tšilhqot'in people at Old School who provided me a place to stay and helped facilitate the ethics process and crafting of first relationships within the community. I also want to share my ongoing thanks and appreciation to the members of my thesis committee for their ongoing support and insight, the breadth and depth of their expertise and wisdom is overwhelming, but always in a good way. Thank you specifically to Helen, who always made time to sit, if even for five minutes, and talk me through the many questions, uncertainties and musings of the research process; our many cups of mint tea helped cultivate my thinking and made sure each step of this process honoured the people who agreed to participate. Thank you to my parents for the support and love that's gotten me this far, for all the homegrown garlic that has helped ward off the many colds of graduate school, and for my little VW, which carried me safely from prison to Tl'esqox and home again. Finally, thank you to Jesse, who made me snacks while I was hunched over my laptop, listened patiently while I spoke in circles to figure out what I was figuring out, and made me laugh when the stress started to rise.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the wonderful people with whom I spoke, moving rocks from fields with men in prison and drinking tea with the T̓silhqot̓in people who welcomed me into their homes and lives. And to my parents, who lovingly taught me to adore food.

Chapter 1: Introduction

For many Aboriginal communities in Canada, the legacies of historic and ongoing colonialism and the impacts of marginalization, dispossession and racism have produced barriers to meaningful foods¹ through land dispossession, the heavy restriction and regulation of subsistence activities, and the subsequent forced reliance on wage labour and processed foods (Adelson, 1998; Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses, 2014). These historic and ongoing policies and forms of violence have resulted in disproportionately high rates of food insecurity and correlated diet-related diseases among Aboriginal populations (British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, 2009; Downs et al., 2009; Government of Canada & Health Canada, 2007). Structural violence is the often hidden social forces that create harm and disadvantage for already marginalized members and groups (Farmer, 1996). These structures have impacted employment opportunities and led to disproportionate economic vulnerabilities within many Aboriginal communities, creating additional barriers to food security. To be food secure is to have sustainable physical, social, and economic access to the quantity and quality of foods that individuals and families need to meet their nutritional needs (Edelman, 2014; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015). Barriers to food security within Aboriginal communities include but are not restricted to limited access to the appropriate quantity and quality of store bought foods (Willows, Veugelers, Raine, & Kuhle, 2009). Yet, despite the disproportionate economic vulnerability experienced by many Aboriginal communities, they continue to have rich and diverse foodways and bio-cultural heritages embedded in complex webs of relationships that connect the individual to family, community, history, and the natural world (Adelson, 1998).

Food security and nutrition are necessary for individual health and wellbeing, which are in turn difficult, if not impossible, to achieve without connections to a family, broadly defined, and a community. Within many Indigenous contexts this intersecting connectivity expands beyond the intrapersonal to encompass cultural knowledges and their intergenerational transmission; culturally-mediated foodways and the family-centered activities that surround the tending, gathering, hunting, fishing, preserving, preparing, and sharing of food, and; being on the land as

¹ The words used to describe the foods and foodways of Aboriginal peoples are often political. My choice of language will be dealt with below.

relational, as opposed to capitalistic and resource extraction-based (Adelson, 1998; Morrison, 2011). These connections encompass Indigenous communities' bio-cultural heritages, resurgent and diverse meanings, customs and knowledges surrounding food that have been purposefully disrupted by colonialism and state-sponsored structures of violence, social marginalization, dispossession, and discrimination (Napolean, 2016). This has resulted in not only increased experiences of food insecurity but disproportionate rates of economic vulnerability, low educational attainment and high unemployment among many Aboriginal communities. These are factors known to be correlates of the persistent inequities that exist within the criminal justice, such as incarceration, among both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Perreault, 2009; Sapers, 2014).

Incarceration inherently isolates individuals, disrupting connections with family, community and culture. Yet for many of the youth and adults engaged within the Canadian criminal justice system, these health and wellbeing sustaining connections were disrupted prior to admission into custody, creating isolation outside prison walls that heightens the risk of criminal activity and incarceration. The vast majority of persons in custody have had adverse childhood experiences (Colantonio et al., 2014; Dowden & Blanchette, 1999; Kouyoumdjian, Schuler, Matheson, & Hwang, 2016); in Canada roughly 60% of Aboriginal and 30% of non-Aboriginal people in federal custody have been involved in the child welfare system, and 20% of Aboriginal persons have survived residential schools (Trevethan, Auger, Moore, MacDonald, & Sinclair, 2001). Individuals in custody also have disproportionately high rates of homelessness and vulnerable housing (Bouchard, 2004; The John Howard Society, 2010), unemployment (Dowden & Blanchette, 1999), and high school non-completion (McCreary Centre Society, 2014). These demographic markers are similar for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people though based in intertwined yet divergent histories of colonial power, privilege and dispossession. These disruptions, spanning across individual childhoods and lifetimes, create and sustain disconnection among many of the roughly 15,000 adults in federal custody in 2014/15 and the nearly 332,000 adults admitted to federal and provincial/territorial custody in 2014/15. In that year twenty-two percent of these individuals were Aboriginal (Reitano, 2016). The Canadian criminal justice system is consequently faced with creating and sustaining rehabilitative spaces, experiences and processes for these thousands of individuals, people often disconnected from home, family, and health and social wellbeing. The Aboriginal peoples of Canada feel the correlates of colonialism, such as patriarchy, and extraction-based capitalism, most poignantly,

and for Aboriginal people in custody these disconnections span back to colonial contact. Yet for all people in custody the redressing of disruption, be it historic or framed within a few generations, is a necessary step towards rehabilitation, healing and health. Focusing on foodways and food meanings may offer a strengths-based way to connect individuals to their families, communities, and cultures and can therefore contribute to redressing some of the correlates of crime situated in and reproduced by historic and ongoing colonialism.

This research has emerged from my interests in the connections among food, culture, history and health in the T̓silhqot̓in Nation, located in what is today the central interior of British Columbia (BC), where families experiencing food insecurity receive donated produce grown in a prison garden by men in federal custody, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This garden, part of a larger prison work program called Work 2 Give, may enable these connections while furthering connectivity between food insecure families and the men working in the garden, both of whom are impacted by systemic marginalization, racism, and colonizing policies. Using ethnographic methods I explored the effects of the Work 2 Give garden project on food security and food sovereignty among T̓silhqot̓in communities, the experiences of meaningful work on the men working in the prison garden, and the connections between these men, the food they grow, and the families who receive it.

1.1: Research Questions & Objectives

This research is based in an ongoing interest in exploring the Indigenous bio-cultural heritage and foodways of the T̓silhqot̓in Nation and how colonialism, global capitalism, and structural violence have impacted Aboriginal peoples' self determination as it relates to food and health. I aimed to explore how these histories influence the lived experiences of T̓silhqot̓in families and men in federal custody. I wanted to know how the introduction of donated produce into economically vulnerable homes influences a family's ability to engage in meaningful food-related activities. How did the history of agriculture in Canada, a method of colonial control and land dispossession, impact the ways in which these vegetables, and the men that grow them, are thought about around T̓silhqot̓in dinner tables? And finally, did digging in the land with soil caked under their fingernails result in increased connectivity to nature and to community for the men growing the produce? These questions are significant given the centrality of relationships to holistic health and wellbeing in many Aboriginal communities and the need for connection and

relationship in correctional rehabilitation. These relationships position food as more than a mere commodity, as medicine, as evidence of living well on the land, as a powerful site of knowledge, story, and ceremony, and as the result of activities and times that bonds communities and respects Elders. These components of foods and foodways become increasingly significant against the historic and ongoing backdrop of global capitalism, land theft and dispossession, the forced reliance on wage labour, and the increased consumption of processed foods across Aboriginal communities and correctional facilities.

Specifically, I aimed to discover to what extent and in what ways the Work 2 Give garden project effects: (1) the food security and sovereignty of economically vulnerable T̓silhqot̓in families who receive donated produce; (2) the experiences of meaningful work for men in federal custody, and; (3) possible meaningful connections between the T̓silhqot̓in community and the men who grow and harvest a portion of their food.

Under the umbrella of these wider questions the following sub-questions were posed:

- 1) How does the produce donated through Work 2 Give impact T̓silhqot̓in individual and family health and wellbeing?
- 2) How does the produce donated through Work 2 Give impact T̓silhqot̓in individual family food security?
- 3) How is the produce donated through Work 2 Give integrated by T̓silhqot̓in individuals and families into their foodways and food meanings?
- 4) What does the growing, tending, and harvesting of vegetables through Work 2 Give mean to the participating men?
- 5) How does the donation of produce through Work 2 Give influence connections between the participating men and the T̓silhqot̓in communities?

Exploring these questions ethnographically allowed me to describe the effects of Work 2 Give on the food security and sovereignty of T̓silhqot̓in communities, as well as the impacts of working in the garden on the men experiencing incarceration.

1.2: Notes on Language

Within the Canadian context the Aboriginal population is comprised of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. While this research focuses on the T̓silhqot̓in Nation, and specifically the Tl'esqox band, it is important to note that the Aboriginal peoples and cultures within Canada are diverse and varied. Aboriginal individuals have defined rights under the Constitution Act of 1982. The term Indigenous will also be used throughout this proposal. Indigeneity refers to first peoples internationally, and is used by the United Nations and other international organizations to describe communities with ancestral occupancy and use of traditional lands. Within the context of this thesis the terms *Aboriginal* and *Indigenous* will be used synonymously, while recognizing these differences. When appropriate the Indigenous peoples who welcomed me into their community, the T̓silhqot̓in people of the Tl'esqox band, will be referred to by their own name, T̓silhqot̓in, the People of the River. The significance of that name, embedded in ancient waters rushing south, will become apparent in the coming pages.

The language and concepts used in these pages are mired in history; it is clear that “concepts have teeth, [...] teeth that bite through time” (Simpson 2014, 100), but language can also unsettle, restore and decolonize. The terms *men in federal custody* and *men experiencing incarceration*, and simply, *the men*, are used purposely to signal that a criminal history does not define a person, and that complex intersections of socio-economic, historical, and cultural factors coalesce to impact the risks, needs, and realities of those in contact, or at-risk of being in contact, with the criminal justice system. These terms are used in place of the inherently reductive terms *offender*, *inmate*, or *prisoner*.

There are a variety of words used to describe the realities that many Indigenous communities experience in the constant wake of ongoing colonialism. I use the terms *economically vulnerable* and *marginalized* to describe the ways in which many Indigenous communities are impacted by external forces of dispossession, appropriation, and discrimination. I acknowledge that Tuck & Ree (2013) write that “damage narratives are the only stories that get told about me, unless I’m the one that’s telling them;” consequently I aim to write stories of strength (647). While many communities are constrained by the racist and very intentional actions of colonial leaders,

vulnerability and marginalization are far from inherent within Aboriginal homes and communities.

The majority of literature on Aboriginal food security focuses on traditional or cultural foods. I choose to write about *meaningful foods*, *meaningful foodways* and *bio-cultural heritages* to acknowledge the dynamic and diverse food histories and foodways of Aboriginal communities in general, and T̓silhqot'in communities in particular. This is intended to avoid a prescriptive understanding of what is and is not 'traditional' or 'cultural', to avoid focusing on food as cultural difference instead of as political and social, based in the context of the Indigenous "right to govern, to own, to labour," to gather, to store, to share, and to eat (Simpson 2014, 102). I describe food as a meaningful heritage born from intersections among human and more-than-human ecosystems; this is done to provide a space for T̓silhqot'in participants to weave their own histories, ceremonies, beliefs, preferences, cultures, and priorities into what is considered meaningful in relation to food.

1.3: Situating the Author

These pages grew from, first and foremost, the meaningful foodways, ancient wisdoms, and generosity of the T̓silhqot'in people of Tl'esqox and the humble honesties, hands on farming lessons, and embodied knowledge of the men. But I must also explain my own histories and meanings around food and land.

I am a settler here, born in Calgary, Alberta. I have always loved food, playing chef with my brother and serving our parents home cooked meals plated with clumsy aesthetic, pre-chopping ingredients and describing my favourite recipes to imaginary television audiences. It was no surprise to anyone when I began working in professional kitchens in Calgary, then Vancouver. I came to Vancouver as an undergraduate student, interested in art, cultures, and peoples, and completed my undergraduate degree in Anthropology while continuing to cook. I remember the first day that I learned about residential schools, beginning to grasp what they actually meant. I came to understand Indian hospitals, forced relocations and the many, many acts of cultural genocide and violence on Aboriginal peoples, and I remember going to work on those evenings, cooking rich buttery sauces to glaze sablefish. My relationship to food became tense, my scholastic interests began focusing on structural violence, genocide and health, and hunger was

always yet another form of violence. The food waste of fine dining became too much and I eventually left professional cooking, finding health equity and wellness research, projects where advocates and allies studied inequities and worked to find solutions.

As so easily happens with our media, social narratives, and stereotypes, it took me a while to look away from the hardship and marginalization impacting Aboriginal peoples and notice the strengths, beauties, and resiliencies that families and communities pass down gently from generation to generation. It was in Vancouver that I learnt that my home is on the unceded territory of the Musquem, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. It was in Vancouver that I learned that my childhood home was the land of the Blackfoot, Tsuu T'ina and Stoney peoples; Treaty 7 land, something I had never been told and had never thought to ask. It was also here that I realized, or remembered, that food can be more than something decadent. Food is health, community, memories; food is learning to knead dough within a specific culture and family, woven amongst moments with grandmothers, mothers and fathers. Food is a way that you welcome people into your home, a way to support friends grieving great losses, it is celebration, it is quiet moments with loved ones. Food is health, and therefore food is justice.

My passion for food and the slow realization that dinner tables were battlegrounds and places of resistance made graduate school an exciting possibility. I began this degree in population and public health to explore the power of foodways and meanings in contexts very different than my own. I am not Aboriginal. I have never been incarcerated. But I have cooked with joy, with sadness and with guilt. I bring to this project my inherent bias as a white settler, as someone whose childhood, educational achievements and career trajectory are propped upon foundational privileges. I recognize and work to remember daily that “injustice is generally a symptom of exercised privilege,” including my own (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014, p. 153). I am not objective because of my personal passion for food, a belief that it can bring people together and overcome differences. I write this as someone passionate about heirloom flours and sustainable fishing, someone working to ‘unsettle’ myself, work past my guilt when it grips me, and someone that strives to be, continually become and act as an ally to all that will have me (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives

This research is based in a critical decolonizing perspective and draws on the theoretical concept of food sovereignty and the principles of ethnography. These foundations prioritize relationships: food sovereignty privileges the relationships between people, land, food, history, and the wider global market; critical decolonization is intended to decolonize the relationships that food sovereignty and Indigenous self-determination require, between land, nations, governments, peoples and economies, and; ethnography privileges relationships between the researcher and the people participating in the project. To found research in critical decolonization is to pay keen attention to Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing, and to maintain awareness of the ongoing influences of colonialism on Indigenous homes and communities while also recognizing the ongoing resistance and resurgence that has and continues to occur among Indigenous peoples. Research findings are therefore understood within this context, and framed within an appreciation for the biases inherent in research done with Indigenous peoples. Within the concept of critical decolonization, the additional theoretical perspectives of critical social justice (Arrigo, 1999; Linker, 2014), postcolonial theory (Browne, Smye, & Varcoe, 2005), and decolonized antiracism (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Varcoe, 2006), as well as the principles of community-based research were drawn on to guide this work (Salmon, Browne, & Pederson, 2010; S. Wilson, 2008; Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013).

Sovereignty as a concept grew from imperialism and its relationship to rights and powers, providing a tension between the self-determining aims of food sovereignty as a movement and its imperial roots. Capitalist expansionism originated to exploit global resources and feed imperial populations (Davis, 2002), exploits that were mirrored by colonial ethnographers intent on 'discovery'; the description and control of Indigenous peoples and nations (Smith, 1999). For some Indigenous scholars the concept is too entrenched in this history; for some "sovereignty carries the horrible stench of colonialism" (Barker, 2005, p. 26), master's tools which carry deep seated repercussions when picked up and used (Alfred, 2009; Morris, 2005). For others sovereignty offers a means to resist ongoing dispossession through language, narrative and the active refusal of *the way things are* (Simpson, 2014); it is a term that can be given new meanings and embarked upon new histories through ongoing and ancient relationships with people, community, and land (Barker, 2005).

Within these new meanings the fight for food sovereignty can be seen, in many ways, as synonymous with Indigenous self-determination and land advocacy and with the potential to re-appropriate concepts of power and control to oppose the ongoing colonization of ancestral lands and contemporary Indigenous communities (Grey & Patel, 2014; Massey, 1994). Food sovereignty for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada is about inalienable rights: to food, land, culture, and to feeding and teaching children about food and community in ways rooted in bio-cultural heritage, memories, and wisdoms. The right to control the production, consumption, and stewardship of Aboriginal foods and foodways in Canada has been fought over since the advent of colonialism: in ancestral fields of indigenous plant-foods ploughed for colonial potatoes; in emergency rations of flour and sugar handed out by Indian Agents uncomfortable with giving money to hungry families; in the dining halls of residential schools; and in the dams, pipelines, and fracking sites where Aboriginal advocates face imprisonment for protesting the ongoing pillaging of stolen lands. Food sovereignty is the right of individuals to nourishing, nutritious, and meaningful food, the right to produce these foods in environmentally sustainable and culturally sustaining ways, and the right to define and control their own food and agriculture systems (Wittman & Desmarais, 2012). Within the Canadian context Aboriginal food sovereignty is inextricably linked to ancestral lands and the policies, treaties, and regulations that have eroded Aboriginal control over these territories. Food sovereignty is “indistinguishable from the right to be Indigenous” (Grey & Patel, 2014; Morrison, 2011); the right to food and land goes beyond the right to food security, it is a relational, compassionate and based in many silent moments breathing in fresh air, appreciating gifts from a land that cares for you and your ancestors; “just as a people have a right to their land, the land has a right to her people” (Grey & Patel, 2014, p. 436). As Potawatomi botanist and writer Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) writes:

In the old times, when people’s lives were so directly tied to the land, it was easy to know the world as gift. When fall came, the skies would darken with flocks of geese, honking “Here we are,” [...] the people are hungry, winter is coming, and geese fill the marshes with food. It is a gift and the people receive it with thanksgiving, love and respect [...] something is broken when the food comes on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in slippery plastic, a carcass of a being whose only chance at life was a cramped cage. That is not a gift; it is a theft (30-31).

In this context, food sovereignty means resisting neoliberal capitalism, fighting for relationships with a family and a community that includes animals, plants and the land; it means “working on

the health of something that has been devastated and is in need of great repair”(Desmarais & Wittman, 2014:1156). Food sovereignty is daily resistance.

Within this same vein ethnographic research methodologies based in critical social justice (Arrigo, 1999; Linker, 2014), postcolonial theory (Browne et al., 2005), and decolonized antiracism (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Varcoe, 2006) purposely create respectful and culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal individuals and communities to participate in meaningful research, distancing ethnographic discovery from its own imperial past (Salmon et al., 2010; Wilson, 2008; Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). While the primary concern of ethnography is to describe reality (Marcus & Fischer, 1999), Indigenous methodologies acknowledges that reality cannot be contained as it is “a process of relationships” (Wilson, 2008, p. 73). Consequently conducting research to explore the realities of food sovereignty and security is not about prescribing methods and outcomes, but “a ceremony for improving your relationship with an idea,” and the peoples, places and landscapes involved in idea creation (Wilson, 2008, p. 110). This research worked to decolonize the research process itself and the relationships it depends upon. Coming from an awareness of researcher privilege, positionality, and a basis in cultural humility (Muhammad et al., 2014; Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013), this project does not aim to find statistically significant variables; instead I did and continue to work to maintain an accountability to the men in federal custody, their histories and contexts, and the T̓silhqot’in communities and their relationships with food, land, colonialism, manipulative government agencies and paternalistic researchers. This accountability aims to produce meaningful results that are of use to the people who shared their time, knowledge, homes, and meals with me. Decolonization cannot be a metaphor (Tuck & Ree, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012); decolonizing processes, theories and methodologies must recognize that colonization is about land theft, disconnection and dispossession; and only the opposite, the return and the reconnection, is true decolonization (Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014).

Theories are stories, assumptions, morals, and biases, “woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, [...] contextual and relational [...] intimate and personal” (Simpson 2014, 7). This means that the theories outlined above will shift, swell and erode as T̓silhqot’in stories and ways of knowing are braided between the words and thoughts of Indigenous scholars, allied researchers, and advocates. This research and I stand humble amongst systemic structures of

institutionalized racism and disproportionate experiences of poverty and incarceration, asking the men growing the food and the families receiving it: 'how can I help? What do I need to know?'

Chapter 3: Background & Literature

3.1: Work 2 Give & the Mission Prison Garden

Initiated in 2012 through a partnership between the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the T̓silhqot̓in National Government (TNG), Work 2 Give is a prison employment program intended to provide meaningful work experiences for men incarcerated within the Pacific Region of CSC, and to meet basic needs through the donation of created items to the T̓silhqot̓in Nation. Work 2 Give originally focused on making beds for children, providing children with the basic needs required to get a good night's sleep with the longer term goal of disrupting the school-prison pipeline. Additional items made by the diverse men who participate in the project include but are not limited to: furniture, such as dressers, kitchen tables, picnic benches, and coat racks; cultural items such as drums and rattles; winter clothing such as toques, mittens and other knitted items such as blankets, and; children's toys, such as rocking horses, sock monkeys and sandboxes. The specific items depend on the specific men, as the project is largely guided by the creativity of the men at each prison, and the tools and resources made available to them. To date approximately 100 men in federal custody have participated in Work 2 Give. Items are made in prisons then distributed throughout the T̓silhqot̓in Nation by Punky Lake Wilderness Camp Society, a non-profit focused on restorative justice and peace services for at-risk Aboriginal youth in the central interior of British Columbia, and contracted by CSC for distribution services.

The garden, located at Mission Minimum institution in Mission, BC, precedes the Work 2 Give initiative. In 2004, Brian Lang, the now retired warden who would later initiate Work 2 Give, founded the labour-intensive organic garden as a means to combat the endemic boredom of incarcerated life. The idea for the garden grew from Lang's conversations with a friend, an elementary school principal in Prince George, BC, who shared the high rates of behavioural problems and drop-outs among his predominantly Aboriginal students, problems later discovered to be largely caused by widespread hunger; kids were simply not eating breakfast. By donating food, as opposed to using the produce to feed the men themselves, Lang intended to not only increase men's employable skills and reduce idleness, but to provide a space for them to engage in meaningful work, feel valued, appreciated, and accountable. The men who work in the garden come from diverse backgrounds, and the garden is open to any and all men who have the appropriate security clearance to handle the necessary tools and at times work without supervision in an area largely isolated from the rest of the institution.



Image 1: The garden at Mission Minimum Institution

The garden spans 7 ½ acres and is surrounded by old growth forest behind the main buildings of Mission Minimum Institution². During the 2015-16 season the men grew and harvested 154,026 lbs. of produce, which was then donated to a variety of local organizations, including food banks, soup kitchens, school lunch programs, and housing initiatives for people experiencing mental health issues, harmful substance use and/or homelessness. Prior to the 2015-16 year the garden was largely funded by CSC, with a small amount of support provided from the Salvation Army. In 2015, CSC sought a funding partner to take responsibility for the majority of garden costs, given fiscal restraints and a federal mandate that excludes any upstream crime prevention strategies. Lookout Society, an organization focused on homelessness and harm reduction for people using substances signed on as the funding partner, receiving 48% of the total garden yield (66,215 lbs). In previous years vegetables were transported by T-Lane Trucking, a for-profit company which donates trucking services between the Lower Mainland prisons and the T̓silhqot̓in area. The vegetables were then distributed by Punky Lake Wilderness Camp Society along with other Work 2 Give items. In recent years CSC has distanced the garden from the larger Work 2 Give initiative, therefore the transportation of vegetables to the T̓silhqot̓in (4,764 lbs in 2015-16) has been done by Brian Lang on a volunteer basis, using his personal funds and truck; assistance in distribution have been still provided by Punky Lake Wilderness Camp Society.

² The garden, in size and scope of production, is in reality a farm. The Harper government cut funding to all correctional agricultural programming, at which time the tract of land was framed as a garden to circumvent forced closure. The men and institutional staff refer to it as a garden, therefore I do as well. The implications of the wider political climate will be dealt with below.

The garden was born from the belief that meaningful, as opposed to menial, work in prison has the potential to improve social outcomes for Aboriginal communities, based in an awareness of the widespread food insecurity impacting both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, and the vast amount of arable land and human resources available within correctional facilities.

3.2: Food, Health & Indigeneity

Prior to the colonization of British Columbia the diverse Indigenous communities subsisted on varied diets, including various fish and other aquatic life, roots, berries, and animals. The resulting diets were, for the most part, rich in polyunsaturated fats and high in protein and a wide array of necessary vitamins and minerals (Kelm, 1999; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1994). Foodways and meanings developed alongside knowledge of the complex ecosystems, knowledge that was transferred across generations for thousands of years through oral tradition, trade, and ceremony. Settlers failed to acknowledge this relationship with the land, and while the introduction of new food items (e.g., flour, molasses) was pragmatically adopted into Indigenous diets, colonial land theft and regulation eroded Indigenous food sovereignty. European settlers saw agriculture as a better use of the land and many indigenous plant foods were destroyed by imperial ploughs and cattle (Turner & Turner, 2008). Industry, pollution, over-extraction, and invasive plants threatened and continue to threaten the survival of many indigenous foods. Increasing colonial encroachment on Indigenous lands and resources meant that Indigenous communities were confined to smaller and smaller reserves, cutting off physical access to ancestral hunting and fishing grounds. This separation from the land was also enabled by a widening array of colonial laws and regulations surrounding Indigenous communities' use of natural resources. With declining land access for Indigenous peoples came increased reliance on wage labour. These policies and processes forcefully ensured that Indigenous people were increasingly dependent on government food rations, the caloric value of which was largely made up of enriched white flour, sugar, lard, rice, molasses, and macaroni noodles (Kelm, 1999). Gradually at first, and then with explicit force within residential schools, this "culinary imperialism" began to change the food habits and preferences of many Indigenous peoples (Kelm, 1999:37).

The dietary changes forced upon Indigenous children within residential schools sharpened the impacts of these earlier policies and processes on food security and nutrition, providing poignant examples of culinary imperialism. George Manuel³, a survivor of the residential school system, vividly remembered how “every student smelled of hunger” (Manuel & Posluns, 1974); chronic and avoidable famine and malnourishment were systemic (Milloy, 1999a). Residential schools were originally funded by the federal Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), however funding was later transferred to churches; funding allotment to the church-run schools was changed to a per capita system in 1907 (King, Napier, & Kechege, 2004; Milloy, 1999a), after which reports of hunger and the inadequate feeding of children became increasingly widespread. Further budget cuts resulted in meals made entirely, in some schools, of broth, dry bread, lard and tea (Mosby, 2013); often “just enough to blunt the sharp edge of hunger” (Johnson, 1990:141). School staff members often found it easier to get the children to eat cookies and breads, failing to instill nutritious eating habits (Milloy, 1999b), and attempts to improve dietary nutrition often focused on increased milk intake, despite widespread lactose intolerance among Aboriginal children (Kelm, 1998; Lee & Lichter, 1971). Despite the persistent protests of Aboriginal parents and the hungry cries of their children, it wasn’t until a series of official investigations from the DIA themselves that the pervasive nature of the problem was acknowledged. However, despite finding woefully inadequate menu plans and caloric intakes that would undeniably result in starvation for all but the youngest of children, the government failed to increase funding and regulation, instead funding a series of nutritional experiments conducted on the malnourished and non-consenting bodies of Aboriginal children (Mosby, 2013). This legacy of hunger and malnutrition, forcefully enculturated into the bodies of these children and their communities through colonial land stealing and institutionalized education has continued in many communities. Residential schools created a reality whereby Aboriginal communities were forced increasingly further away from ancestral food sovereignties, a distancing started earlier through land theft, dispossession, and government relief rations, and provided the ideal framework for Aboriginal peoples to become entangled in what one Indigenous youth called the “five white sins: flour, salt, sugar, alcohol, and lard” (Elliott, Jayatilaka, Brown, Varley, & Corbett, 2012, p. 5). This has resulted in disproportionately high rates of food insecurity and correlated diet-related diseases among Aboriginal populations (British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, 2009; Downs et al., 2009).

³ Manuel was the Chief of the Assembly First Nations and a survivor of both the Kamloops Indian Residential School and a tuberculosis-specific Indian hospital.

While food security is based upon the meeting of nutritional needs (Edelman, 2014; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015), when considering the impact of food and nutrition on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples, nutrition is only one of many culturally and historically mediated factors that impact the appropriateness and meaningfulness of food (Elliott et al., 2012). These intersections of land, food, people, and history are often not respected within the food security literature, which often views food and land as commodities that can be manipulated and processed (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014). The concept of *food sovereignty* comes closer to this holistic understanding of food and land as sacred, and while the imperial history of sovereignty may make an uncomfortable bedfellow with Indigenous self-determination, the focus on rights and powers fits perfectly with a concept that insists that Indigenous peoples, in Canada and globally, have an inherent right to their land and the meaningful foods that spring from these relationships. Food sovereignty, as outlined in the theoretical section above, focuses on relationships, between lands that offer food, shelter, and space for community, and peoples with respectful and sustainable ways of living on the land. This being on the land, the gathering, preparing and sharing of food that occurs in many diverse Indigenous cultures results in more than mere survival. It is a means of intergenerational knowledge transmission, a relationship with the land and all the life it supports, and a foundation to many ceremonies and celebrations (Adelson, 1998; Kelm, 1999). True and sustainable food security is impossible without food sovereignty, and food sovereignty is not possible without resolving land issues and treaty rights; “through access to food, the ‘land question’ [remains] reified in Aboriginal bodies” (Kelm, 1998, p. 18).

Despite these barriers to meaningful foods that ongoing colonialism and structural violence have produced (Adelson, 1998; Kirmayer et al., 2014), some Indigenous communities continue to have rich and diverse food cultures embedded in complex webs of relationships that connect the individual to family, community, history, and the natural world (Adelson, 1998). Other communities fight to reconnect with these foods and relationships. These connections are embedded in bio-cultural heritages that extend back thousands of years and exist today in diverse kitchens, riverbanks, smoke houses, and stories. The specific and varied ways in which communities access food, the knowledge about where that food comes from, and the shared histories of the land where food is grown, gathered, prepared, and made meaningful all play

central roles in how healthy foods and healthy communities are understood, in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

3.3: Prison Employment Programs

Under- and unemployment are common risk factors among both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals involved in the Canadian criminal justice system at both provincial and federal levels (Dowden & Blanchette, 1999; Perreault, 2009; Sapers, 2014), as well as being common risk factors of recidivism post-release (Scott & Gillis, 2011). Approximately 70% of individuals entering into federal institutions in Canada have an unstable work history at the time of their admission, over 60% have no trade skills or knowledge, and 70% have not completed high school (Nolan, 2012; Scott & Gillis, 2011). Prison employment programs are consequently widespread, both within Canada and internationally, in an attempt to increase a person's chance of employment upon release and to subsequently reduce their risk of recidivating.

Prison employment programs are intended to increase institutional safety and instill positive and pro-social attitudes and behaviours among the prison population, while also reducing recidivism (Scott & Gillis, 2011). While program evaluation has shown employment improves the behavior of individuals during their incarceration (Maguire, 1996; Richmond, 2014), the evidence of employment program participation reducing recidivism is less clear (Bouffard, Mackenzie, & Hickman, 2000; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007; Maguire, Flanagan, & Thornberry, 1988; Richmond, 2014; Visher, Coggeshall, & Winterfield, 2006; Wheatley, 2016; Wilson, Gallanger, & MacKenzie, 2000); the majority of studies rely solely on quantitative measures that fail to capture the diverse experiences of program participation and impacts post release (Miller, Tillyer, & Miller, 2012). Despite mixed results regarding impacts on recidivism, there is evidence that employment programs can increase institutional safety for both individuals and staff and positively impact the attitudes and behaviours of people in custody (Correctional Service of Canada, 2008; Latessa, 2012; Maguire, 1996; Power & Nolan, 2014). Employment within prisons is seen to have positive impacts on a person's sense of self worth, self confidence, self reliance, responsibility and individual routines (Latessa, 2012; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Sampson & Laub, 1997; Uggen, 1999; Uggen & Staff, 2001), while providing spaces for individuals in custody to build positive relationships with each other, employers and other authority figures (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Richmond, 2014; Sampson & Laub, 1995). While employable skills significantly

impact outcomes upon release into community, motivating changes in attitudes and behaviours and providing an environment for the development of positive identities and constructive social learning is arguably an important intermediate step to ensure successful reintegration into the community (Bushway, 2003; Latessa, 2012).

Over half of federal offenders take part in a CORCAN employment program at some point during their incarceration (Nolan, 2014). CORCAN is contracted by CSC and provides employment and employability skills to people experiencing incarcerated in 36 of Canada's 53 federal institutions, with training available in the fields of manufacturing (e.g., office furniture and vehicle repair), textiles (e.g., clothing for people in prison, uniforms, bedding), construction (e.g., framing, plumbing, drywall), and services (e.g., industrial laundry, printing) (Correctional Service of Canada, 2013). Research conducted by CSC has highlighted that individuals employed within CORCAN while incarcerated have lower rates of segregation, fewer institutional crimes, higher rates of day parole, and slightly higher rates of employment post-release (Nolan, 2012). In one small sample of individuals employed in the community after release from a federal institution, the majority of whom had worked in CORCAN while incarcerated, community employment was found to positively impact their sense of self worth, belonging and achievement; individuals in this sample attributed their strong work ethic and a positive attitude to their success (Power & Nolan, 2014), characteristics not explicitly dealt with through CORCAN programming. In another study, Aboriginal individuals in federal custody in Canada identified colonialism and racism as having negatively impacted previous, often disjointed work histories, and expressed a strong desire for "greater opportunities for meaningful work" that incorporate Aboriginal learning and teaching styles and knowledges (Forrester, Trainor, & Brazil, 2012). In a sample of all individuals released from federal custody between April 1st, 2010 and March 31st, 2011 (n=798), only 39% of released individuals found employment that matched their CORCAN experience (Nolan, 2014), and employment with CORCAN has not been shown to impact length of time that people hold down their first job post release (Nolan, 2012). Employment is clearly important, "but that does not mean that employment programs will lead to significant reductions in recidivism[,] unless we go beyond simply getting them a job" (Latessa, 2012, p. 89).

Earlier models of incarceration, based on Quaker ideologies, framed labour as a means for individuals to pay their debt to society while instilling morals through hard physical work (Dwyer & McNally, 1993; Garvey, 1998). Within Canada the meaning and importance of

correctional employment opportunities has declined due to society's increased reliance on automated technology that have not been paralleled within correctional employment opportunities. This has resulted in an increasing mismatch between prison employment opportunities and current community labour market needs (Correctional Service of Canada, 2008, 2015; Richmond, 2014). Additionally, correctional programming has increasingly focused on reducing psycho-social, as opposed to socio-economic, risk factors (Correctional Service of Canada, 2015). Research conducted with individuals in custody has highlighted the importance of providing professional development training alongside employment programming to increase employability and skill relevance post release, while also addressing skills needed across sectors, such as resume and job interview training and job search assistance (Nolan, 2012; Richmond, 2014; Uggen, Wakefield, & Western, 2005), and working to increase educational achievements as a means to offset the stigma of having been incarcerated (Kim, Clark, Kim, & Clark, 2013; Logan et al., 2015; Visher, Winterfield, & Coggeshall, 2005). Meaningful employment in higher wage and higher quality jobs has also been highlighted as more likely to reduce recidivism (Allan & Steffensmeier, 1989; Harer, 1994; Sampson & Laub, 1997; Uggen, 1999), as "few can dispute the value and importance of meaningful work" (Latessa, 2012, p. 87), particularly when employment in the community results in feelings of self worth and a sense of belonging (Visher et al., 2005; Wheatley, 2016). Work programs in correctional institutions that provide opportunities for social learning, positive personal growth, constructive new experiences, and wherein people are introduced to widening circles of relationships and positive influences have powerful potential, both within and outside of prison (Latessa, 2012). Within the context of a population more likely to have adverse childhood experiences and several barriers to education and employment, such opportunities can be transformational (Wheatley, 2016).

3.4: Gardening & Health

Working with soil and seeds, planting, weeding, tending and harvesting, whether in a community garden or alone in your backyard, has positive mental and physical health benefits. Gardening can influence chronic diseases and mental health through the intermediate health behaviours of diet and physical activity (Mitchell, 2013). Mental health benefits include reductions in the symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as increases in attentional capacity and self-esteem (Gonzalez, Hartig, Patil, Martinsen, & Kirkevold, 2009, 2010, 2011; Kam & Siu, 2010; Kuo & Taylor, 2004; Rappe, Koivunen, & Korpela, 2008; Son, Um, Skim, Song, & Kwack, 2004). Research

done on cortisol levels found that participants who spent a half hour gardening outdoors had salivary cortisol levels 50% lower than those of people who had spent that time reading indoors (Van Den Berg & Custers, 2011). Another study found that individuals with mental health issues who consistently volunteered at a plant nursery visited psychiatric hospitals less, had reduced self harming behaviour, and half of the sample reduced or removed medications from their mental health plan (Calleau, 2005).

Gardening is a relationship, between earth and sun, water, soil, and human hands. These relational webs often extend into and across communities, and the benefits of gardening alone are joined by positive impacts that are inherently social (Elings, 2006). Participation in community gardening has been shown to increase both social capital and a community's capacity for social learning and accessing the resources necessary for community health and wellbeing (Agustina & Beilin, 2012; Alaimo, Reischl, & Allen, 2010; Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005; Mitchell, 2013). Increases in collective efficacy have been attributed to community gardening (Teig et al., 2009), and as collective efficacy grows in a community so does community safety, marked by reductions in the rates of neighbourhood crime (Ahern et al., 2013; Gerell & Kronkvist, 2016; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Qualitative work done with participants of a community garden in an low-income neighbourhood of Toronto found that the communal space broke isolation for some participants, and the authors argued that the positive impacts of community gardens may be increased in areas where isolation and marginalization are pervasive (Wakefield, Yeudall, Taron, Reynolds, & Skinner, 2007). The study participants had access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods that were either not available locally or prohibitively expensive. This access to plant foods impacted their dietary health and that of their families, while also engendering a sense of empowerment among economically vulnerable people. The people who participated in this study felt proud of their work, of their ability to turn a seed into a stew over the course of many months, and to be able to share food and be generous with friends, family members, and the wider community (Hale et al., 2011; Wakefield et al., 2007).

Horticultural and gardening programs in detention and correctional settings have been found to decrease the effects of mental illness and harmful substance use (Cornille, Rohrer, Phillips, & Mosier, 1987; Lindemuth, 2007; Migura, Whittlesey, & Zajicek, 1997; Page, 2008; Rice & Lremy, 1998; Sandel, 2004), as well as engender the skills necessary for successful community reintegration, such as delayed gratification, and improved social skills, self esteem, problem

solving, and decision-making (Feldbaum et al., 2011; Migura et al., 1997; Polomski, Johnson, & Anderson, 1997; Rice & Lremy, 1998; Sandel, 2004). The aesthetic value of green spaces within prisons alone can decrease some of the harms of imprisonment, improve coping abilities among those in custody, and provide a cost effective means to reduce stress among both the prison population and institutional staff (Lindemuth, 2007; Sandel, 2004). Tending plants as they grow requires tenderness, a gentle yet firm touch and a willingness to spend time kneeling, watching, and responding to the tiny sprouts, curving stems and delicate blossoms. This gentle relationship, pulling weeds that threaten your plant friends and adding water, warmth and nutrition when needed, has been found, not surprisingly, to engender less hostility among participants in correctional settings (Elings, 2006); responsibility for small budding plants can grow into improved social bonding and accountability.

The impacts of gardening may be even more acute when contrasted with the experience of incarceration. A 1998 study with 28 people in a county jail in the US found that correctional horticultural therapy highlighted in the media provided positive images of rehabilitation to the wider public. A more recent study conducted in 2015 on an 125 acre farm in Florida, found that participating individuals enjoyed the relative autonomy of agricultural work, felt positive about the learning environment where they were able to bring prior skills to the table and/or develop new ones, and experienced better treatment by correctional officers, when compared with other correctional contexts. A number of participants described the experience as transformative (Moore, Freer, & Samuel, 2015). The Insight Garden Program, based out of the Solano and San Quentin Prisons in California, explicitly recognizes the parallels between tending plants and caring for one's own wellbeing; participants engage in courses on both the Inner and Outer gardener, including learning about the concepts and theories of transformation, meditation, emotions, eco-therapy, ecological systems and organic gardening, with participants reporting greater decreases in drug use compared to controls three months post release (Khatib & Krasny, 2015). Something as seemingly simple as growing plants in prison has also been shown to reduce rates of recidivism (Feldbaum et al., 2011; Khatib & Krasny, 2015; Sandel, 2004). An evaluation study of the Insight Garden program found that, in a sample of 117 participants paroled between 2003-09, less than 10% reentered the criminal justice system, compared with 64% recidivism rates in California during that same period (Khatib & Krasny, 2015). Similarly, 500 participants in the Rikers Island GreenHouse recidivated at a rate of 25% after three years, compared with 47% of the general population (Feldbaum et al., 2011). Roots to Reentry, a garden and

landscaping program based out of Philadelphia, measures success through job placements, finding that over 85% of graduates have found successful employment since 2010 (Khatib & Krasny, 2015).

The skills acquired in prison-based horticulture activities have also been found to give participants a sense of wellbeing and increase employability post-release (O'Callaghan, Robinson, Reed, & Roof, 2010), and gardening outside of the prison context has been shown to have vocational benefits ranging from learning new skills to changing attitudes towards hard work and increasing personal responsibility (Kam & Siu, 2010). Within and outside of prison contexts gardening is a neutral, de-stigmatizing activity that is not explicitly associated with correctional rehabilitation, mental health or behavioural treatments, and is therefore powerful in its ability to break down walls and create therapeutic spaces without stigma (Fieldhouse, 2003; Sempik, Aldridge, & Becker, 2005); "something essential happens in a vegetable garden. It's a place where if you can't say 'I love you' out loud, you can say it in seeds. And the land will reciprocate, in beans" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 127).

Other studies pointed to the potential of gardens to be therapeutic in and of themselves, regardless of what activities a person does in them. Attentional restoration theory is frequently drawn upon in the gardening and health literature, and posits that being in nature improves cognitive function by allowing restorative thought processes (Kaplan, 1995). Simply being outside in natural environments is therapeutic, an association so strong that hospital patients in rooms with a view of nature have statistically shorter recovery times and fewer stress incidents (Maller, Townsend, Pryor, Brown, & Leger, 2005). With activities in nature generally, and gardening specifically, it's clear that the process is just as important as the outcome, and the impacts of being outside may be even more significant when contrasted with the architecture and experience of being incarcerated. As Robin Wall Kimmerer, a Potawatomi botanist, a mother and an avid gardener describes:

People often ask me what one thing I would recommend to restore relationships between land and people. My answer is almost always, 'plant a garden.' It's good for the health of the earth and it's good for the health of people. A garden is a nursery for nurturing connection, the soil for cultivation of practical reverence. And its power goes far beyond the garden gate - once you develop a relationship with a little patch of earth, it becomes a seed itself (2013, 126-27).

Relationships between people, places, lands and landscapes can be therapeutic and rehabilitative. These relationships go beyond the fences of the prison garden, so to speak, and can impact outside communities, both through the donation of food and the reciprocity that can be cultivated there.

3.5: The T̓silhqot̓in Nation

The T̓silhqot̓in Nation is a grouping of six bands, Tl'etinqox, ʔEsdilagh, Yunesit'in, T̓si Deldel, Tl'esqox and Xenigwet'in, who have lived in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of central British Columbia for thousands of years, rooted within the sage brush, tall grasses and giant skies, and nestled amongst the Chilcotin, Chilco and Fraser rivers. Historically semi-nomadic, communities would move over large tracts of land throughout the seasons, making use of a diverse range of natural resources as well as trading with neighbouring nations, and in the early 1800s, with fur traders. These communities were classless, and due to their semi-nomadism had little use for status goods, characteristics that made trading with or working for settler colonialists unattractive, and made the T̓silhqot̓in increasingly “difficult” to deal with for colonial agents (Lutz, 2008). The great pains that T̓silhqot̓in peoples took to keep their lands as their own resulted in relative isolation from the Department of Indian Affairs and the church, and allowed for an overall continued reliance on hunting, fishing and gathering, a subsistence economy that continues to exist despite increasing regulations and bans. Beginning in 1908, with the appointment of the Provincial Game Commissioner, these restrictions on hunting, trapping and fishing became increasingly constricting. Ultimately government policies made it progressively more difficult for T̓silhqot̓in people to live off the land, disrupting important cultural cycles and worsening the health and wellbeing of communities. A 1969 study of 80 families in Tl'etinqox found that, while nearly half of all caloric intake came from game and fish, the remaining half came from processed foods, namely breads, cookies, cereal, soft drinks, sugar, and flour (Lee, Reyburn, & Carrow, 1971), clear markers of culinary imperialism that resulted in disproportionately high rates of iron deficiency anaemia, low levels of vitamins C and E, and elevated cholesterol levels (Desai & Lee, 1971). The importance of access to land and resources cannot be underestimated in terms of the T̓silhqot̓in specifically, and the health of Aboriginal peoples more generally, and formed the basis of a legal battle that would span three decades and bring Aboriginal title rights into courtrooms across the country.

In 1990, Xení Gwet'in Chief Roger William brought a case in front of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, declaring T̓silhqot'in title over 438,000 hectares of land in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region. This resulted in a 2007 ruling that, despite acknowledging that T̓silhqot'in rights existed, and that British Columbia had infringed upon their Aboriginal rights and title, stopped short of granting title; the judge cited a technicality. Williams and the provincial and federal governments appealed this ruling, resulting in the BC Court of Appeal upholding the 2007 judgment in 2012, and pushing Chief William to bring his case before the Supreme Court of Canada (Friends of Nemaiah Valley, 2015). Finally, in June 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the T̓silhqot'in community of Xení Gwet'in, granting title to 175,000 hectares of land, and acknowledging that, unlike previous 'postage stamp' rulings, "Aboriginal title is not confined to specific sites of settlement but extends to tracts of land [...] over which the group exercised effective control at the time of assertion of European sovereignty" (Supreme Court of Canada, 2014). This ruling and recognition of the ancestral land rights of the T̓silhqot'in people provided a crescendo in the ongoing fight for self-determination and the right to live on their own lands, a fight that had begun over 150 years earlier with the resistance and subversion to colonial land grabbing that led up to the Chilcotin War of 1864. This war saw T̓silhqot'in Chiefs fight to drive Europeans from their land. These community leaders were no longer willing to accept the encroachment of colonial settlers and infectious disease; in the face of threats by European settlers to reintroduce smallpox into their homes and communities they fought to protect their people, a fight that resulted in their subsequent capture⁴ and execution. These men were named Lhatš'aš'in, Tajed, Biyil, Chayses, Talaghed and Kwutan (Alphonse et al., 2012; Lutz, 2008). The dishonesty and violence of these murders, deemed legal under the pretence that the colony of British Columbia had judicial jurisdiction over T̓silhqot'in people, were finally recognized by the provincial government in 1993, with memorial plaques mounted in Quesnel and New Westminster, where the executions had occurred (Alphonse et al., 2012).

The ancestral and ongoing resistance of the T̓silhqot'in Nation provides a rich and diverse backdrop to the Work 2 Give project, and offers important insight into the battles, both physical and legal, that T̓silhqot'in leaders and communities have fought to ensure their people were and

⁴ The T̓silhqot'in men were tricked into meeting a colonial official for a peace talk, and were arrested instead. This is an important distinction however outside the scope of this thesis (Lutz, 2008).

are able to subsist from the land and enjoy the meaningful foods and ceremonies so engrained in the acts of fishing, hunting, and gathering.

3.6: Summary

The garden at Mission Minimum sits on unceded lands, and interwoven histories of resistance and oppression stretch across that garden and the surrounding communities of British Columbia. The impacts of colonialism are felt daily in the bodies of incarcerated Aboriginal peoples, and in the disconnection from land felt by all Canadians, Indigenous or non. The culinary imperialism that stretches from first contact, through the halls of residential schools and into the mines and lumber yards of the 20th century can be tasted in the remote kitchens of reserve communities across the country and the pre-packaged foods served to those in custody. Yet just as the destructiveness of colonialism crashes through time and space, the gentle swelling of resurgence and resistance continues. Aboriginal communities continue to create and sustain connections; working to reclaim lands, reinvigorate relationships within and across communities of people and more-than-human beings, and revision pre-colonial conceptualizations of justice and punishment. Woven within these long histories are small gardens, planted by some to resist colonial hunger and by others to civilize the 'savage'. Gardening positively impacts physical, social and mental health. Incarceration impacts those same outcomes, often in negative ways. The potential for incarceration to hurt and for gardening to heal must be understood within these wider contexts, ancient ways of being on the land and criminal justice norms rooted in colonial racism. Yet if we do pay attention to these contexts and frame experiences in histories, gardening within prison can be seen as an avenue to heal relationships with oneself, the land, and the wider community.

Chapter 4: Methods & Analysis

4.1: Qualitative Settings and Participants

This research is ethnographic in nature and used qualitative methods to explore the questions outlined above. Qualitative data collection involved the T̓silhqot̓in community members in Tl'esqox who received produce through Work 2 Give, and the men who are incarcerated and working in the garden. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 T̓silhqot̓in community members, 10 men working in the prison garden and 5 stakeholders, representing both T̓silhqot̓in leaders and staff and stakeholders from within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). Purposive sampling was used within each of the participant communities as a means to deepen and expand my understanding of the experiences of gardening while incarcerated as well as receiving donated vegetables within one T̓silhqot̓in community. Each participant had personal experience and understanding of some component of the garden program, and the differences and similarities between these participants helped uncover themes and core meanings. This process was iterative as each return to the prison and each day in Tl'esqox resulted in rich conversations that highlighted new potential participants who could expand, challenge, complicate and clarify themes and findings emerging from ongoing data collection. Any T̓silhqot̓in individual that has received donated produce, are able to speak and understand English, and consents to participate was eligible to take part in this study. All men working in the garden were invited to participate, providing that they were able to speak and understand English and provide consent. Although not a predetermined inclusion criteria, only men with low risk profiles had access to the garden program at the minimum-security institution and were therefore available to participate. Stakeholders were eligible given their knowledge regarding some portion of the garden project and their ability to speak and understand English. The goal of these in-depth, open-ended interviews was to gain a broad understanding of the relevant topics and allow participants to guide the conversation and bring what they deemed important to the forefront. While the interviews allowed participants to share rich information, it was in the sharing of meals and the harvesting of plants, the passing of time together through participant observation conducted within both the T̓silhqot̓in community and the prison garden, that allowed for the relationship building, researcher accountability and human connection that truly deepened and expanded my understanding of the prison garden's impacts, contexts, challenges and opportunities.

4.2: Qualitative Data Collection

From August to late October 2016 I spent ten full days which culminated in approximately 80 hours of fieldwork with the men in the prison garden. Early in the morning I would arrive at Mission Minimum Institution, in Mission BC, pick up my gate pass, and walk through the prison, through a second growth forest, into the garden. I would help out with the harvesting of vegetables, the clearing of tarps and rocks to make way for end of season rototilling and spring fertilization, the sourcing and gathering of goat manure and its subsequent spreading across wide tracts of soil, the pulling up of tomato plants and berry bushes, and the careful cleaning of carrots and other root vegetables so families received un-soiled produce. I was also able to join the men and the farmer as they delivered food to local food banks and soup kitchens, unloading boxes of acorn squash for soup and pumpkins ready for Halloween. It is against Correctional Service of Canada protocols to give honoraria or gifts to incarcerated individuals participating in research; in lieu of these items I brought in a thank you lunch (KFC, as requested by the men) on the last day of the garden's 2016 season.

Throughout August and September of 2016 I spent three full weeks living in Tl'esqox, one of the bands within the wider Tsilhqot'in Nation. Tl'esqox is roughly 50 km west of Williams Lake, situated in a valley and surrounded by hills that eventually give way to sage encrusted cliffs and the crashing Chilcotin River. Today the registered Tsilhqot'in population is roughly 3,500 members (Alphonse et al., 2012); approximately 300 people are registered with the Tl'esqox band, roughly half of whom live there. While there, I stayed in Old School, an old school building given by the Department of Education to the band after it's closure many years prior and currently used to house Elders, individuals completing various training programs hosted on the premise, such as firefighting and heavy duty mechanics, and youth completing court-mandated community service hours. I had a small apartment with a kitchen, and five nights a week a Tsilhqot'in man, the local community alcohol and drug counselor, stayed next door, acting as community host, tour guide, and answerer of my many questions. My time was unstructured yet full, spent gardening and weeding with women in the community garden at the Old School, hiking and berry picking with community members, watching families dip netting in the Chilcotin and Fraser rivers, learning to clean, prepare and smoke fish, sharing meals, and learning recipes passed down by many grandmothers. All community members who took part in a semi-structured interview received an honorarium as a token of my appreciation and a means

of valuing their time and expertise, and any and all community members who took part in interviews, welcomed me into their homes, gave me directions or supported my stay in their community in any way were given food-based gifts as a thank you.



Image 2: Tl'esqox, nestled amongst the hills

Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to two hours in length. The men I spoke with in the prisons were asked about their history of incarceration and participation in correctional programming other than the garden; this was done to provide a foundation upon which their experiences of the garden could be understood. I did not ask the men what crime they had been convicted of, this was purposefully done to create a humanizing space in which the men could craft their own narratives and share their histories and identities with me in the ways they wanted; some of the men chose to tell me how they had come to prison, others did not. Questions for the men focused on how they felt and what they thought about while gardening and whether or not where the vegetables went mattered to them. Within Tl'esqox interviews focused on how people experienced the donation of vegetables, what impact the vegetables might have had on diet and health, whether or not it mattered that the food was grown in prison, and the factors impacting food security and sovereignty for them and their communities.

Interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to craft their narrative and explore tangents in ways that felt natural to them. Within these conversations I sat and listened, asking for clarification and gently pushing people to explore their connections to food, health and wellbeing.

Additionally, I conducted 5 interviews with program stakeholders; specially I spoke with the retired warden who founded the garden, the farmer contracted by CSC, the warden and assistant warden of programming at the institution, and the executive director of the distribution partner.

4.3: Qualitative Data Analysis

A thematic analytic approach was used to highlight patterns and develop descriptive themes. This approach was used based on my “belief in multiple realities [and] a commitment to participants’ viewpoints” (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013, p. 398). All but one interview was recorded, transcribed verbatim, anonymized and subsequently coded using NVivo software; one interview with a T̂silhqot’in woman was not recorded as per her request, and her insights were subsequently treated as field notes. Pseudonyms were provided for each participant as a means to respect their confidentiality and have been used throughout this document. Extensive field notes were written in a research journal; these were used to capture my initial thoughts and insights that may have not been captured in the audio recordings alone. Writing daily in my journal, which started during the ethics process and has continued through the writing of this thesis, allowed me to develop new questions and explore and work through theoretical insights. This “narrative of events, behaviors, conversations, activities, interpretations, and explanations [...] help[ed] to create a portrayal of the soul and heart” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 17) of the garden and its impacts. The reading, re-reading and ongoing writing in the margins of these journal entries worked to refine my thinking; this immersion provided a space within which I began to notice and subsequently systematically clump and categorize themes and core ideas.

The analysis was iterative and was conducted concurrent with data collection. The interview transcripts were read and re-read multiple times. These hard copy stacks of paper became cluttered with fluorescent highlighting, margin notes and rough diagrams of relationships. Through the close and attentive reading of these narratives I was able to explore patterns, expand themes and find commonalities and differences between and within each person’s story. Mind mapping further discovered and connected themes, hectic hand drawn diagrams attempting to find ways to respectfully and honestly illustrate the relationships and connections that people expressed within their narratives; drafting connections among people’s stories, organizing words much “messier and thicker than numbers” (Miles & Huberman, 1984). These maps were then organized into parent-child coding schematics, using NVivo Software. Codes

were created to categorize topics within the narrative data; shared and divergent participant experiences were classified according to key words through the coding process, crafting central themes from across all transcripts. All transcripts were then coded within NVivo. At the beginning of the analysis process the discovering and development of themes and codes through close reading, mind mapping and the creation and subsequent use of coding schematics was done within each group of transcripts, resulting in one coding structure and thematic analysis for the men, one for the Tl'esqox community members, and a third for stakeholders. As the analysis progressed the themes that existed across the narratives within each category were compared and contrasted and subsequent mind mapping, reading of coding reports and re-visiting entries from my field diary allowed for a weaving of themes between these groups, providing a more holistic understanding of the connections, disruptions and potential reciprocities existing across the many kilometers that separate the prison and the wide open spaces of Tl'esqox. This constant comparison allowed for the similarities and differences between each narrative and each group to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). All coding schematics were shared with my thesis advisory committee; questions posed by my committee members were discussed and considered as a group then later reflected on and integrated into the analysis. The coded stakeholder transcripts were read and re-read, and the information gleaned from their pages was used to provide the underlying context and background for my thematic exploration and close comparison of the men's and communities' transcripts. The insight and wisdom of these individuals helped to shade in the contours of the impacts and relationships between and among the men in the prison and the people of Tl'esqox; this information was foundational to my understanding of the garden, yet these interviews are not unpacked in the same way as the narratives of the men and the people of Tl'esqox, as the stakeholders provide a rich backdrop upon which the strengths and experiences of the men and community members and the connections between these groups can be explored and cherished.

Throughout the data collection and analysis period ongoing conversations with thesis committee members, specifically Dr. Helen Brown who leads the wider Work 2 Give research study, helped to refine my thinking and ensure the meaningfulness and reliability of this analysis. During my time in Tl'esqox and in the prison garden, key findings and themes were shared with participants to ensure findings remained meaningful and culturally appropriate. This sharing of themes, such as the influences of resource extraction and climate change on food security, and widespread connections with people who were or had been in prison, was done informally; shared with

women while gardening and picking berries, men while driving to fishing spots: ‘what do you think?’ ‘Does that sound about right?’ These participants helped to refine my thinking, for instance highlighting the tensions between rejecting rivers polluted by tailing ponds and the refusal to let your family go hungry. Near the end of this journey I sat down to write a detailed thesis outline that delineated each section of this manuscript and clearly articulated my analytic structure and the findings that grew from the ongoing engagement with the men and T̓silhqot̓in community members, first in person, and then through the repeated reading of their words. This thesis outline was shared with the women in my thesis advisory and all feedback was discussed and integrated.

4.4: Community cooking workshops

The creation of meaning is relational, therefore the research methods I drew on for this project did not come fully into focus until I began to spend time with the men in the garden, and with the T̓silhqot̓in people on their ancestral lands. Once in Tl'esqox it became clear that the Work 2 Give vegetables were brought into T̓silhqot̓in communities without attendance to community preference, food histories and foodways. Vegetables such as kale, bok choy and diverse varieties of squash were distributed without recipes or information, and communities of people who often describes themselves to me as “meat and potato, fish and rice” people were often left unsure of what these vegetables were, and how to store and prepare them. In talking with community members and staff at the Tl'esqox Health Centre & Band Office I learned that many Elders and community members were interested in learning more about these new vegetables. I was put in touch with the dietician and nutritionist in the T̓silhqot̓in National Government, Megan Dark, and together we collaboratively planned and hosted one cooking workshop in Tl'esqox, in which I personally picked up and drove vegetables from the prison to the community. We separately hosted two other workshops in other T̓silhqot̓in communities (Yunesit̓in and Tl'etinqox), to coincide with the delivery of vegetables from the prison garden. In preparation for these workshops we developed vegetable information sheets, based on feedback received from community members, that included nutritional information, storage information and a selection of accessible recipes (see Appendix I). Vegetable names were translated into T̓silhqot̓in and funding is being sought to sustain the community cooking workshops and support the full translation of vegetable information sheets and a recipe book. I conducted three qualitative interviews with Tl'esqox community members after the cooking workshop and included

questions about people's experiences in the workshops and ways to improve workshops in the future.

4.5: Ethics

The ethical considerations for this project are based upon a theoretical and moral foundation of decolonizing and ethical research that aims to be meaningful to the participating individuals and communities. This study was conducted within the context of the broader Work 2 Give Research program. A Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) currently exists between the UBC School of Nursing, the Work 2 Give Research team and the T̓silhqot̓in National Government (TNG). Negotiation and approval for this project occurred under the supervision of the Work 2 Give Research project's Principal Investigator, Dr. Helen Brown, and was supported by her and the other members of my thesis supervisory committee. The framework for the broader Work 2 Give Research project, which reflects the MOU with the TNG, is based upon the T̓silhqot̓in Nation Research Protocol. Research approval was received both formally and informally from community leaders within Tl'esqox. Ethical approval was also obtained through the Correctional Service of Canada's Research Branch, as an amendment to the pre-existing Work 2 Give Research ethics approval, and through the University of British Columbia Research Ethics Board.

Chapter 5: Results

I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with men who were currently or had in the past worked in the Mission garden. Of these men, 30% were Aboriginal. The average age was 52, with a range from 33 to 77 years. Fifty percent of the men had completed high school or received a GED, 40% had not completed high school, and one man had taken some university courses. The men identified their home communities as being from across Canada, with the majority being from BC (40%) or Ontario (40%). The average time the men had been incarcerated in a federal institution, at the time of the interviews, was 17.9 years (range: 3 months to 39 years). A number of the men had done time in provincial institutions, however these dates were not captured.

Participating in the garden at Mission Minimum, called from here on in simply 'the garden', has diverse and layered impacts on both the participating men and the recipient communities, communities that include local organizations in the Lower Mainland as well as the T̓silhqot̓in Nation. For the participating men the garden is meaningful within the context of being incarcerated, and the various ways that the experience of incarceration impacts their lives: from diet, to the ability to spend time in nature, to more intrinsic benefits such as pride and responsibility. For the T̓silhqot̓in community of Tl'esqox the impacts are overshadowed by a wider history and context of food (in)security, land rights and Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination; this history creates food insecurities and not-quite-sovereignties that are complex and complicated, and difficult to address through the donation of relatively small amounts of produce a handful of times throughout the year.

5.1: Impacts on Men

The impacts on the participating men are layered; layers that deepened and widened over time and through increased engagement and ownership by each individual man, as highlighted in Figure 1. The first layer is access to food, and is the most accessible in terms of impact; even the men who had just started and were not particularly interested in where the food is going were able to take fresh organic produce back into their homes to integrate into the meals that they cooked themselves. As time went on the men become more committed to the work and the tranquility of the garden, the work became a means to find peace and escape within the institution. With more time, more seeds and more sprouts their pride in the growing and tending

of plants furrows upwards; the sheer quantity of vegetables becomes a responsibility. As the destination of these beautiful plant foods clarifies, the act of giving creates additional meaning for the men. Finally, as their work in the garden continues through the seasons the men are able to imagine meaningful futures, envisioning their time in the garden as not only growing and giving, but as planting and tending roots for a future outside of prison, one where nature, giving, responsibility and self-worth may take on new and impactful meanings. For the core men in the garden, who had worked over several seasons and provided mentorship to incoming recruits, the impacts were the most meaningful.

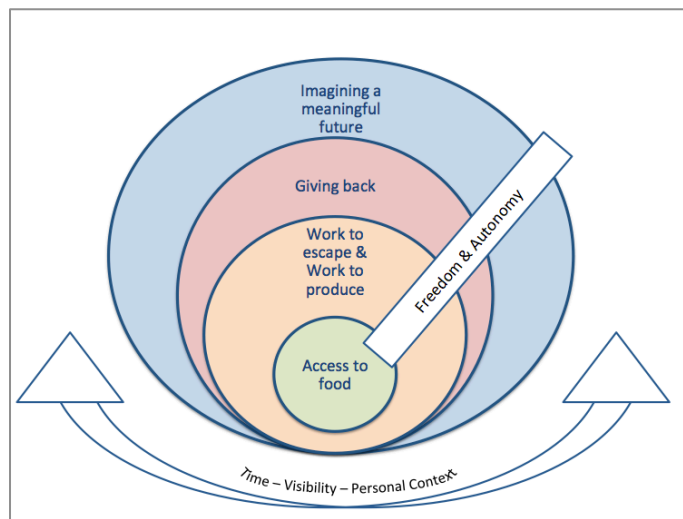


Figure 1: Layered impacts of the prison garden on participating men

The specific impact on each man is influenced by three external forces and contexts: (a) *time*, including each man’s length of incarceration; the passing of seasons, and; the number of weeks, months and seasons spent in the garden; (b) *visibility*, including men watching the plants grow; seeing, meeting and interacting with the diverse individuals who receive the donated food, and; the reciprocity of recipient community members watching the men give, creating visible and alternate social narratives around what type of people end up in prison, and what potential they may or may not have; and finally; (c) *personal contexts*, including men’s ethnic and/or Aboriginal identities; histories of work and education; childhood memories, and; their institutional history and context, which institutions they had been in, and whether or not they identified as a ‘lifer’ or were new to the criminal justice or federal system. These impacts and influences are then intersected by the concepts of freedom and autonomy, driving forces that impact the men against

the wider context of incarceration, providing meaning in gardening that is explicitly based within the experience of being in prison and of having limited freedom of choice and of movement.

5.1.1: Access to Food

The first, most easily accessible layer of impact was access to food. The institution has a minimum security classification and the men do not sleep in cells as they might at higher security levels; instead they share houses with four to seven other men. Minimum security is the last institutional stop as men cascade down from higher security levels before release back into the community; men are consequently expected to buy their own groceries through a central ordering system and prepare their own meals. These activities are intended to provide meal planning and budgeting experience to individuals experiencing incarceration, increasing their chances of successfully reintegrating back into the community. For the men at Mission Minimum staple groceries, such as flour, basic fruits, vegetables and meats are ordered through the central ordering system; men have to provide their grocery lists to the food service department weekly, each receiving a per diem that works out to \$32.51/week. Additional novelty items, such as pre-made chicken wings, snacks, or sodas can be purchased at the commissary, although items are often prohibitively expensive. While fresh fruits and vegetables are available to the men through the food ordering system, the quality of the produce is variable. Being able to take home fresh, organic produce from the garden after work provides an opportunity for the men to integrate high quality produce into their diets while also saving on their monthly food budget. For many of the men, the great variety of vegetables available in the garden allows them to try new things, integrating new vegetables and recipes into their diets. As one man notes:

“I ate a lot of stuff out there I never even tried before, like eggplant, never tried it before, and I cooked it myself in there, and never stopped eating it then. Your diet changes quite a lot if you’re out there, I hardly eat meat at all during the summers.”

The high quality of the vegetables was also appreciated in contrast to what is available in supermarkets in the community. One man who had been released in summer of 2014 and who I interviewed in the community explained that while he now has access to more variety than he did through the food ordering program at Mission Minimum, “a lot of the stuff in them stores is just horrible.” For the majority of the men with whom I spoke, the dietary changes that resulted from their time in the garden were something they intended to continue with post release, with

many of them hoping to have access to community or personal gardens where they could grow their own food. Even for the men with previous gardening experience the variety of things grown in the garden was novel. This variety was facilitated by a supervising farmer who travels extensively and enjoys experimenting with new vegetables and varieties brought home from faraway places; this impacted the men's ability to diversify their diet and learn about new plants, such as lemongrass and daikon.

For some men the shifts in their diets were understood within the context of their own childhood hunger; men spoke of daily hunger, across classrooms, family living spaces and bedrooms, and connected these experiences to the trajectory that resulted in their incarceration. Their awareness of the downstream impacts of hunger shaped their appreciation for the fresh vegetables they were able to cook for themselves. For other men the growing, harvesting and eating of their own vegetables reconnected them with the foods, foodways and experiences of their childhoods, linking them to memories of family farms and backyard gardens.

The majority of the men had been incarcerated for long periods of time, with 70% having spent ten or more years in federal custody, and many had taken culinary skills programming offered through institutions across the country. These skills, combined with access to fresh vegetables, allowed them to create appealing and nutritious meals for themselves and their housemates. I found the level of culinary skill and attention to nutrition and flavor surprising at first, because I assumed that most men would subsist on the stereotypical pastas and burgers of bachelorhood. One man with whom I spoke lived with someone who enjoyed baking; he would provide fresh squash in return for a piece of the pie or cheesecake. All the men I spoke with were happy to share cooking advice, sending me home with vegetables and their favourite recipes: butternut squash soup with coconut milk, ratatouille, and coleslaw with fresh garlic scapes. In the past some of the previously participating men had traded vegetables for cigarettes and other contraband items; however this was frowned upon as the vegetables were meant for personal consumption, within reason, and for donation to people deemed deserving of donated food. One man, Caleb⁵, described how he rarely took home vegetables because he "didn't like getting yelled at by [the farmer contracted by CSC to run the garden]". The farmer would often shout, in a firm and sarcastic yet friendly manner to men who left with multiple bags of vegetables. Caleb, who

⁵ All names used throughout this document are pseudonyms.

had only been incarcerated for three weeks at the time of our interview, and who was spending his first day in the garden after transfer from the federal Regional Reception and Assessment Centre (RRAC) during my fieldwork period, was not aware of the vegetables' destination and had assumed they were sold for profit; upon learning where the vegetables went he reframed his understanding of the farmer, shifting from a general apprehension towards respect: "[he] doesn't mind if you bring vegetables home for your house, but if your bag's overflowing he doesn't like that. Well, now I know why, because they're for people that are hungry." The ability not only to grow, but then to cook their own food starkly contrasted against the set meal times and pre-made processed foods available at medium and maximum security institutions.

The dietary impact of taking home vegetables and integrating them into home cooked meals intersects with the themes of autonomy and freedom. One man described the meals available in higher security institutions as "not even for humans. It's not food. But they feed you it, it's a filling, right? And they feed you a lot of it. It's not real eggs, it's not real anything." For the men, many of whom had taken culinary programs in the past, and others who simply used their extended period of incarceration to teach themselves to cook, using books from the prison library, the ability to create and play with new vegetables and flavours allowed for creative and autonomous experiences, providing them a space to exercise their freedom of choice, selecting what they did and did not want to eat. When asked if his time working in the garden had impacted his diet, Dennis explained:

"Oh yeah, oh yeah. Way different than before. I don't want to eat, touch a potato, or anything involving a potato for a long time. There's so much of it, and bread, up behind when you do medium time and max time. It's a way different ballgame in there [...] it's a privilege to be in a minimum security institution."

Across the layers of impact the garden was seen as a privilege. For men who had done time in higher security prisons this privilege was nested within the larger privilege of a minimum security institution, where freedoms such as meal choice and preparation provided spaces to practice their autonomy. In the context of diet and nutrition the ability to access a wide variety of fresh, organic produce, and to integrate those vegetables into any meal they wanted was seen as meaningful, supporting of their autonomy and freedom within the confines of institutional histories where meals seldom included fresh vegetables and choice was not an option.

5.1.2: Working to Escape, Working to Produce

The men's ability to work to both produce and to metaphorically escape offered a layer of impact above and beyond access to vegetables. As one man, who is still in federal custody but can no longer work in the garden due to health problems explained, "I used to like going out there because of the sun more than the veg."



Image 3: The prison garden in August

Working to Escape

It's nearly impossible to not feel the substantial difference between the open natural space of the garden and the institution. The first time I visited the garden, after signing in at the front duty desk, I was led through the paved roads of the prison, weaving between the houses, CORCAN buildings, staff offices and programming areas. The institution, compared with higher security areas, is relatively open and green; a large pond filled with ducks and geese sits behind the houses and small gardens dot the lawns between the men's homes. Yet even given the relative openness of the institutional spaces, the contrast between there, with the crackling intercom interjecting into all thoughts and conversations, and the garden is hard to describe. From the garden you cannot hear the intercom, you cannot see the paved roads. You walk through the gate at the back of the institution and through old growth forest; blackberry bushes, walnut trees, douglas fir and vine maples caked with thick mosses frame the now gravel road. Each time I walked or was driven down that road, the trees and their ecosystem friends made me feel that I was on my way to a weekend camping trip, not a prison work program. As the road curves you see the garden lay out ahead of you, nestled amongst rolling hills and towering trees; perfect rows of broccoli and eggplant contrast with the brambles and blackberry bushes slowly creeping

out, back into the open sunshine. The men feel the dissimilarity between the garden and the wider institution acutely:

“When you’re here, I mean even though you work with people, you’re not hearing machines and that kind of stuff, right? You’re hearing birds, you’re listening to the wind through the trees, you’ll see the odd wildlife. In CORCAN industries you’re in a building, there’s bright lights, and it’s noise.”

“Working out here has just been so nice. It doesn’t seem like you’re in prison, you know? You get a lot more freedom here.”



Image 4: The second growth surrounding the garden

Even while incarcerated the feeling of sun and wind on your face creates a sense of freedom, an escape. These impacts become even more meaningful for men who have cascaded down from higher security institutions, where not only the contrast between the garden and the wider Mission institution, but also between minimum and higher security levels creates a sense of freedom and privilege. As one man explains:

“This isn’t jail, right? You know what I mean? It doesn’t feel like a jail. Like when I got here I came in a van with no handcuffs, and guys walking around in their clothes by the road, I’m like ‘holy crap what’s going on here,’ right? This isn’t jail, there’s no gate. So it’s kind of a privilege to be here too, and then it’s a privilege to come out here and actually do this. Because in no other place will you get to go gardening, and get the vegetables off the garden.”

The garden was described as therapeutic and calming. One man, Jordan, who had only been working in the garden for a month when I spoke to him, described how the other men seemed impacted by their time there:

“[The farmer’s] got flowers, rows and rows of flowers. And you talk to some of these guys, and they’re out there picking the flowers and ‘it’s very therapeutic,’ I’m like, ‘what?’ And they say ‘yeah, just standing out in the flower patch and pick flowers,’ it takes their mind off stuff. It does take your mind off a lot of stuff, gardening, it’s a good thing.”



Image 5: One of the men, standing proudly beside a flowering zinnias plant

The impact of being in the garden is not only tied to the physical experience of working outside in a serene natural setting, but the way the men felt treated by the farmer. The farmer is far more relaxed with the men than other CSC staff, allowing the men to bend and break certain institutional rules, for instance letting the men work without shirts in the hot summer sun, allowing them to escape, if only for a while, institutional dress codes. The experience of working with each other is also different in the garden, as is the way prison politics play out during garden shifts. Two men told me that these politics didn’t continue into the garden, that everyone left that behind and came to work to focus on the growing and donating of food. However the

majority of the men talked about how prison politics continued to exist within the garden, particularly among the younger part-time guys, but that it was easier to escape those politics, to work alone planting seeds, weeding, and trimming fruit trees. For some of the men who had longer federal sentences the garden provided enough space to work alone, allowing them the peace they needed to pass their time easily and quietly. One man, Stan, had been incarcerated for 39 years, first in Ontario and then in BC, experienced the garden as a place of peace and quiet, somewhere to avoid the unwanted shifts in prison culture, where people no longer mind their own business; where there is “just no respect anymore [...] They come right from RRAC to here and never have to do a day’s hard time, they don’t learn nothing.” All of the lifers with whom I spoke viewed the influx of younger men, particularly those who went straight into minimum security without doing ‘hard time’, as eroding the longstanding con code, an informal set of values that shape the way people live their lives while incarcerated. Young men, particularly those involved in gang activity, were seen as wanting to make a name for themselves, which conflicted with the lifers’ desire to be simply left alone. For Stan, the garden offered an escape from the institution, and as he gained seniority he was able to work alone in the way he wanted, peacefully keeping his head down and waiting for release:

“I come out here because... the first time I come out here with [the farmer], I worked out in the field and that. And you had to work with everybody. And they fucking whine and cry, you know ‘blah, blah, blah,’ and you just don’t have time for that, because it makes a long day when you have to listen to that [...] So I worked that and then I came out here and I work by myself. I do the tomatoes and the peppers. [...] I would say I don’t have to really listen to the others, no, because I work by myself, right? The days just blow by, yeah the days just blow by.”

For other men the ability to escape prison politics not only is a means to pass the time well, but a way to protect themselves from potential conflicts within the institution. For the majority of lifers working in the garden, the ability to escape and avoid prison politics was seen as protective, ensuring that they are left alone and allowed to finish their remaining time without incident; as one man explained, “all it takes is for somebody to just say the wrong thing about you, make up some story or whatever, and as a lifer you know if you get shipped out of here it’s gonna cost you five years.” For other men the garden provided a space for them to avoid conflicts that they feared they themselves would start, conflicts based on deeply held values and morals of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ men in the institution:

“The only thing I have in common with these guys is we’re locked up in the same place. And that’s the way I want to keep it. It’s really, it’s hard for me to be in a place like this, and other places like this, and I’ll be sitting there with 5 or 6 other guys and I’m the only one in the room who’s never raised my hand to hurt a woman or child in my life [...] Being [in the garden] keeps me away from places like that. And I don’t have to listen to guys bitching and complaining. If I sit and listen to guys and their problems and their opinions about stuff they know nothing about, I’ll start telling them what’s wrong with what they’re saying, and they’ll end up in the hospital and I’ll end up next door [at the medium security institution]. Like I say, I’m trying to get out of prison, I don’t wanna stay here for the rest of my life because of someone’s else’s problems.”

The con code, though shifting, includes not only the value of minding your own business and keeping your head down, but a hierarchy within institutions, with people who commit violent offences at the top and those who commit sexual offences, particularly those who victimize children, at the bottom. These tensions surrounding who committed which crime did seep into the garden. I never asked any of the men what crime they had been convicted of, only how long they had been incarcerated; however, over the course of my time in the garden some of the men would tell me what others had allegedly done, creating boundaries around the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ men in the garden. It is clear that the way that the garden continues to operate within this shifting prison culture and across the tensions between different crimes and differing moral codes impacts the everyday and ongoing operations of the garden.

Working to Produce

Being in the garden as a means to escape the concrete and political spaces of the wider institution creates meaning and benefit for the men. Yet they are not simply spending their time in the green space of the garden, but working to grow labour-intensive organic produce. It is through these efforts, often in the pouring rain or sweltering sun, that the men are able to feel proud of not only their hard work, but the visible and bountiful benefits of that work; “it’s awesome. It’s rewarding. To see the fruits of your labour.” As another man described:

“It’s peaceful, it’s tranquil. Basically just watching everything grow. I mean you have to kinda picture it. When we first started we had to cover all those greenhouses [...] Then we had to clean the beds, and then everything you see out there, every single black tarp we put out there. And then we planted. You know the potato field, that was one of

the first things that we planted; so you have to fertilize it, and then it's gotta be tilled, and then we have to dig a hole, put fertilizer, put a potato, and cover. So basically you're watching everything grow. And not only grow, but then you're harvesting in three or four months, it's holy smokes. And then seeing the hundreds- actually thousands of pounds that you're producing. It's so awesome."

The visibility of their work has a huge impact on the men; the pride they felt was palpable as they showed me around the garden, pointing out particularly large cabbages, perfectly red tomatoes and weed-less rows of romaine. As Stan told me: "I take pride, when I put the tomatoes in the ground, or the peppers, I want them standing up straight."



Image 6: Harvested squash, cleaned and ready for donation



Image 7: Clearing the fields at the season's end

The garden also allows for a kind of structure that many of the men found appealing. The ongoing responsibility, set tasks, and largely predictable needs of the plants and the equipment and tools needed to run a farm provided a sense of order and control that was comforting,

particularly when compared to the shifting prison culture back in the institution and chaotic and negative previous life experiences. As one man, Jackson, explained when describing his skill and ability at fixing tools and machines in the garden:

“It’s kinda weird, but I’ve been doing that my whole life. I can look at something that’s broken and instantly know how to fix it, except for my life, that’s different. It’s pretty fucked up. I can fix everything but me.”

While this structure was important, it was never monotonous, providing the men with something not only productive but interesting to do during the many days of their incarceration. As one man explained, “you can do one thing one day and another thing another day, and it’s always different; you’re always enjoying yourself out there.” The men who were fully committed to the garden also understood the importance of maintaining this culture of order, stability and autonomy; they recognized the impacts of turnover, something that is particularly high in a minimum institution where a great number of the men are working towards upcoming parole dates. The men appreciated that new recruits willing to work hard and “do things right” were important for the sustainability of the project; the men felt pride not only watching the vegetables grow but helping newcomers to integrate and buy-in to the “whole garden thing.” As these two men explain:

“You can see it. The guys have no idea what they’re doing at the beginning of the year, right, and that stuff comes up, those plants, and you can see it, when they actually get it. That’s good stuff. You can go out and take that on the street, get your own garden, because now you know what it takes.”

“So it’s teamwork, working with people, being able to take my experiences and my skills and that and help other people and show them, you know, here’s an easier way, or here’s how I’d do it. So they can benefit from what I’ve learnt over the years. Especially for the younger kids and that, who know it all [laughing]. And it makes it so much easier when you’re doing something like that and helping somebody else.”

The men I spoke with believed that having new men able and willing to work the whole yearly cycle, from empty and wet soil to full bloom, is one way to increase recruitment and investment in the garden. Instilling these values in the new recruits was important not only for a stable and enjoyable work environment over time, but to ensure that productivity remains high.

“We’ve got Hubbard squash over there, and we’ve got half a bed over there, but some of the guys are lazy, they go ‘whatever,’ and they go and plant ‘em. They don’t care [...] If this was all one squash, and we picked all the spaghetti marrow, then that bed’s ready to be cleaned up for winter. Rather than come October, when the big rush - the big push is on, to get that done. The best way to get that done is step by step. But when you got guys that don’t really care, and they only show up when they want to show up, it makes it difficult, it’s hard sometimes. Because then all of a sudden you go from eight guys down to five guys, last year there was four of us out here. And we all knew what we had to do, and we all pitched in and worked together, because we’d all worked together for a year, year and a half, and we got it done. But sometimes still we go [sigh], ‘I wish we coulda got that done, just that little extra.’”

In the garden the men work to help themselves and the other men in the institution; creating and sustaining a space where men can develop a sense of responsibility over living things, perhaps for the first time, caring for rows of seeds and tiny plants; where men can learn to work both alone and together, can pass time quickly and peacefully, and can mentor each other to sustain a garden culture that provides escape and protection from the wider institution.

5.1.3: Giving Back

For the men working in the garden, the impacts of watching tiny seeds and sproutlings turn into tens of thousands of pounds of food is meaningful because of the pride they feel watching the literal fruits and vegetables of their labour. Additional meaning is derived from the men’s understanding that the produce is destined for donation to economically vulnerable and marginalized communities within the Lower Mainland and the central interior of BC. It is this giving back that makes the men so passionate about high production, so involved in the small tasks necessary to ensure large, nutritious crops:

“Helping these kids out and families out, who can’t afford the necessities of good food [...] It makes you feel good, that accomplishment, when you come out here and see all these black tarps in the fall, and then in the spring you start peeling them back and piling the ground up, and planting the various crops. And for a long time it doesn’t look like it’s growing very much, and then all of a sudden you come out here after a weekend, a long weekend and it’s like ‘wow, look at that stuff! It’s way up.’ It’s jumped so high. So you have that sense of fulfilment.”

“It’s some of the best food around, because there’s no pesticides on them. But it’s all those little things that come together, you know? One of the big things is, I’ll go around to garden weeds out, and I’ll throw them out- don’t throw them in the compost pile- throw them in the bush [...] it helps the soil out, and you get a better crop with everything you’re putting into it.”



Image 8: A CSC truck, loaded for delivery

The men frequently brought up that they were growing organic vegetables, a distinction important in and of itself as well as in relation to where the vegetables were going; while the increased work required to grow organic produce could have been a point of contention, the end destination of the vegetables created increased meaning. Knowing where the vegetables were going also meant that increasing production through expansion was important to the men:

“Because it’s my, my joy, you know? I mean, a lot of people say ‘well it’s a lot of work, isn’t it?’ No, it’s not. It’s something I thoroughly enjoy, I get a lot of benefits out of it, and the pleasure of being able to go somewhere and take a load of veg and see the reaction on people’s face. And even out here and you’re wandering around, you go ‘geez, I could plant that, I could open up that, expand this area.’ This area here, a year or two ago was bush and rock.”

While the work of planting, tending and harvesting food for economically vulnerable children and families is inherently meaningful to the men who have worked in the garden long enough to fully appreciate where their produce is going, additional meaning is derived by the contrast to other institutional work that the men have done. Men shared experiences of working in

lumberyards, in electrical and textiles training and work programs through CORCAN, and a variety of other jobs. By and large work that allowed the men access to the outdoors, such as grounds keeping, were considered better than working indoors. The monotony of many available jobs, such as sewing identical clothing items over and over again, was contrasted with the diverse tasks available in the garden, and the ability to give back to communities was seen as novel when contrasted with other CSC employment opportunities:

“I’m not running around cleaning an area and just wasting my time doing nothing. I’m out here actually doing something that actually helps people, so that’s the only thing that actually makes it worthwhile.”

While some of the men happily share vegetables they bring home from the garden with their housemates and other men in the institution, others refuse to; “I’d rather feed the homeless than these guys, right?” For some of the men there is a hierarchy of the types of people that are deserving of the donated food.

“Well you never know where the food’s going until you see it, I mean you think that it’s a bunch of crack heads who just spend all their money on dope. But you envision that in your head, and then you go out there and see, like I said, one woman she had a different kid every year, so that was neat. And the same old people that come out and ask ‘what’s that, how do you do, what do you do with that? Is it tasty? Can you cook it?’ So yeah, that makes a big difference.”

This idea of who and who is not deserving of food donations was echoed by a few of men in their understanding of which men in the garden were deserving of redemption and restoration through the act of giving. As one man, Jackson explained, when asked whether or not his understanding of a moral hierarchy in prison impacted the way he viewed other men’s participation in the garden: “there’s nothing you can do that’s gonna make up for [sexual assault]. That happened to me when I was a kid, believe me there’s nothing you can do that’s gonna make up for that.”

The meaning of working in the garden and the relationships men had with each other was grounded in their own personal context and histories. Similarly, the meaning of providing food to hungry people was understood by each man within the context of their own childhoods and relationships to food and hunger. Many of the men with whom I spoke grew up in economically

vulnerable households where they had experienced hunger and food insecurity. This understanding of the impact of food for a young family provided an opportunity for men to not only develop a sense of self worth and accomplishment, but also to reflect on their own experiences and some of the forces that impacted their life:

“Everyone’s worried about the money and the cost [of running charitable programs like the garden]. Well, what’s it cost to have the people out on the street, that need food, that can’t afford to feed their kids? Down the road it’s gonna be hard for those kids. I grew up without food; so it keeps going, keeps going. Unless you do something to help the people that need help today, it’s just going to be an endless game of trying to make things better. You’ve gotta give people hope and something to work with.”

The impacts of giving back went far beyond simply feeding hungry people. The educational, mental and physical health and crime prevention potential of providing children with food to help them pay attention at school is well established in the literature (Cook & Jeng, 2015), and something of which the men had very poignant understandings and experiences. For some of the men the connections they drew between their food insecure childhoods, their crimes and their incarcerations provided a space for not only reflection, but the ability to develop responsibility and feel hopeful that they could not only change their futures but perhaps impact the chances of children growing up in similar circumstances. That being said, the impact of growing vegetables for donation, including increases in self-esteem, ideas of self worth and positive identities were not restricted to the men who could personally relate to the experience of economic vulnerability, food insecurity, and hunger. For a couple of the men the idea that children went hungry in Canada was appalling, something they felt accountable for, based on what they considered privileged childhoods. For all the men, regardless of personal context, the impact of their giving was enhanced by their ability to deliver vegetables to local organizations. These food deliveries were pioneered by the farmer, who took the men on a rotating basis on Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs) to donate vegetables to food banks and soup kitchens within a short drive of the institution. Allowing the men to see where their hard work ends up, meet some of the people who receive the produce, and create and maintain connections with community organizations and community members on the outside is one of the prevalent strengths of the garden. For the minority of men who had no personal experience of food insecurity and hunger, being able to go into food banks and see the type and quality of food available to community members instilled further responsibility to provide fresh and nutritious vegetables:

“It’s the satisfaction of being able to help others, and know that they’re eating a lot better, rather than the Cheerio box and stale crackers, or food that’s old and should have been composted. I go to some of these food banks and I see what they got when I go into the coolers to put stuff in, or a lot of the times I’ll put stuff out front, and I’ll see what other outfits have dropped there. And it’s like, man... dump that crap in the garbage. They had zucchinis, and beans, boxes of beans, and they were full of mold. Because companies, they get a tax deduction for donating food, and they save themselves the disposal fees, so the food bank is ending up having to pay for that cost. If they were to take that money and buy fresher stuff, it would be a lot better. That’s one of the things, that’s one of my real pet peeves about those stores that donate stuff, you take a look at those wholesalers and stuff like that, it’s stuff that should have gone in the garbage.”

The men make a point to wash root vegetables such as carrots and beets, to ensure that each delivery is clean, aesthetically pleasing and something they can feel proud of providing to the surrounding communities.

For many of the men there is a general distrust towards the prison administration, so the ability to physically walk into a soup kitchen and deliver vegetables provides reassurance that the vegetables are actually being donated, that they are not being tricked into working under the guise of charitable giving. The garden also produces a range of vegetables that are not necessarily well known to food banks recipients, and even some of the staff and volunteers. Having the men who have planted the seeds, tended the seedlings and harvested the vegetables deliver the produce gives them the opportunity to share information on how to prepare and store different vegetables:

“We’d take them in there and they’d say ‘how do we cook this? What do we do with this?’ And so I’d tell them, and most people would be ‘oh, okay,’ and they’d realize, ‘yeah, I love squash.’ We’d usually get a chance to discuss what we do with each vegetable down there when we’re moving boxes back and forth, so yeah, we’d go to 3 or 4 different food banks. It made for a good outing when you see, when see them taking the vegetables- most people don’t get to see that in prison, most people don’t get to see the end of their labour, so that’s nice.”

The men’s experiences of ETAs cemented the importance of the work they did in the garden, fostering connections with community members and creating a space to share not only

vegetables but knowledge. During my field work I went on a number of deliveries to the food banks, and on each run at least one community member asked for more information about one of the vegetables: what is this? How do I cook it? How do I store it? Can I prepare this variety like I do others? Without the men there to share recipes and storage information the impact of the vegetables would have been substantially lessened. Vegetables can and should be more than mere food, they are connections between lands, people and places, they are vehicles for recipes passed down through families, carried across continents by immigrants and refugees, shared amongst friends and strangers. The men's ability to meet some of the recipients created a space for the vegetables to fulfill their potential, to be more than carriers of vitamins, but mediums for human connection, for the recognizing of sameness across palates, cultures, and prison walls.

The T̄silhqot'in connection

Given the distance from the prison to the T̄silhqot'in (500 km), the community connection that the men enjoy with local organizations in the Lower Mainland is more fragile when stretched north to the interior. The men recognize that they cannot deliver the food themselves, the distance is too far and the logistics of having overnight ETAs too complicated; consequently the men miss out on that connection, in terms of both meeting the people who receive a portion of the food they grow, and in their ability to share information about less familiar vegetables to recipients interested but perhaps apprehensive about strange new plants. Yet, despite the general disconnect from the T̄silhqot'in, the majority of the men had an awareness of the barriers that many Aboriginal communities face across Canada, either based in their own Aboriginal identity and context or through friendships and understandings made during childhood or while incarcerated (particularly in the Prairie region of Canada, where prison populations are predominantly Aboriginal). As one Aboriginal man, Patrick, describes:

“I would imagine it's like that in most Aboriginal communities. It's more fast food and potato chips than fruit and veggies. It's introduced. And I guess it's dopamine [...] I mean, sugar, right? It tastes good. But I mean even farming, right? I'm sure back in the day that's what we used to have. I'm not talking way back, I'm talking when colonization more or less got introduced to us, with chickens, pigs, cows, stuff like that. But most people would rather go to the super market, instead of harvesting. I believe that our Elders, when they share stories with you, of how they grew up, they had to go, they didn't have a choice but to go pick berries and various plants, you

know, medicines and all that kinda stuff. Now they basically have a choice, right? I believe that we used to... you knew right from wrong, right? And then residential school and all that kinda stuff, that had a huge impact, huge impact on Aboriginal communities. And it's gonna take generations for that to go away, right? But the way I look at life now, you know from my youth, I can make the change. I can be the change, instead of trying to change others, or whatever, I just need to change my behaviour and my way of thinking."

Patrick describes not only his connection to an Aboriginal community he has never visited through shared experiences and histories tied into the ongoing legacies of colonialism, but also addresses how his connection to that past drives his participation in the garden, as well as other Aboriginal programs available at the prison. When asked if there was a way for the garden to strengthen impacts in the T̓silhqot̓in, he went on to say:

"I would think it would be hands on, right? That's the way you're gonna learn. I mean you can read books and stuff like that, but when it's hands on, that knowing. Being there and showing them, and helping them. But letting them get their hands dirty as well, right? Working alongside with you."

The men all recognized that the freedom and autonomy that they experience while gardening in prison is also available, although slightly differently, to T̓silhqot̓in reserve communities. Every man I talked to, whether within the context of a recorded interview or chatting while harvesting cabbages, felt that the only way for the T̓silhqot̓in Nation to benefit fully from the project was for them to grow their own food. The men knew 500 km was too far for them to deliver vegetables and share recipes with community members. They also had an awareness of the geographic isolation of central interior BC and the barriers to fresh food and vegetables that exist in rural and remote communities, particularly those without active farms and gardens. Above and beyond the impacts on food security, the empowerment that can come from growing your own food, particularly for people who face numerous barriers to healthy eating, was something the men wanted to share with the T̓silhqot̓in Nation. For Aboriginal men the impacts of growing your own food pushed back against colonial forces, and their desire to share the benefits of gardening connected them to T̓silhqot̓in community members through shared resistance against the correlates of colonialism, be it hunger, incarceration, or unemployment. For non-Aboriginal men their experience of learning alongside the farmer, working together and feeling part of a larger team was simply, yet powerfully, something they hoped that others could experience.

“I think if someone was to go that little extra mile and say, ‘hey, we’ll set something up, do some gardening.’ Help these people and show them how to raise veggies themselves. How to garden, how to work the land, and then take that knowledge of it and probably help another group. It’s a big ripple. How many can benefit from this down the road?”

There is inherent value in helping others, in terms of both person growth and widening senses of self worth and value, and the tending of relationships and ongoing harvests of human connection and reciprocities. One man, who had been incarcerated for 36 years, said he would gladly go up to the T̂silhqot’in after his release, slated for early 2017; he told me “I would dive in there in a heartbeat.” This interweaving of experiences in the garden and future possibilities and plans was a common theme.

5.1.4: Imagining a Meaningful Future

The garden enabled the men to imagine alternate identities above and beyond that of ‘criminal’ or ‘inmate’, and to plan for life in the community upon release. For some of the men this future outside of prison was shaped by the work ethic they had gained working in the garden.

“I don’t mind a little hard work, there was one time that I didn’t really care for stuff like that, but I don’t mind being in a minimum institution and trying to get used to working and stuff like that upon release, ‘cuz they expect you to do quite a bit right away, so it’s good to get that routine.”

The development of a work routine was something new and significant for some of the men. While the core workforce tended to have histories of consistent employment prior to their incarceration, men without experience waking up for work five days a week found the routine and responsibility helpful for building the intermediate skills required for work, such as punctuality and respect for authority. One man, Jeffrey, who had a consistent work history prior to incarceration, understood recidivism as linked to people’s ability to work, not the correctional programming that he felt was forced onto men regardless of their needs:

“If you actually have the choice of actually doing something, like working on cars or working here or anything, you might be able to get a job on the street, and you might not come back [...] Sure, they can sit there all they want and listen to someone talk, but it’s not gonna teach

them to work, so you're gonna send out a bunch of guys who don't know how to work and they're gonna be right back."

Many of the men brought with them negative experiences with authority figures, often accentuated within the power structures and hierarchies between prison staff and people in custody. The farmer, an outsider not seen as part of CSC, provided leadership and authority while also being accessible and "just one of the guys." As one man explained:

"Yeah, he's a really good teacher. And I mean I've seen him give more people a work ethic than I thought it possible to do. He's a really good teacher, if you listen to him, you learn a lot, right, and I like to think I did, I learned a lot. He's really good to have out there, I don't think I'd be going back there if it weren't for him, if it was someone else out there I wouldn't go back there, no. He's quite a character."

The ETAs also provided another useful skill for the men; the opportunity to engage with people in the community and develop self-confidence in a non-institutional environment. Some of the men who had been incarcerated for long periods of time struggled with apprehension and fear surrounding life on the outside, as two of the man explained:

"I know guys who purposefully get close to the gate and sabotage it, because they don't want to get out, it's that fear factor. They're comfortable here, they've got everything here. It depends on what you want out of life and where you want to go and what you want to do. What I want to do is get out of there and expand what I've learned in here, the way of gardening and helping people, volunteering. I'm really looking forward to it."

"I've gone into so many places now, the food banks, and they're all happy to see me, sit and chit chat, and it's like 'hey, when you get out are we still going to see you?' All the food banks that we go to here have all said 'if you ever want a job,' or if I want to volunteer. And that's what you need, to go out and meet people, to control that fear."

The garden provides a means for men to build confidence by simply being in the community and talking with people at food banks and soup kitchens. This confidence is increased further by the impacts that growing food to give back to communities has on the men's self esteem and ideas of self-worth and identity. For the core men who really bought into the garden idea the experience was often transformation. Many of the men wanted to continue to give back, take what they've

learned and spread that knowledge and spirit of giving in the community, as one man, Stan, told me: “when I get out this time, to the street, I wouldn’t be afraid to volunteer.”

Changing Social Perceptions

The fear that many lifers feel about reintegrating into society is echoed by social apprehension and fear around previously convicted and incarcerated individuals re-entering communities. As the men grow and donate vegetables, physically enter organizations, unload boxes and share favourite recipes, perceptions of both life in the community and people in prison are renegotiated, broken down and built up again. As the farmer describes:

“A few years back they offered us to stay for lunch with the volunteers [...] I remember a few years ago, one inmate- you know we’d done it for several weeks. And then one day this lady, she says to one inmate ‘well how long have you been in for?’ And he goes ‘18 years.’ Then the next week none of them sat with us. But now that particular inmate still goes with me, and if he’s not along they’ll ask ‘where’s that other guy?’”

The men’s ability to connect with some of the recipient communities and be visible in their giving has slowly worked to change the way that some community members think about people who are or have been in prison. This is important because for men to continue to give back, or even simply to work on the outside, the community needs to give them an opportunity to belong and be welcomed.

5.1.5: Challenges & Strengths

There are a number of challenges facing the garden, including issues surrounding the workforce, the seasonal nature of the work, shifting political climates and funding, and transportation to the Tsilhqot’in, as well as a number of strengths. The visibility and time required for new men recruited into the garden to ‘get it’ is often at odds with the majority of the prison population; where histories of under- and un-employment are widespread and “easier” jobs are often sought after; as one man explained: “other people that don’t work here, when I first got here they were like ‘don’t go work in the garden, get this other job that’s easier.’ They don’t want to come to jail to work.” Other prison programs, deemed “easier,” often not only provide a higher weekly wage, such as work in textiles, but also provide year-round employment to the men. The garden largely

shuts down from November through March annually. The farmer has created work in the greenhouse throughout the winter, allowing him to keep a few men, generally four or five, on while the garden is closed. This allows them job stability, as otherwise they would have to either find another job within the institution to occupy their time, or sit idle until the spring. This impacts the sustainability of the garden and the natural cycles of gardening work, as one man who stays on through the winter explains:

“So we stay in the green house, just cleaning and building, keeping busy. And then we start planting stuff in February to get things going, but that could turn, they could say ‘oh no we’re not gonna go ahead with it,’ and that would all get dumped, and that would be the end of the projects. So it’s one of the uncertainties. If they could say it’s a go all the time, let us run this project, expand it, and get more people.”

This seasonal nature of the work, paired with historically unstable funding means that the farmer has difficulties having enough men working with him throughout the year. Some years he has twenty men throughout the summer, however in the 2016-17 season there were only six core workers, supplemented with a revolving door of men who showed up infrequently and often left early. There is more land to clear, always more to be done, but their ability to expand and increase production is restrained by what is now a small workforce and a shoestring budget. One of the core men was released just prior to the seasonal closure of the farm, another was transferred to another institution and another two are slated for parole in the coming months; it is unclear who will provide the core workforce required to run the garden next year. It is not only the visibility and pride of watching plants grow that impacts the men, but the pride they see in the other men; one man described how when he was transferred to Mission Minimum he was initially uninterested in taking part in the garden:

“When I first went there and I didn’t even want to go there because at the time I had a sore back and I thought ‘I can’t be fooling around up there,’ but they said ‘well there’s some little stuff up there that you could work on, try and get ‘em fixed, but there’s not too many tools.’ And so I went up and started to feel better, and then I seen how hard those guys were working, especially [the farmer], he worked like a dog, eh? And it was so - they had all kinds of junk there, it was a terrible place to work, and not enough guys helping, so I says ‘you gotta give me something to do, I can pull weeds, whatever,’ and he says ‘well you can get this potato patch so we can dig it,’ so that started it off. And a lot of it was him, hey, it was just after a week or two of watching I said this guy’s pretty

extraordinary, he works hard and he knows how to make stuff grow.”

Many of the men talked about the farmer as a particular inspiration; for those that had steady employment histories prior to their incarceration they appreciated his hard work ethic. For those who had historically troubled interactions with authority figures, often made worse through the prison staff/inmate relationships that existed across the incarceration experience, he provided a positive role model and an authority figure with whom they could begin to develop positive relationships and self confidence. The wider political climate also impacted the sustainability of the garden. In 2009, all prison farms were closed by the then Conservative government, consequently the funding and operations of the prison’s secret ‘garden’ have remained tenuous and the government’s general Deficit Reduction Action Plan has also resulted in severe budget cuts. In summer 2016 the newly appointed Liberal federal government announced they were considering re-opening the closed farms, which included cows and dairy, chickens and vegetables, and the men remain hopeful that visibility of the garden will increase, subsequently ensuring sustainability.

5.2: Impacts on T̓silhqot̓in Communities

In Tl’esqox I interviewed 10 T̓silhqot̓in people, 3 men and 7 women. The average age of the people I interviewed was 55, ranging from 29 to 79 years old. The layered impacts on the men are echoed in the communities, though the echo is truncated over the 500 km separating the prison and the T̓silhqot̓in territories; while the gardens impacts the men in ways rooted within their personal contexts, the impacts on communities, though formed within the historic and colonial contexts that continues to shape food (in)securities for Indigenous peoples, fails to address this context and consequently impedes the program’s ability to reach it’s full potential. As highlighted in Figure 2, by passively aligning with historic and ongoing contexts that impede food sovereignty, the possible impacts on community members in Tl’esqox are curtailed to only two layers: access to food and connection with the men in prison. Yet despite the need for active opposition to culinary imperialism in the distribution of the prison vegetables, the T̓silhqot̓in values of teaching, learning and freedom intersect with the garden impacts and create ample opportunity for increased benefit based in community strengths.

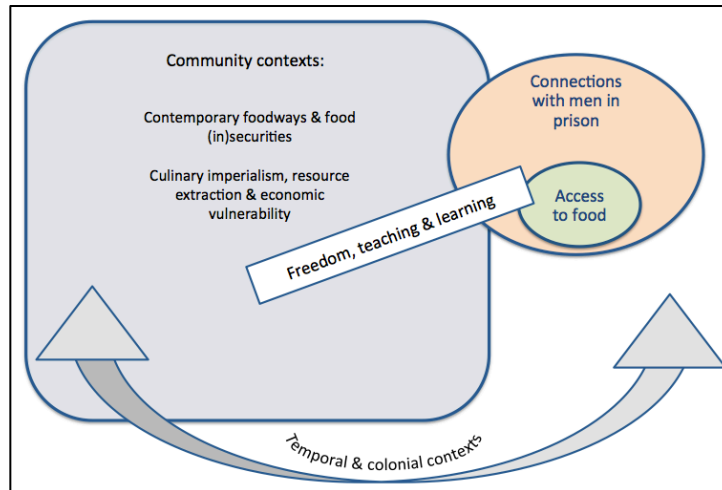


Figure 2: Distribution inadequately confronts colonial context, truncating impacts

5.2.1: Access to Food

The first layer of impact for the T̓silhqot̓in individuals who received the produce was a slight increase in access to fresh vegetables. Produce was delivered six times to the T̓silhqot̓in throughout the summer and fall of 2016; Brian Lang, the now retired warden who started the garden, filled his own truck with vegetables and delivered them to Williams Lake for distribution by Punky Lake Wilderness Camp Society throughout the communities. One load of vegetables tended to be delivered to one community, with some of the more remote communities receiving nothing due to the increased distance. Other communities only received one or two deliveries throughout the season; Tl'esqox, the community in which I focused my time in, received one delivery in early June 2016. While the vegetables were appreciated by the individuals who received them, distribution was not systematic; often vegetables were dropped off in the band office parking lot and people who happened to be there that day were able to take some home. Of the community members with whom I spoke, two noted that without the vegetables they received from the garden they would not have had any fresh produce that week, if not month. Tl'esqox is roughly an hour drive from Williams Lake, where the nearest grocery store is, and that distance, the price of gas and the rising cost of groceries made fresh vegetables increasingly less accessible to many community members. One woman explained that due to rising grocery costs "we can't even buy lettuce anymore." For other community members vegetables were still affordable, but the distance to town makes not only the buying but storing of fresh produce difficult:

“Yeah, I wouldn’t have had any vegetables [without the prison vegetable delivery], just mostly carrots. So we live out of town, so... I want to buy cucumber but they go soft really fast [...] Because it goes fast, you know some of those vegetables, they can’t go for months at a time, hey?”



Image 9: Vegetable distribution to one of the T̓silhqot̓in communities

I was asked on numerous occasions how to store some of the prison vegetables, for while receiving a large bag of fresh produce was appreciated, without accompanying storage information vegetables may wilt or discolour prior to use; the T̓silhqot̓in people I spoke to saw the prison vegetables as an opportunity to learn, to integrate new plants and new information regarding the cooking and eating of vegetables into their diets. For the majority of community members I spoke with the small once a year influx of vegetables from the prison simply saved them a trip into town. A few community members noted that they went into town anyways, and continued to access farmer’s markets in town despite receiving donated produce; this highlights a lack of targeted distribution, with food secure individuals receiving the same produce that other families may need more. During the distribution of vegetables that I took part in community members were unsure where the produce came from, and were often uncertain who the vegetables were intended for; boxes of vegetables left largely unattended in hot parking lots were approached tentatively by families who would politely ask if they could take some, or if they should wait to be handed their share.

5.2.2: Connections With Men in Prison

The majority of T̓silhqot̓in people I spoke with, both within Tl̓'esqox and in other communities I visited during my time in the territory, were unaware of where the vegetables came from. In Tl̓'esqox there are other food security initiatives, such as the Good Food Boxes, wherein the Band purchases bulk fruits and vegetables that are then distributed to families with young children and people living with diabetes; the lack of distinction between these programs results in a general awareness of "veggie programs" without clear understanding of which programs specific vegetables are from. Other community members associated the vegetables with Punky Lake Wilderness Camp Society, the distribution partner who did not make the connection with the incarcerated men explicit during vegetable distribution, and consequently may have lessened the impact of human connection between those in federal custody and the T̓silhqot̓in people. The importance of knowing who grew the food is highlighted in the ways that people who did know about the men and prison garden spoke of them; often responding that "it doesn't matter" when asked whether the source of the produce added meaning:

"It don't matter. We're all people. We all grow what we want, and they're doing the same thing. They're in prison doing that, it doesn't bother me. As long as it comes out of the ground it's good for me. It's healthy."

Within the responses of "it doesn't matter," or "it doesn't bother me," is a wider understanding of the forces and structures that can result in incarceration. Community members did not say "it doesn't matter" because they did not care, but because they assumed that I was expecting a negative response. All but one T̓silhqot̓in community member knew at least one person who either was or had experienced incarceration, and two of the community members I spoke with had been incarcerated at some point in their past. For many T̓silhqot̓in people learning that gardening was available in prison was important, as they knew people experiencing incarceration and felt hopeful that similar positive programs were available for their friends and family behind bars. As one man explained:

"They're doing the work and they're donating to people that probably need it. I know inmates, and they're pretty good people when you talk to them. They just need someone to talk to them, I guess. I don't know if they have people to care for them, out there in the real world. They're just humans themselves, anyways. And people when they go to jail, I guess they go to jail for a reason. And when they get there they probably don't feel right, but after awhile they get into programs and

stuff like that, gardening or whatever, they're there to learn too, hey. Just like everybody else."

Historical and ongoing colonialism and the structural violence intertwined with economic vulnerability, barriers to education, and disproportionate incarceration were profoundly understood, felt, and lived by the T̓silhqot̓in people I had the opportunity to speak with. For them, incarceration was one possible outcome amongst an array of others, all moderated by forces that worked to continually dispossess, marginalize and disenfranchise T̓silhqot̓in communities; community members embodied their own humanity and strength, and therefore it was not difficult for them to understand the humanity, strength, and potential of these men, strangers experiencing incarceration. Throughout my time in Tl'esqox the themes of learning and teaching intersected across conversations; there is always something you can teach and share, and there is always something you can learn, from different and diverse people, from small plants, from majestic animals. This valuing of learning and teaching resonated in the ways the T̓silhqot̓in people I spoke with understood the men in prison; the act of growing food in prison was not one of charity, but an opportunity to learn, to heal, to grow not only green things but generosity and gentleness.

"It's good too that they are in prison and into learning, and making themselves better, and their health and their health situation. Living, and learning on top of that."

"Well I thank them for their kindness, for doing all that work. I know it's not an easy work, especially if you have arthritis or whatever ailments they have, or whatever they have emotionally, missing their family. I know it's hard on a person. So you can thank them for me when you go there. Say that [Tl'esqox] Elders really appreciate it, well I'm one of them, I appreciate the veggies that they gave to us. You know, it comes from, probably, in a good place, and we appreciate all that."

"They say [gardening is] a real healing thing. I mean anybody that's doing anything, whether it's gardening or anything, working or fishing, it takes the mind of you. You're doing something, and it makes you feel good inside, I would believe. I think it's probably helping them heal in the prison, so I'm glad that they're doing it."

The impacts on the men were layered and often transformational, for the communities the impacts were more limited as the donation of vegetables passively coalesced, as opposed to actively challenging historical and colonial contexts and recognizing community strengths.

Community members who knew where the vegetables were coming from saw the acceptance of vegetables not as a charitable gift; rather, they saw their acceptance as actively taking part in men's healing and learning. Unfortunately these impacts were limited due to a lack of information regarding the garden and the men working there. This investment in the men, acceptance of a person's past and support of an alternate future is echoed in the way one man, Jonas, described his own relationships within his community:

"They respect people for how they live. Yeah, myself I kinda lived a hard life when I was young. Grew up in alcohol and stuff like that. You go through a lot of pain after you get out of residential school. You kinda work on yourself after awhile, and after you're finished drinking and stuff. You go through your healing, your problems, and you try to do good for yourself and for other people. And you kinda learn on your own and work on yourself. And people realize that after awhile, they see you going through stuff like this."

The community members I spoke with all understood the impact of gardening on the men through their own understanding of and respect for healing, a journey towards holistic wellbeing that was often understood as coming from being on the land. Based in thousands of years of ancestral relationships with their territory, T̓silhqot'in people understood the freedom and autonomy that the men experienced in the garden as freedom to work with the land, to be outside, and to feel productive and responsible alongside the land.

"They're doing a good job. And they're probably... living in the prison, it's not like living out in the country or anything. You have to obey by their rules, and you can't go out too much, and you're always inside, it's rough like that."

"Once you're connected to your land and your territory, you kinda feel better about your lives and how you lived. Because your ancestors lived on this land before, hey, so that tells a lot of the history about our land, how we live off our land, and are connected to our land. The land is really valuable to different people, it's been in their heart, I guess that's where it is."

"Yeah, I don't think I'll move away from here. It's my home. Just go out and you're surviving yourself, go out and do what you have to do, what you need. There's lots of things to do out here, if you put your mind to it, you're never short of stuff to do. Our ancestors used to roam, roam all around this country. They never used to drive cars or ride horses, a lot of walking, eh? And making tools and all that kinda stuff, make their own tools so they can go hunting and hunt for meat

or whatever. And, I think our Nation is kinda, really trying to move forward, and learn from our ancestors, and our grandparents.”

The vegetables from the garden provide another story in a long narrative of people getting what they need from the land: food, human connection, healing. The men growing the few vegetables community members took home with them provided another example of the hope that can be found digging in soil, and for some community members provided inspiration, combined with memories of grandmothers’ tomato plants and stories of ancestral gardens, planted to offset the impacts of reserve settlements and fishing and game regulations.

“I thought ‘wow, these guys are in jail, and they’re gardening.’ And then there’s me, I’m just learning this this year, and next year I’m gonna garden at home, but then there’s these guys, who are already, like look at all the stuff they grew! And I’m like ‘what is this?’ I don’t even know, I’m still learning.”

The community members based their understanding of gardening in thousands of years of ancestral relationships with a nurturing land and the lessons learnt from plants and Elders, passed down across generations; the prison garden provides an opportunity that the people of Tl’esqox easily recognized, to continue learning from the land and each other, this time passing lessons across prison walls. The vegetables represented a connection to the men in prison, a connection based in an understanding of the importance of the land and the freedom to move within and across it; freedoms constrained by colonialism, imagined borders, and prison walls.

5.2.3: Community Contexts

T̓silhqot’in contemporary foodways are inherently relational, as “food arises from partnership” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 126). As one T̓silhqot’in man, Phil, explained to me, hunting wild game is about a relationship, animals “give themselves up to you;” this creates a relationship based in reciprocity that goes beyond simply giving and taking to include responsibility. The bio-cultural heritages of Indigenous peoples includes concepts of “honourable harvest” to only take what you need, to never take too much; beyond mere sustainability, beyond simply taking in a way that ensures more taking (Kimmerer, 2013). Indigenous foodways and food meanings include taking from the land in ways that benefit the land; be that the harvest of sweatgrass in such a way that “pickers open some space, let the light come in, and with a gentle tug bestir the dormant buds that make new grass” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 165), or an active engagement, an explicit “yes, thank

you,” to the salmon upon which your ancient ties to the land are based. Cliff, a T̓silhqot̓in man, describes the relationship his people have with the fish in their territories, and the tension between respecting that relationship through honourable harvesting and the regulations and closures imposed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans:

“That’s our traditional rights, and I would have never gave that up. So, we still exercise that right. And that’s one of the rights that I’m probably going to exercise over the weekend, just go down there, and just let them know we’re still around. Because every time there’s lots of fish in there, they’ll always say there’s not enough, and then after it’s gone they’ll say ‘oh, maybe we should have left more.’ But if you don’t take fish from the river and use it, it’s like saying ‘no’ to the fish. And they -if you keep saying ‘no,’ all of our people, well they’re going to start saying ‘well why aren’t you using us? How come you’re not there anymore?’ Animals, plants, everything has a spirit in it. Same as people.”

This respecting of non-human spirits is linked to long-standing meaningful relationships with the land, relationships strained by the weight of colonialism, in need of healing but not fractured beyond repair. As a T̓silhqot̓in Chief explained to me, “if the T̓silhqot̓in own it and have full jurisdiction over our lives, and full control back of all our territory and all of our land, I think [...] then we will get a lot stronger, people, families.” Freedom is inherent in true sovereignty, freedom to govern, to fish, to hunt, and to live on the land in the ways you want and need, without being impacted by the jarring impacts of drilling and the empty wastelands of mines. For the T̓silhqot̓in people with whom I spoke being on the land was a right, a responsibility, and a means to continue to learn and engage with each other; all aspects that they connected, at least when speaking with me, the “gardening lady,” to the act of growing your own food:

“But when you feel connected you kinda know the place, eh? And you know where to grow a garden, where the best spots are [...] When you’re in residential school you don’t learn to much. Cuz’ you’re always weary, why you’re there. And you don’t really learn nothing besides just going to school. You didn’t know what gardening was all about, or anything like that [...] And food just comes to your table and you gotta eat it, and if you don’t eat it you’ll starve I guess.”

Food without the freedom of choice, without the relationship inherent in learning, from other people and from the plants themselves, is violence. Within the historic kitchens of residential schools and Indian hospitals and the carbohydrate-heavy rations of the Department of Indian

Affairs the relationship between T̓silhqot̓in people and T̓silhqot̓in food has been wounded. Even as communities work to restore these splintered relationships with animals, plants and fish, contemporary forces and structures threaten the very sustainability of these plant foods and animals; the regulation of Indigenous bodies fishing indigenous waters, the disenfranchisement of moose and deer, and the violent extracting of resources from ancestral lands:

“We have family down south there, and they’re catching fish that are deformed and everything. So it’s just, you start thinking do I even want to keep doing this? What’s in the fish? What’s gonna happen if we eat it? And you know, I was telling my daughter ‘I hope by the time you get to my age that you can still do the things I do,’ like she watches me clean and cut [salmon], and she wants to but she’s only seven, and I’m kinda leery to give her a knife. But I’m hoping that by the time she’s my age that she’ll still be able to do the traditions that we have, like the drying and the smoking.”

The people of Tl'esqox and the wider T̓silhqot̓in communities are actively working to continue their foodways and pass food meanings down across generations: parents are teaching children; the leader of the Aboriginal Head Start program in Tl'esqox integrates fish canning, gardening, and meat preservation into activities with children of all ages, and; Nation's gatherings held throughout the territories in the summer on the banks of rivers center on the sharing of fish and game meat, elders tending smokehouse fires and young people gathered around helping prepare rice and bannock. Yet these immense community strengths must stand up against the mounting impacts of extraction-based capitalism and climate change. Even when imagining a future where T̓silhqot̓in people create their own economy of gentle harvesting, the tailing ponds, oil leaks and dammed rivers would still surround them, as Matthew explained: “[tailing ponds] are in everybody's minds I guess, but if you [don't eat fish] you'd starve. I don't know the long-term effects of it, it's pretty much in all the food chain now. You get diseases from everything.” It is within this wider context that the donated prison vegetables attempt to impact food security. The donated vegetables, although beautifully grown, nutritious and organic, attempt to address a Euro-centrally defined notion of food security; if these people are hungry we will send them food. But it is indicative that when talking about food with T̓silhqot̓in people, resource extraction, land rights and title always came up. T̓silhqot̓in sovereignty over land, and thus foodways and meanings are larger issues that cannot be addressed by any amount of kale and cauliflower. As one T̓silhqot̓in chief explained to me:

“I think food’s a big issue for our people in a lot of ways, you know whether it’s just the price going up on a lot of food, you can see that in stores now, and it makes it that much more important to grow a lot ourselves. I think a long time ago just about everybody had a garden, you know, because back then if you didn’t you’d probably starve in a lot of ways, you know there’s probably game and so forth, but that’s kinda getting harder to find, especially the moose. But again I think it’s important to know all them, the four leggeds, the salmon, the trout, the finned ones, I think it’s important for our youth or just people that don’t know. Because some of them, maybe they’ve been in the city then when they come home, some of them are in the foster system and when they turn a certain age then they come back into our Nation; so a lot of them they have to learn how to be T̓silhqot’in, how to live that life. *Food’s a big of part of that*. You know it don’t matter where you live, but I think that’s always been there for our people; especially the salmon, that’s why our people fight so hard to keep the river the way it is” (emphasis added).



Image 10: The work and pride involved in smoking salmon

5.2.4: Challenges

Within these wider contexts and histories the donation of prison vegetables is faced with a number of challenges, largely caused by the distance between the prison and the T̓silhqot’in. The vegetables that were brought to Tl’esqox to be distributed were transported in the open back of a truck, resulting in heavy wilting and wind damage to the more fragile vegetables like romaine lettuce and bok choy. In the context of Tl’esqox, vegetables were unloaded in front of the band office on a hot day in June, and people who happened to come by were able to take some home. Across the vegetable distribution process there were numerous communication barriers; the community members I spoke with were excited to learn more about new vegetables, ways to store and cook them. And while numerous community members had taken it upon themselves to teach and learn about the vegetables, mental health counselors doing workshops on cooking with kale and community youth Googling recipes to share with the band office, no individuals

involved in the distribution process integrated any knowledge sharing into the process; within days of arriving in Tl'esqox I was asked how to store, clean and cook vegetables and I can only assume these questions preceded me. Finally, there was no feedback loop integrated into the distribution process; since 2012 vegetables have been donated to the T̂silhqot'in Nation; vegetables were dropped off in parking lots, and any questions or feedback the community might have had were never actively sought. These communication barriers impeded community interests in teaching and learning, increasing disconnection with the donated vegetables and the men in prison growing and harvesting those plants.

5.2.5: Opportunities: Strengthening Tenuous Connections

The geographic isolation of the T̂silhqot'in communities from the prison interrupts the relationship building and sustaining that creates such meaningful human connection between the men and the local food banks and soup kitchen staff and recipients. The approximately 500 km between the garden and Tl'esqox results in suboptimal produce quality, and the delivery of unknown vegetables without the additional sharing of knowledge results in a missed opportunity to teach and learn from one another. Despite the long distance and the impacts of transportation and imperfect communication on vegetable quality and uptake the community saw many ways for the prison garden connection to be improved. Not surprisingly, these suggestions took into account the wider community and colonial context and focused on community strengths in ways neglected by the prison garden distribution model. As one T̂silhqot'in woman explained to me, "we didn't even know, like with squash and stuff, we're still in the learning stage;" this comment is grounded in a community that values learning, and is open to increasing their relationship with the men, both parties acting as both teacher and student. Within this idea of teaching and learning lies the foundational T̂silhqot'in value of reciprocity; by increasing the connection and thus the responsibility felt between the men and the T̂silhqot'in communities the relationship, and consequently the impacts, could be strengthened, as highlighted in Figure 3. Grounding the distribution of vegetables to T̂silhqot'in communities within an explicit awareness and understanding of community contexts and colonial impacts on food (in)securities and self-determination would allow for a wider recognition of community strengths; strengths such as the rich capacity for forgiveness of past crimes, the easy recognition of humanity in prisons often framed as overflowing with depravity, and the diverse and creative means that the people I spoke with imagined ways to increase connection, reciprocity, and relationship. Connecting the autonomy experienced by the men

against the backdrop of their histories and contexts to the autonomy of Indigenous communities fighting back against ongoing dispossession and marginalization could center community strengths within the prison-community relationship, drawing on integral values of teaching and learning to support increased food security and food sovereignty.

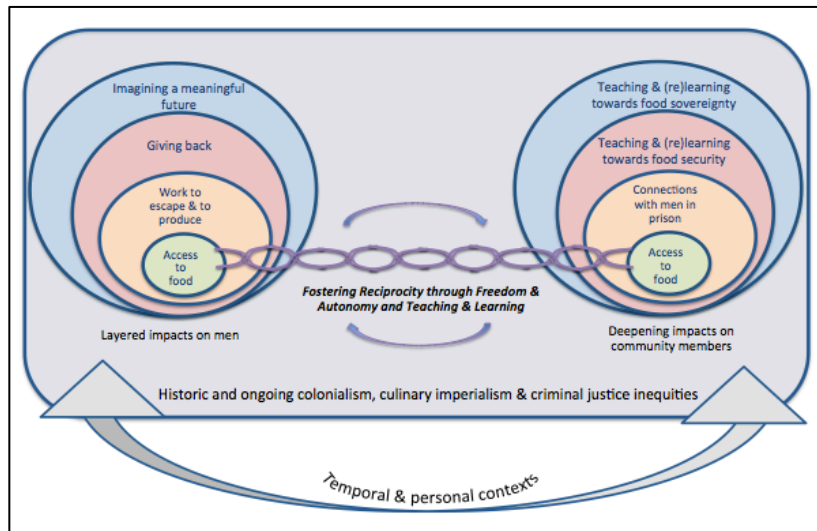


Figure 3: The potential for increased benefit through strengthened connections and recognized contexts

The community members and leaders with whom I spoke consistently resisted the label of passive recipient, instead offering suggestions on how to increase the active T̓silhqot̓in role and community ownership of the project. After hearing about the challenge of transportation from Mission into the territory one T̓silhqot̓in Chief explained the possibilities that exist for increased community involvement and a widening recognition of T̓silhqot̓in autonomy, based in community context and his people’s ongoing resistance against colonial governments:

“I mean we have drivers, we have whatever, the fuel- we have gas stations. I think anything’s possible for something else to keep going, I’m pretty sure we can make something happen. Once the word gets out. Right now we’re doing negotiating with the, starting the negotiations with the federal government, so put your list down [laughing].”

The wider context of growing food unfurls from a history of agriculture practice first forced by colonial agents as a means to control nomadic peoples, peoples seen as hard to proselytize and even harder to convert. Later these practices were pragmatically adopted by hungry and

dispossessed Indigenous communities, and agriculture was seen by the people with whom I spoke as a practical means to engage with another source of food. Garden grown vegetables offer relief from the rising cost of the groceries and the need of a vehicle and fuel to drive into town. Yet the impacts of colonialism carved into the land that make the need for alternate food sources so acute, such as reducing salmon runs and disappearing moose, are also the forces that make gardening less than a sure thing; as climate change increases it's clutches summers begin later and frost comes early. The time I spent in Tl'esqox last summer was one of strange weather; community members often shaking their heads, sharing their concerns over weather patterns that they used to know so well, patterns slowly dissolving:

“Difficult, yeah [...] you can lose half your crop mid-summer too, so that ain't good neither. Yeah, [gardening is] getting harder and harder to do I guess, unless you understand the climate change and everything to, eh? So indoor would probably be better.”

Everyone I talked to knew someone who used to garden, and community gardens were beginning to pop up across the six communities; significantly shorter growing seasons compared with the southern parts of the province meant that climate change was felt intensely. A number of people I spoke with believed that green houses and other indoor growing environments would provide more stable and sustainable food sources, however according to the people I spoke with that knowledge was not strongly held within the community:

“This year was our first year for the garden, so we're trial and error, for this and the greenhouse. So next year we know. Or even if the guys in jails could even do a list of tips of gardening, like their tips and stuff, to help other people do their own gardens. That would be cool too, learning from their experience, they could just tell people about how they did theirs.”

The men's expertise in growing vegetables provides an opportunity that the community members recognized; while donating vegetables provides small inputs of nutritious food into the community, sharing knowledge and experience could create a sustainable supply of fresh produce. Another man, when asked how the impact of the prison garden could be strengthened, suggested that communities learn from the men and begin widespread gardening:

“Yeah, to take it up and start growing themselves. And I see that happening at the school, so it's nice to see that. And other people

learning to, to learn themselves and to grow [...] I think [the men in prison] gives them a little incentive to think 'we could be doing this ourselves'."

Other community members and leaders saw the men's incarceration and experience in the garden as more meaningful than the vegetables themselves. The T̓silhqot'in people I spoke with understood the more holistic benefits of gardening, ranging from productive use of time spent in the sunshine to an accountability to fragile plants, and saw a potential to harness those benefits for their own communities.

"Try and show the young guys, with their experience from the guys that are doing more time than what they're doing. And they're already in trouble, so how to step away from that kinda lifestyle [...] I think for them, like you know how they're doing their community hours. So they're just breaking into a different cycle, and we're trying to stop it. Maybe if we had the guys from the jails do a little video on 'hey,' you know, 'I hear you're doing this and that, and this is where I am, and this is where I started.' Just something like that."

The Old School in Tl'esqox offers a Farm Project where community members, staff, and youth serving court mandated community service hours work together on economic development projects, which thus far includes a community-owned and operated sawmill, the building of fishing sheds and chicken coops, an organic community garden and greenhouse (in its first year), and ongoing plans for a horse riding arena. The theme of teaching and learning transcends the growing of vegetables and creates a space for community members to envision mentorship and connection that draws on the men's personal contexts and experiences. The community members I spoke with effortlessly recognized the shared histories and interlinking contexts between T̓silhqot'in communities and men in federal custody, whether Indigenous or not; people understood that incarceration is a symptom of larger structures and violence, that crime comes from somewhere, and that culpability often stretches across time and intersects local communities, government agencies, and colonial traditions. The community saw their role as active helpers and healers, not recipients. The T̓silhqot'in people value second chances and forgiveness, and see opportunities to teach and learn where others may see none:

"I guess in some ways I guess people are just scared to give people a chance, being criminals or whatever, or just in trouble. I mean it's just the wrong choices that they make. I mean it happens, right?"

“Trying to get something, some kinda connection with them and the younger people that’s around this way here, I think within the community [...] I mean, anything you can pass on and share is always a good thing. If they’re willing to come and learn that’s fine. To teach on and pass on, whatever, and to be around people that are willing to help them.”

When asked how to strengthen and sustain the prison garden project, in the face of federal budget cuts and transportation barriers, community members always focused on the strengthening of relationships and the reciprocities of learning and teaching. One man explained how he wished “they had a different kind of relationship with [the men], to be able to [...] give something, to [help them] be proud of what they’re doing.” Community members talked about wanting to send smoked fish and dried moose meat as gifts of appreciation and a token of their ongoing relationship, increasing the accountability between the two groups and providing concrete ways to engender humanizing respect and healing.

Cooking Workshops & Lessons Learned

The cooking workshop I conducted in partnership with Megan Dark, the nutritionist and dietician from the T̓silhqot̓in National Government (TNG) was an attempt to provide some of the knowledge that could deepen the significance and meaning of the annual donation of one or two truck bed’s worth of vegetables.



Image 11: Cooking workshop participants in Tl'esqox

The cooking workshop began with a roundtable discussion, where different vegetables were passed around and community members were given a chance to share their knowledge about specific plants, their uses, how to grow, harvest, clean, store and prepare them, and their nutritional value. Some vegetables, such as varieties of squash, were cut or peeled open so participants could see the inside, peeling apart papery garlic as we discussed how one clove can grow a whole head and scooping squash seeds from stringy flesh to roast and eat as a pre-lunch snack. Vegetable information sheets were provided to participants (see: Appendix I), and have been handed out along with subsequent vegetable deliveries to the other reserve communities. Recipe booklets of the dishes made with the group were also available for all participants to take home with them (see: Appendix II). Using the conference room and band office kitchen participants divided into groups, while Megan, a mental health counselor, Ellen, and myself provided guidance and support. Information regarding the washing, storing, cutting and cooking of vegetables was shared, along with nutritional information and ways that particular vegetables could be cooked or prepared to increase nutritional value and bioavailability, for instance the non-water solubility of vitamin K in squash and other orange vegetables and the importance of cooking or marinating kale to increase nutritional quality. Together we prepared a vegetarian meal, focused on the beets, squash, kale and other vegetables I had brought up from the prison. We made spaghetti squash 'pasta' with homemade marinara sauce, bok choy and apple coleslaw, red beet borscht, baked oat bannock and a Three Sister's stew highlighting the reciprocal growth and flavour of squash, beans and corn.



Image 12: Cooking borscht with workshop participants in Tl'esqox

In conversations held over plates of steaming food and in subsequent semi-structured interviews I found that the participating women (only women showed up for the workshop, though it was open to everybody), enjoyed making the meals and were interested in learning more about the vegetables. Borscht in its deep pinkness raised some eyebrows, and baked squash seeds as a snack were a polarizing treat, but by and large the dishes were a success, and the women were excited for the next shipment of vegetables so they could share these new dishes with their families. Everyone was sent home with leftover vegetables, prepared dishes and a single garlic clove, ready to be planted in the fall. We talked about gardening, about our favourite dishes and our heritages; my grandmother's polish borscht recipe went home with everyone and Elders asked that I pass on their kind words to her. The possibility of planting a community garden, using seeds from the prison and planning cooking workshops along the arc of a growing season was discussed as women marveled at the pasta-like texture of spaghetti squash and the magic that corn, beans and squash can create when tended from garden to soup pot.

In conducting qualitative interviews and participant observation in the community in the weeks following the cooking workshop several lessons were learned. Community politics between specific families, mainly those employed at the band office and those not, may have impacted attendance, and using a more neutral space could increase turnout in the future. Many of the programs offered by the band office are attended by employees of the band office and their family members, therefore finding a space where the entire community feels welcome may make the workshops more accessible and acceptable to the wider section of the community. A few of the band office employees recommended integrating crafts into the workshop, providing people with something tangible above and beyond a meal that they could take home or gift to friends and family. Many of the women lamented the meat and potatoes inclinations of their husbands, and a two men who worked at the band office drew gales of laughter after peeking into the kitchen to see what was cooking and leaving in mock horror: "are you trying to kill me with all this healthy cooking?!" Consequently ways to engage men in future workshops should be explored.

The women who participated in the workshop were eager to ask when subsequent cooking workshops would be held, and Megan, who lives in the area, went on to provide workshops aligned with subsequent vegetable deliveries in surrounding areas. Transportation continues to be an issue as there is no set delivery schedule, consequently subsequent workshops have often

been planned with limited notice. In ongoing conversation we found that co-leading the workshop allows for more active engagement from participants, and that our nutritional and culinary knowledge complimented each other nicely. At the time of writing a Vancouver Foundation grant has been submitted to fund future workshops and support ongoing community-driven food security and food sovereignty initiatives in the T̓silhqot̓in.

5.2.6: Limitations & Challenges

Before delving into a discussion of these results it is important to highlight key limitations to this work. First, given the focus on the community of Tl'esqox, one of the six T̓silhqot̓in communities, the highly contextual nature of the garden program and my thematic analytic approach there may be impacts on the transferability of the findings to the wider T̓silhqot̓in Nation and other Aboriginal communities across Canada. However, while experiences of colonialism are diverse and varied across Canada and between Aboriginal communities these experiences are grounded in shared histories of dispossession, marginalization and racialization. While Tl'esqox is unique, it is also a community that defines itself as explicitly T̓silhqot̓in, and therefore the findings based in Tl'esqox provide a foundation upon which future work can explore the specific contexts of other T̓silhqot̓in communities. The environments in which research was conducted: a male correctional institution, where my female-ness may have impacted the interview and participant observation processes, and an Indigenous reserve community well aware of the manipulative history of research in Indigenous contexts have impacted the study in ways I cannot know. This history of exploitative research implicitly impacted my time in Tl'esqox; decades of well-founded cynicism towards outsiders made the development of trust and the process of building researcher accountability a delicate process; ideally I would have loved to spend a whole summer, a whole year. This particular limitation is inherent within all qualitative research; more time could always be spent in communities. That being said, the time I spent was used well, I tried my best to be present, respectful, and humble in each moment. Additionally, the impacts of time on research credibility are being addressed through ongoing communication with community members and the planning of subsequent cooking workshops. These workshops will provide an opportunity to not only engage community members in the growing and making of nutritious food, but to install an ongoing feedback loop between the T̓silhqot̓in communities, the men in custody, and the relevant stakeholders. These workshops will aim to create and sustain formalized reciprocal loops to allow for a deepening relationship between myself and the communities, which may result in relationships wherein community needs and perspectives can

be communicated to myself, the prison garden, and relevant stakeholders from a place of trust. Workshops will also work to widen the limited scope of this research, as the Vancouver Foundation grant is aimed at conducting ongoing workshops in Tl'etinqox, one of the other communities. Within the T̓silhqot'in all interviews and participant observation-based conversations were conducted in English. I was unfortunately unable to engage with community Elders who only speak T̓silhqot'in, and subsequent research that provides translation services would help to ensure that all interested community members are given the opportunity to share the full spectrum of their knowledge. While offering translation services during qualitative interviews was a missed opportunity constrained by my graduate student budget, ongoing planning for community cooking workshops is intended to ensure that, while workshops will continue to be offered in English, all recipe books and resulting materials will be translated into T̓silhqot'in. These efforts will fail to engage with T̓silhqot'in speakers who cannot read their language, however will provide a first step to bridge the gap between languages; books on tapes may be explored to address this gap in knowledge translation. Finally, my identity as a white settler has invariably impacted my understanding of the garden and its impacts; while impossible to escape, reflexivity and an ongoing engagement with Indigenous scholars' decolonizing work has helped to tether my privilege and ensure that my thoughts and ideas support, as opposed to detract from, the community strengths and resurgences embodied within the T̓silhqot'in community and the wider Indigenous peoples of Canada, and the passion and strength of the men in custody.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This research explored the layered impacts of a prison garden on the experiences of meaningful work for men in federal custody, truncated impacts of that same garden on the food security and sovereignty of the T̓silhqotin community that receives a portion of the donated produce, and the existing and potential connections between these two groups. I found that the impacts of the garden are layered for the men, beginning with the simple integration of fresh vegetables into diets often long impacted by incarceration. These benefits grow over time as men experience the garden as first a place to escape the wider institution and feel productive within that confining context, then later as a place to give back, to tend human connection, self worth and compassion. Eventually the garden provides a space within which the men can imagine meaningful futures outside the prison walls. The benefits for the men are grounded in their personal contexts and histories, which in turn are understood against a backdrop of structural violence, colonialism, and marginalization. For the T̓silhqotin community members who receive donated produce the impact is dampened by a misalignment between CSC's intended benefits and community and historical contexts. Community members are provided with fresh vegetables only once or twice a year, and are often unsure of where those vegetables are coming from; those that do learn of the prison garden are able to envision connections with the men, providing a means for community members to help the men heal while actively avoiding the prescriptive label of impoverished recipient.

These findings highlight both the significant positive impacts experienced by the men through their ownership of and pride in the garden, and the potential for deepening the benefits for T̓silhqotin communities through increasing their engagement with the garden, sustaining the recognition of community strengths and imagining the diverse ways their role could increase within the garden project. Recognition of community strengths would, I believe, inherently highlight the importance of land and community to T̓silhqotin health and wellbeing, and provide a lens through which the garden can work towards not only mere food security, but the underlying concept of food sovereignty.

6.1: From Gratitude to Reciprocity

Drawing from gift theory's concept of negative reciprocity, wherein the obligation to reciprocate gifts no longer exists, the distribution of vegetables without recognition of wider contexts and relationships obliges T̓ìlhqot'ín community members to become actively complicit in maintaining social inequities, a symbolic form of domination that erases wider socio-economic and political histories while ever so subtly affirming socio-economic hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1977; Korf, 2007). While the current distribution structure provides humanizing experiences for the men, the same opportunity for agentive determination and autonomy is restricted for the T̓ìlhqot'ín community members; this framework of donating and receiving echoes problematic aspects of foreign aid and development, wherein "some lives are for saving while others are for being saviours" (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 489), and there are "those who give assistance and those who must be grateful for it" (Kothari, 2007, p. 37). Gratitude exists widely within T̓ìlhqot'ín communities, within the honourable harvesting of plant medicines and the gentle hunting and preparing of game animals, yet in the passive accepting of donated vegetables gratitude provides only a few strands in the longstanding relationships that many Indigenous peoples and communities have to plants, animals, and people involved in the webs of accountability and relationships that demarcate foodways, meanings, and sources.

The men's ownership of and pride in the garden and its harvests creates meaningful and positive impacts for the men experiencing incarceration. This pride in the land and the physical, nutritional, emotional, spiritual, and cultural nourishment that it provides is shared by the T̓ìlhqot'ín communities in their connection to the fields, lakes, and rivers of their territory. The current distribution of vegetables ignores the strengths and benefits inherent in connecting beings in real and meaningful ways to their food sources, be they salmon swimming north to spawn or men in federal custody tending plants and relationships. Simply giving vegetables is not enough. Feeling part of and experiencing the connections inherent in a wider relationship to land, food and foodways is an essential part of the benefit of the prison garden for the men, and something that can be strengthened for the T̓ìlhqot'ín communities. In discussing the responsibilities to nature and ecosystems currently missing from our capitalistic and often cruel engagement with the earth, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) draws on Indigenous ways of knowing and ancient relationships to discuss Indigenous cultures of gratitude, wherein relationships with plants, animals and seemingly inanimate objects deserve thanks for the gifts they share with us;

she moves past this concept of gratitude to urge a return to cultures of reciprocity, where accountability shapes relationships and we move from simply taking from the land to finding ways to not only appreciate, but to give back. In the context of hunting, fishing and gathering plant foods “reciprocity resolves the moral tension of taking a life by giving in return something of value that sustains the ones who sustain us” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 190). Learning from the reciprocity of Indigenous peoples and the plants and animals that sustained communities for thousands of years, the moral tensions inherent in the donation of prison vegetables, grounded in histories of colonial aid and prescriptive labels of passivity (Kelm, 1999), can be resolved by doing something far easier than creating reciprocity: simply providing T̂silhqot’in communities the opportunity to engage in reciprocities that they are already imagining, envisioning and enacting. The people I spoke with in Tl’esqox proposed multiple ways to increase community ownership, autonomy and relational accountability between themselves and the men. They did not see themselves recipients but partners in a reciprocal healing process born from generations of colonial trauma and disenfranchisement at the hands of neoliberal capitalism, healing that can and has transcended hundreds of kilometers, ethnic identifications and institutional experiences.

6.2: From Passive Recipients to Partners in Growth

The impacts on the men are strengthened through ongoing interactions with local food banks and soup kitchens, and the lived experience of planting seeds and pulling carrots from dark soil. In contrast, T̂silhqot’in communities are framed as passive recipients within a project that assumes that any vegetables will impact health and a distribution process that assumes helplessness and fails to acknowledge community strengths. The distribution of vegetables works to disconnect the communities from the men in custody, and the lack of associated information about specific vegetables and their proper storage and use moderates community impacts. These challenges are based in a foundational assumption that simply donating vegetables will impact food security, and that food security, measured quantitatively and without mindfulness towards relationships and reciprocities, is in and of itself is sufficient for T̂silhqot’in nutrition, health and wellbeing. True food security requires true food sovereignty, based in land rights and title (Edelman, 2014). Food sovereignty theories and discourses at their very foundation aim to strengthen Indigenous communities through a range of strategies, including “respect for place and diversity, acceptance of difference, understanding the role of nature in production, human agency, equitable distribution of resources, dismantling asymmetrical power

relations and building participatory democratic institutions (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014, p. 1155). Despite the constraints of incarceration on freedoms and autonomy, the participating men are provided with a space within which they can work on these strategies outlined by Desmararais & Wittman (2014); wherein they develop respect, for the land, for themselves, and for each other and the wider community; where they can cultivate agency; work to increase equitable access to fresh produce, and take part in the ongoing negotiations of individuality, difference, and team accountability that shape large scale democracies and the daily running of community gardens alike. How can these same opportunities be provided for the T̓silhqot̓in peoples whose engagement in the garden provides additional meaning for the men? How can the history of culinary imperialism be uprooted to give more space for the growth of healthy and self-determining communities?

6.3: From Food Security to Land & Sovereignty

Rates of food insecurity for Aboriginal peoples living off reserve are at 33%, three times higher than the national average, and percentages rise to 75% in rural, remote, and northern communities (Fieldhouse & Thompson, 2012; Reading & Wien, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011; Van Den Berg & Custers, 2011); estimates place rates of food insecurity in reserve communities at 41% (Chan et al., 2011). However, these measures focus on Euro-centric definitions of food security and wellbeing, and fail to integrate foodways and meanings based in Aboriginal contexts. Both the measurement of hunger and its solutions must stem from understandings of land and history, and (re)connection to land and engagement with community strengths, respectively. Indigenous food sovereignty embodies a struggle for self determination where food is necessary yet not sufficient, where land rights have been recognized by Canadian courts while tailing ponds still poison rivers. For Indigenous peoples, in Canada and internationally, “the dining room table [is] every bit as much a site of cultural struggle as the classroom desk” (Milloy, 1999a, p. 275). Land is the basis for all food, and the distancing of super markets from forest floors and ocean banks negatively impacts foodways, food meanings and community health and wellbeing. Indigenous communities, when consulted, continue to highlight the importance of indigenous foods, foodways and food meanings for not only community health and nutrition, but for cultural wellbeing (Elliott et al., 2012; Morrison, 2011; Mundel & Chapman, 2010). While it’s improbable that a prison garden project will focus on, or be successful in upending the colonization, dispossession, and disenfranchisement that effects Aboriginal food security and

food sovereignty, it is possible for this project to re-frame itself as not only donating vegetables, but connecting men in prison to community members eager to integrate new foodways and (re)engage with land, plants, and people caught up in the criminal justice system in new and novel ways. This can be achieved through the growing and preserving of food, the building of relationships, and the sharing of knowledge. Sovereignty for Indigenous peoples is “inherent and collective” (Barker, 2005, p. 20) and “infused with interconnected autonomy nurtured through relationship with land,” non-human beings, and community members (Adelson, 2000; Kamal, Linklater, Thompson, Dipple, & Ithinto Mechisowin Committee, 2015; Simpson, 2004). To fully realize its potential the garden program must integrate the men and their vegetables into a wider community of beings, interconnected across land and bonded by responsibility and relationship.

Despite the meaningfulness of the garden for the men and the potential to deepen impacts for the communities, growing food, while promising in the face of rising food costs and the impacts of resource extraction on the health and viability of indigenous plants and animals as food sources, is not without its own burdened history. Farming has a tenuous history within many Aboriginal communities in Canada, where “colonial patriarchy found its first foothold in the fields and gardens of Indigenous peoples” (Carter, 1990; Grey & Patel, 2014; Holly, 1990). The Department of Indian Affairs forced farming as a means to disrupt the seasonal movements of Indigenous communities and to tether Indigenous peoples close to churches and missionaries (Grey & Patel, 2014; Turner & Turner, 2008), disrupting Indigenous foodways and meanings and working to erase the ancient and embodied gendered knowledge of Indigenous women, ethnobotanical experts engaged in reciprocity and responsible harvest on their homelands (Anderson, 2005; Turner, 2003). Transformational hard labour in correctional settings echoes these colonial ideas of farming as civilizing the savage, and whether being forced to relocate to smaller and smaller reserves or in federal custody, the experience of farming has and continues to exist upon a foundation of restricted freedoms of choice and movement. Prison-based agriculture programs in the US exist against an uneasy and violent history that placed black bodies in plantation fields, a history that has resulted in the ongoing over-incarceration of African American people, particularly men (Browne, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The seemingly simple act of growing food is inextricably linked to power, hierarchies and social norms that implicitly dictate who grows, who eats, and who gets a choice. Growing food in prison provides healing, calm and productive growth for some, yet others may experience those same farms and gardens as grounded in long histories of marginalized bodies forced to tend fields; as always, context matters.

Just as the physical, emotional, and structural violence of education are being healed in land-based education programs for Indigenous youth and adults (Radu, House, & Pashagumskum, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014), and Nations such as the T̓silhqot̓in continually work towards self-determining and autonomous education for their children and youth, gardening provides tools and frameworks, mired in colonial violence yet ripe with possibility. Pragmatic Indigenous communities such as Tl'esqox see agriculture as a means to increase self-determination in the face of the ongoing and increasing deterioration of indigenous food sources. Gardens and farms provide a means for communities to: (re)connect with their land; (re)engage with ancestral gardens planted to stave off hunger as colonialism's teeth sunk ever deeper, and; (re)create and sustain plant foods and medicines, all on their own terms. These networks are particularly important given the increasingly devastating impacts of climate change and resource extraction on salmon runs, moose, deer and berry yields, and the rising cost of store bought foods, healthy and otherwise. Indigenous communities have and continue to subsist off diverse food sources, "they are hunters, gatherers, and fishers; they comb the beach, reap the hive, shepherd the flock, harvest on and in the water, and tend the forest as well as the field" (Grey & Patel, 2014, p. 439). The biocultural heritages of the T̓silhqot̓in people provide impacts far greater than mere access to food, and connection to the men in prison offers a promise of relationships and reciprocities so foundational to Indigenous health and wellbeing.

Imagine if the garden shifted focus from providing food to increase food security to supporting Indigenous food sovereignty through resurgence. Instead of focusing on dispossession and food insecurity the garden could focus on community strengths, engaging and reinforcing T̓silhqot̓in "land-centered literacies" across communities and generations (Goodyear-Ka'opua, 2013). This re-envisioning of relationships could center the distribution of vegetables and the reciprocity of learning and teaching as "transformative alternatives to this [colonial] present" (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 2). Activities that connect Indigenous communities with and on the land and provide a space for Elders and youth to engage is an act of decolonization; strengthening communities in the face of systems and policies designed to destroy them (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Simpson, 2004). Food, in all its relationships and intricacies, provides a framework for social learning (Morrison, 2011). Lessons learned from other Indigenous food and nutrition programs highlight the great potential that exists within the garden and the communities it connects. Community gardens within the Inga communities of Colombia grow

meaningful indigenous plant foods and medicines based in ancient knowledge and biocultural heritages, and the resulting plants and seeds are shared and celebrated in community festivals and used in schools to provide culturally appropriate and meaningful lunches for Inga children (Chaparro, 2013; Kuhnlein, 2014). In the Canadian context, the Nuxalk Food and Nutrition program in northern coastal British Columbia includes Elders (re)introducing Indigenous foods and foodways to community members, classes on budget-friendly grocery shopping and nutrition, recipe booklets that integrate market foods with those harvested from the Nuxalk territory, and ongoing advocating for more nutritious food to be available at local grocery stores (Kuhnlein, Fediuk, Nelson, Howard, & Johnson, 2013; Kuhnlein, Moody, Kluckner, & Nakai, 1989).

Within prison environments and Aboriginal communities across Canada the foundational human right to move freely is restricted; while T̓silhqot̓in people push back against the confines of colonial reserve boundaries through sustained legal action, and the men experiencing incarceration continue to work towards their own personal freedom, often year after year, the garden provides an opportunity for men to move freely in the sun and for communities to reach out and engage in dynamic relationships with new allies.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The prison garden has layered and beneficial impacts on the participating men's mental health and wellbeing, beginning with access to food and deepening across time and personal engagement to include transformational experiences and a means to imagine a meaningful future. The impact of the donated vegetables on communities is often simply saving community members a trip into town for fresh produce. While knowledge of where the vegetables came from was not widespread among the people I spoke with, both in the specific community of Tl'esqox and the other T̂silhqot'in communities I visited, learning that men in prison grew those vegetables increased impact and provided an opportunity to envision ways to create reciprocal connections that go beyond the simple donation of vegetables. Barriers, mainly a lack of a formal transportation and distribution mechanisms and the correlated absence of feedback loops to ensure that gifted vegetables met community needs, originally resulted in some of the produce being discarded. Community members were unsure of what certain vegetables were and how to properly store, prepare, and preserve them. The introduction of cooking workshops provided a means to bring the community together to prepare and share food, introduce people to new nutritious vegetables that can be integrated into their existing diets, and create sustained links between the men in prison and the community of Tl'esqox. While only a small step, these workshops highlight the foundational interest in teaching and learning that exists within the T̂silhqot'in, and the significance of creating spaces, whether real or imagined, where community members can come together, build relationships, and share their knowledge and experience of foodways and meanings.

Relationships built on the premise of balanced reciprocity are the foundation of food sovereignty, giving and taking, learning and teaching. Such relationships highlight the vast potential of using the prison garden as a place of teaching and mentorship. While the location of the garden within a correctional institution creates physical, bureaucratic, and political barriers to connecting people around the growing and harvesting of food, the T̂silhqot'in community members I spoke with had several ideas of how to increase reciprocity across the prison walls. Community members suggested that the men in custody send gardening tips and seedlings grown in the prison greenhouses. They imagined relationships where men in prison interacted, through letters, videos, and perhaps in person with T̂silhqot'in youth beginning to engage in criminal activity, sharing their histories and experiences of incarceration. Research has highlighted that

Scared Straight programs, where youth deemed 'at-risk' are brought into correctional institutions to meet individuals in custody, are at best ineffective, and at worst may aggravate criminal behavior in participating youth (Hunter, Logan, Barton, & Goulet, 2004; Lilienfeld, 2005; Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Buehler, 2002; Wheatley, 2016). Is it not possible that fear is a poor motivator, and that the building of trust and nurturing of relationships offers a way for youth to find alternate trajectories and positive role models? Can the growing of plants and gentle tending of human connection across time provide meaning in ways that the clanging of prison gates cannot? Stakeholders noted numerous barriers to supporting mentorship within the garden context; the distance to the T̓silhqot̓in is too far for ETAs, as the men would have to spend the night and there is no provincial jail in Williams Lake to house them, and the cost of paying correctional officers overtime for such a trip is prohibitive. That being said, stakeholders also provided alternate suggestions for facilitating reciprocity. Community Visitation Days, a program that no longer runs in CSC's Pacific Region, previously allowed community members to enter federal institutions and engage with the people living there. This program supported the developing of relationships to assist those experiencing incarceration post-release, while also de-stigmatizing the incarceration experience within the wider community. Whether through this program or through other initiatives, findings ways to transmit knowledge across culture, distance, background, and context is key to not only the sustainability of the prison garden-T̓silhqot̓in community connection, but will also ensure that donated vegetables play a role in a decolonizing and strengths-based process that acknowledges the impacts of land theft and dispossession on both food sovereignty and food security.

7.1: Implications for Practice

7.1.1: In Prison

Agricultural programs in prison are becoming increasingly widespread, particularly in the US where, according to the US Department of Justice, roughly one third of American prisons already have green education and training programs, which include gardening, farming, and other initiatives intended to create self sustaining and sustainable institutions; another third are in the process of developing programs and strategies to facilitate integration of sustainable and land-based programs into their institutions (Khatib & Krasny, 2015). While many of the existing programs sell the resulting produce grown in correctional horticultural settings or use it to offset

the food costs of the wider institution, it is clear from my time spent in the garden that connecting the participating men to communities through the donation of produce works to deepen and expand meaning and impact. While correctional programming is inherently downstream, addressing the problems of crime and criminality after the fact, the donation of vegetables provides an opportunity for people in prison to engage in meaningful work while addressing an upstream determinant of health and wellbeing. Given the negative physical and mental health correlates of food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly for children (British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, 2009; Downs et al., 2009; Government of Canada & Health Canada, 2007), allowing people experiencing incarceration to grow food, using their ample amounts of free time and the large expanses of land upon which federal institutions sit, aligns with the principles of social justice and equity; harnessing underutilized resources, both human and economic, to work towards a Canada where no parent skips meals and no child is hungry. Unfortunately governments rarely fund projects based on the principles of social justice, yet even ignoring the moral and human rights arguments of providing food for Aboriginal communities, doing so will provide cost savings to our health and social services further down the road (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010). Above and beyond the social and economic impacts of addressing food security as an upstream social determinant of health and wellbeing, increasing connection between the participating men and the recipient communities has the potential to deepen impacts for both parties. The experience of not only growing vegetables but meeting the children, single mothers, and elderly people who receive that food had substantial impacts on the men. For the communities, providing a space for autonomy and active engagement with the program may provide increased opportunities for relationship building; creating opportunities for engagement and agentive determination for the oft-marginalized peoples who receive donated food, and providing increased opportunities for empathy and relationships with the men. Although outside the scope of this project, active engagement may provide similar benefits to individuals receiving donated vegetables through food banks, soup kitchens, and other organizations within the Lower Mainland. In the context of Indigenous communities, supporting active community engagement works to decolonize relationships and facilitate increased self-determination and sovereignty (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Million, 2014; Simpson, 2014).

Within the daily functioning of the garden it was clear that the unconventional supervisor, seen as outside of the institutional environment and as “not CSC” by the men, provided additional benefit. The farmer, a man contracted by CSC to operate the farm, has a history in logging and creates a light-hearted space where the men can swear, feel comfortable, and develop a positive

relationship with an authority figure, perhaps for the first time. Research conducted within correctional institutions in the UK has highlighted that staff with unconventional backgrounds, such as bartending, bring skillsets useful for dealing with the stress and intrapersonal conflicts that arise in correctional institutions (Wheatley, 2016). My time in the garden supports this; the men spoke highly of the farmer, and in some instances stated that they would not continue to work there if another person were to replace him. This has implications for the sustainability of the project, as the farmer is over the age of 60 and will one day retire. One project stakeholder told me that prior to hiring the farmer they had tried contracting individuals from UBC with training in agricultural science, these individuals did not “mesh” well with the men; whether or not the strengths inherent in his outsider status are recognized by the wider correctional institution are unclear and will surely impact the garden in the coming years.

The men who are successful in the garden tend to self select; those who buy-in and work hard tend to have worked consistently on the outside, were used to getting up and going to work in the morning, and saw value in spending their time productively. Finding ways to attract men to the project initially will increase the sustainability of the garden and ensure a large enough work force to continue to harvest high yields and work towards expanding the project. The ability to take vegetables home is one pull, but the men can also order vegetables with their larger grocery order; they are less fresh and grown with pesticides but require minimal work prior to preparation and cooking.

There is an ongoing need to ensure that the men have activities to keep them busy throughout the winter, as the impacts of productive work in the sun may be weakened by months spent idle throughout the winter. Although some men are kept on in the greenhouse over the winter there are ongoing conflicts regarding supervision, as the farmer tends to travel internationally during that time and is not available to oversee them. Additional funding could support winter activities that engage more men in the down season. GreenHouse, at Rikers Island in New York, provides an example of a successful correctional garden that provides year-round activities for participating men and women. Founded in 1997 by the Horticulture Society of New York, the garden teaches around ninety students annually, and includes butterfly, bird, medieval herb, and vegetable gardens in a landscaped acre of land. In the winter students engage in horticulture classes and the greenhouse is converted to a woodshop where items are made and later donated to local schools and parks (Lindemuth, 2007). GreenHouse graduates are able to participate in GreenTeam upon release, a community-based program that supports job searching and

placement for participants, addressing barriers to employment and housing that individuals with criminal records often face upon release (Khatib & Krasny, 2015).

The sustainability of the garden is also impacted by a shifting prison culture. Community gardens outside of prison contexts have been shown to provide increased social capital, communal learning and collective efficacy (Agustina & Beilin, 2012; Alaimo et al., 2010; Glover et al., 2005; Mitchell, 2013). In contrast, the garden's positioning within a wider correctional context limits social bonding as men's identities and positions within the hierarchy of the con code restrict community building; men within the garden, while learning to work in teams and proud of the products of that team labour, were by and large focused on "keeping their head down" and "laying low" until release. While community gardens in marginalized neighbourhoods can work to reduce isolation (Wakefield et al., 2007), the men I spoke with saw the garden as an expanse of land within which they could be peacefully alone. Some of the men talked about previous years when a community was created among the core group, men would get together after work, sharing food and socializing. As the prison culture has shifted that garden community has eroded. It is possible that a correctional garden in a higher security institution, where there is less diversity between lifers and young men newly incarcerated, would provide a space for more community development. While the experience of working in the garden did not create the social bonds and sense of belonging that has been reported in non-prison contexts, the meaning and impact of the garden is still substantial. Today the men may not be building and experiencing community, but finding solitude in open air, flowering bushes, and thick rows of corn is preferable than isolation within the florescent-lit rooms of the wider institution.

The effect of the air, sun, and rain of the garden is highly therapeutic in and of itself (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Maller et al., 2005). While the growing and giving of food provides increased benefits, the men were positively impacted by simply being outside. For those men that had been incarcerated for many years the experience of being in natural green spaces was even more impactful. The garden is not a high cost endeavor, the farmer has an annual budget of roughly \$25,000, and the only cost above and beyond that is his salary, yet the integration of green spaces into correctional institutions is an even more economical initiative. Institutions within Canada tend to sit on large tracts of land, thus providing people experiencing incarceration with low barrier opportunities to improve their mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing, opportunities often impeded by fences and gates.

7.1.2: In Indigenous Communities

The garden project provides key insights to working with and for Indigenous communities. The donation of produce from the garden exists within a wider framework wherein T̓shilqot'in communities have several ongoing programs aimed at addressing both food security and sovereignty. Many of these programs are specifically aimed at children, Elders and people living with diabetes, including monthly distribution of fruits and vegetables and collective food sharing where select individuals will fish, hunt, and gather plant foods and medicines that are then distributed to those in need. The prison vegetables were not distinct from these other programs for the vast majority of people I spoke with, both within Tl'esqox and across the wider T̓shilqot'in. Throughout my time in the T̓shilqot'in I explained the prison garden project and shared the origins of the donated vegetables with many people, and of those the vast majority responded with a caring and kindness towards the men. People spoke of family and friends who were in custody, shared their own experiences of incarceration, and envisioned ways that the program could draw on the men's knowledge and experience, about both plants and prisons, to increase reciprocity and build relationships for mutual benefit. Distributing not only vegetables but sharing their origin would deepen these impacts.

The donated vegetables were insufficient in quantity, and too misaligned with the historical context and community needs to address food security and the larger goal of food sovereignty, yet these vegetables do provide an opportunity for T̓shilqot'in community members to experience new foods and experiment with new recipes. Increasing the connection between the men and the T̓shilqot'in communities to include not only the sharing of vegetables but of foodways, meanings, and recipes could deepen this impact and work to increase capacity and confidence around new unknown produce within the communities. Cooking workshops work to align the donated vegetables with community tastes, trends, and preferences and provide opportunities for social bonding around food. Aligning the prison-T̓shilqot'in garden project with T̓shilqot'in preferences is a necessary step to ensure full benefit for the participating community members and to avoid programs disconnected from community strengths and preferences that often hinder, rather than help, community health and wellbeing (Easterly, 2007). For many of the men it takes times to fully engage with the layered benefits, time for the visible fruits of their labour to deepen the meaningfulness of their time in the garden. For community members interested in learning more about new vegetables and integrating the growing, storing, and preparing of those foods into their diets, the visible impact of digging in the soil and seeing seeds sprout into food may similarly expand positive impacts. Finding innovative ways, based in the

strengths and creativity of the T̓silhqot̓in communities and the men, to come together, learn about the garden's benefits, and share the visual impacts of the project offers the potential increase impact on both sides.

T̓silhqot̓in foodways, meanings and bio-cultural heritages are dynamic, evolving over the seasons, the trials and tribulations of colonialism, resource extraction, and climate change. Gardening may present a pragmatic means to increase self-determination and food sovereignty, providing a space for community members to (re)connect with their land, and earlier gardening traditions that grew in the shadows of colonial land theft. That being said, community politics, economic strain and the ongoing influences of colonialism make community gardens at times difficult to introduce and maintain. Many of the T̓silhqot̓in people I spoke with described themselves as a 'shy' culture, suggesting that individual gardens may provide an easier gateway into growing good. A community garden started at Old School in Tl'esqox was intended to provide gardening training for each of the six communities, although the organizer could only find one woman from Tl'esqox to participate. Champions within the communities able to cut through community politics and engage diverse members are an important aspect of successful and sustainable community gardens that last beyond the short-term interest of one or two passionate leaders. Engaging with other Indigenous communities across Canada and internationally may provide opportunities for inspiration and to learn from gardening opportunities and facilitators based within shared understandings of land, community, and wellbeing.

7.2: Implications for Research

There are several implications for research within correctional garden environments specifically, and correctional work programs more generally. The ongoing impacts of shifting prison cultures on the communal nature of gardening deserves further study. Further, research into means to increase social bonding and collective efficacy in correctional environments generally, and correctional gardens specifically, against a backdrop of isolationism, could produce increasingly positive impacts for the participating men. There is evidence that employment programs are experienced differently by men and women in custody, as women are thought to be more interested in passing their time well as opposed to procuring employment post release, and a large percentage of women in custody have children in the communities which impacts their

post-release goals (Bloom & Covington, 1998; Richmond, 2014). Research into gendered impacts of correctional gardens is needed. While some programs, such as GreenHouse at Rikers Island in New York include both men and women, with daily shifts ensuring the two populations engage with the garden at different times (Khatib & Krasny, 2015; Lindemuth, 2007), to my knowledge there has been no research conducted on gendered differences. While the men I spoke with considered the garden a way to pass time well, it is unclear if that would be experienced in the same way by women, and the impacts of men imagining meaningful futures, based in the growing and giving of produce may be moderated by women's possible relationships with and housing needs for their children upon release. Additional differences based on demographic variables also warrant further inquiry. These findings are focused on men over the age of 18 experiencing incarceration. There is evidence that employment decreases criminal behavior in adults more so than youth and young adults (Sampson & Laub, 1997). Community gardens aimed at engaging youth have been shown to provide benefits, including academic improvement and cultural benefits (Sandler, 1995), and horticultural programs for juveniles engaged in the criminal justice system have been shown to provide increased self efficacy, social bonding, reduced recidivism, and improved goal orientation and motivation (Finch, 1995; McGuinn, 1999). While additional research into the benefits of gardening for youth in custody is needed, particularly within the Indigenous and Canadian prison contexts, research into youth gardening initiatives that connect youth in detention to youth in community could provide insight into the probable benefits of reciprocity and relationship between diverse youth communities. Additionally, the impacts of different security levels warrant attention, as evidenced by the deepened meaning and benefit of the garden for men with experiences in higher security institutions; providing gardening tools and the freedom and autonomy necessary to garden successfully in medium and maximum security institutions is possible. For instance, Garden Time is a successful therapeutic gardening program for men in a maximum security institution in Rhode Island; compared with the garden at Mission Minimum, men who regardless of years served have cascaded down to a minimum security institution, and many of whom are months or years from release, the men gardening in Rhode Island are serving life sentences in a high security institution. The garden provides a space to pass their time well, knowing that many of them may never be released back into the community (Espinoza, 2015). While the benefits of the prison garden fit nicely into the emotive potential of qualitative methods, standardized measurement of impacts as a means to leverage additional funding and policy attention may support the sustainability and scalability of the garden. This is particularly notable given the Harper government's funding cuts to correctional

agriculture initiatives, and ongoing discussions with the current Liberal government regarding re-initiating such programs. Finally, following participants after release would provide longitudinal data that may support future funding and sustainability, as well as provide evidence of impact as CSC public consultations and feasibility studies explore the possibility of reinstating prison farming programs (Correctional Service Canada, 2016; Mehta, 2016).

Research on foodways and meanings in Indigenous communities necessitates an understanding of and accounting for history and context. Historic and ongoing colonialism and structural violence influence the causes, correlates and impacts of food (in)security. Land rights and relationships are foundational to all health and wellbeing, and foodways offer a window into community identities, strengths, and dynamic traditions. The T̓silhqot̓in people I spoke with told me that being T̓silhqot̓in was inextricably linked to the ways they catch, preserve, share and eat salmon, moose, deer, and plant foods and medicines, and the knowledge, history, legend, and values tied up in the transfer of food-based knowledge, foodways, and meanings. Interventions focused on food security for Indigenous communities, both within Canada and internationally, that ignore these wider contexts are doomed to fail. The health impacts of food insecurity have resulted in a great deal of public health and health promotion research focused on exploring the state of food insecurity and possible nutrition-focused interventions among various Indigenous communities (Downs et al. 2009; Fieldhouse & Thompson 2012; Willows et al. 2009). While a great deal of food security and nutrition research focused on Indigenous communities recommends culturally-appropriate and -mediated public health nutrition interventions (Mercille, Receveur, & Potvin, 2012), a pragmatic means to address ongoing food insecurity within Aboriginal communities, such short-term interventions fail to address the longer term and underlying land issue that continues to dig deep groves into Aboriginal communities' self determination, food and land sovereignty, and holistic health and wellbeing.

7.3: Final Thoughts

Within T̓silhqot̓in culture, individuals mourning a family member or close friend refrain from fishing, hunting, or gathering plant foods for one year. This creates a need within that home, a need for not only the physical sustenance that food provides, but for the social and emotional bonds with friends, family and the wider community that ensure caring kinfolk bring food to share, food for caring and for healing. These gifts of food strengthen relationships and express

tenderness in times of grief. Food as relationship and connection is something known and embodied by T̓silhqot'in peoples. To quote Secwepemc Elder Jones Ignace, "food will always be what brings people together" (Morrison, 2011, p. 97). Recognizing the reciprocity that already exists within T̓silhqot'in foodways and meanings and widening those connections to include the garden, the men, and the wider context of dispossession and resurgence will allow the garden project to thrive within an ancient framework of relationships and accountability. Growing and sharing food can connect people to plants across great distances and prison walls, providing a fertile space for those involved to "remain attentive to the very ground upon which we stand," and the histories and strengths buried and growing there (Snelgrove et al., 2014, p. 2). Drawing on this wisdom will only increase the meaning and benefit of the garden, for "when Elders speak of the strength of their people, they invariably mention food" (Kelm, 1998, p. 19).

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Appendix I: Selected Vegetable Information Sheets

GARLIC SCAPES




Gazlig tl'ulh

OTHER NAMES: None
WHAT IS IT? The flower bud of the garlic plant



STORING




Store garlic scapes in a brown paper bag in the refrigerator. They're best when they're fresh but can keep for a couple of weeks!



COOKING

Garlic scapes taste just like garlic and can be used as you would garlic in any recipe! They are delicious cooked, pickled, and can be chopped and sprinkled raw on meat or fish for a garlicky garnish!

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

 <p>Liver and kidney health</p>	 <p>Vitamin C</p>	 <p>Anti-cancer</p>
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- ✓ Sulfur compounds fight against tumour growth!
- ✓ High vitamin C protects your skin and lungs
- ✓ Guards against stress to your liver and kidneys

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SAUTEED GARLIC SCAPES



INGREDIENTS

1 bunch of garlic scapes (5-8 scapes)
2 Tbsp olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

-Heat a pan with 2 Tbsp of olive oil
-Add scapes and sauté, stirring occasionally, on medium heat.
-Cook for 5 minutes or until tender. Add salt and pepper. If overcooked scapes can be hard and stringy so taste test often!

Serve garlic scapes as a tasty and nutritious side dish with fish or meat.

Scapes can also be sautéed along with other vegetables to make colourful and healthy stirfrys!

Raw scapes are delicious too. Try mixing them with low fat sour cream and a touch of salt for a garlicky dip to enjoy with other fresh veggies!

SCAPE OMELETTE

INSTRUCTIONS

-Add oil and sliced scapes to a hot frying pan, and cook, stirring occasionally, over medium heat until tender and crisp, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and set aside, keeping the oiled pan warm.
-In a bowl whisk 6 eggs with milk or water, seasoning to taste until frothy.
-Gently pour the egg mixture into the hot pan, leaving on medium heat until the bottom layer is firm. Sprinkle the garlic scapes and grated cheese. Cook for roughly 4 minutes, until the omelette is mostly cooked through.
-Gently fold the omelette in half and enjoy!
This recipe serves 2-3 people.

You can add smoked salmon, herbs like chives or parsley, or sliced veggies like onion, peppers and tomatoes to change things up!

INGREDIENTS

6 eggs
2 Tbsp olive, canola oil or margarine
3-4 garlic scapes, sliced
-2 tsp milk or water
1/4 cup grated cheese (cheddar or mozzarella)
salt and pepper to taste



You can pickle garlic scapes in the same way you pickle beets! See the beet information sheets for more information- leave out the cloves from that recipe and try adding dill or black peppercorns!

SQUASH



Xanelhyish ?inlht'in

OTHER NAMES: Winter squash
WHAT IS IT? Thick-skinned vegetable



STORING

Winter squash can be kept in cold storage for a long time. Keep in a basket or box in a cool, dark, and dry place for up to 6 months.



COOKING

Winter squash is best baked, roasted, or cooked in soups or stews. Most types need to be peeled and have their inner seeds scooped out. The seeds can be roasted and eaten.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION



Vision & Eye Health



Healthy Fats



High in fibre

- ✓ Protects our eyes. May help prevent cataracts.
- ✓ The seeds have heart healthy fats.
- ✓ Fibre helps keep us regular and balances blood sugar.

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Brown Sugar Baked Squash



INGREDIENTS

1 winter squash, cut in half, with seeds removed
1 Tbsp of butter
1 Tbsp brown sugar
Salt & pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. Place squash in a shallow baking pan, cut side down.
3. Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes, or until tender.
4. Turn cut side up; season with salt and pepper, dot with butter and sprinkle with brown sugar and cinnamon.
5. Bake for 20 minutes more.

Try acorn, buttercup, or hubbard squash varieties for this recipe.

Microwaved Spaghetti Squash 'Spaghetti'



INGREDIENTS

1 spaghetti squash
1 Tbsp cooking oil
Salt + pepper
Water
Jarred spaghetti sauce (or homemade!)
Optional: cheese, for topping

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Poke the squash several times with a fork or knife. Microwave the whole squash on high for 5 minutes. Remove from microwave and let cool.
2. Once cool enough to handle, cut the squash down the middle lengthwise (stem to bottom). Scoop out the seeds and set aside.
3. Rub the squash with a bit of cooking oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
4. In a large microwave-safe cooking dish, place squash halves cut-side down. Add 1 inch of water to pan. Microwave on high for 5 minutes.
5. If squash is cooked, a fork should pass easily through the skin. Turn squash over and use a fork to separate the strands into 'spaghetti'.
6. Serve with your favourite jarred or homemade spaghetti sauce and topped with cheese.

You can also bake this in the oven if preferred. Follow the the instructions from 1-3 above. Then roast in oven at 400 for 30-40 minutes.

KALE



?et'an tw'ediyan ?igut'in

OTHER NAMES: None
WHAT IS IT? Leafy green vegetable
TYPES: Curly, dino and purple



STORING

Store unwashed kale in the fridge in a plastic bag, and use within the week!



COOKING

Kale is usually cooked before eating, but can be eaten raw if chopped into small bits and allowed to 'marinate' in a light dressing of oil and lemon juice. Otherwise it will taste bitter and be less healthy!

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Kale is one of the healthiest foods on the planet!!



Healthy heart



Anti-cancer



Remove toxins



Protects the heart by lowering cholesterol



Helps protect against many cancers



Helps removes toxins that build up in your body

NOTE: If you take blood-thinning medication you should only eat kale occasionally. Kale is high in vitamin K. Too much vitamin K can impact how well your blood thinner works.

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GARLICKY KALE

INGREDIENTS

1 bunch kale, stems removed and chopped
2-3 cloves of garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1/4 cup chicken broth
2 tsp oil
Salt and pepper to taste



INSTRUCTIONS

- Remove the stems from the kale by holding the stem firmly and pulling down the leaves, stripping them off. You can also cut the leaves off the stem.
- Chop leaves into bite sized pieces
- Peel garlic and chop finely
- Heat 2 tsp of olive oil in a pan over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté for 1 minute
- Add kale to the pan for cook for 2 minutes, stirring often
- Add chicken broth and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Let cook for 2-3 minutes, until kale is wilted. Enjoy!

This makes a great side dish or a heathy snack! Try adding chili peppers for an added kick!

KALE CHIPS

INGREDIENTS

1 bunch of kale, stems removed and torn into bite-sized pieces
1 Tbsp oil
Spices (try dill, garlic powder, chili powder or paprika)
Salt and pepper



INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F
- Remove the stems from the kale (see the recipe above).
- Tear the leaves into bite sized pieces. They will shrink when baked so don't make them too small!
- Wash kale and dry well before coating in oil
- In a bowl, toss the kale with the oil and sprinkle with the seasonings of your choice.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes until crispy. Enjoy!

You can make a healthy dip by mixing low fat and plain greek yoghurt with lemon juice and garlic powder. Dip and kale chips!

Appendix II: Cooking Workshop Recipe Handout

Roasted Squash Seeds

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Total time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

- Squash seeds, try pumpkin, hubbard or acorn squash
- Garlic salt

What to do?

- Preheat your oven to 275°F. After removing the seeds from the squash, rinse them with water and remove any bits of squash stuck to them. Drain the water and pat the seeds dry. Sprinkle the seeds with garlic salt and bake, about 15 minutes or until the seeds start to 'pop'.
- You can also try seasoning them with salt and pepper, seasoning salt, chili powder, onion salt, or brown sugar!
- Roasted squash seeds make a delicious and healthy snack. You can also try them sprinkled on a green salad for an added crunch!

Spaghetti Squash 'Pasta'

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 45 minutes
Total time: 1 hour
Serves: 2

Ingredients

- 1 spaghetti squash
- 3-4 lbs of roma tomatoes, roughly diced
- 1 head of kale, stems removed and roughly chopped
- 1 large white or yellow onion, diced
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon oregano or basil
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Garnishes like chili peppers, parmesan cheese, or fresh herbs

What to do?

- Preheat your oven to 400°F.

- Cut the spaghetti squash in half lengthwise, scooping out the seeds and stringy parts with a spoon. Brush with olive oil and a pinch of salt and pepper and place face down on a baking tray. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the squash is tender and a knife easily pierces the skin and flesh.
- While your squash is baking, heat the remaining olive oil in a pot, and add the diced onion and garlic. Sauté until the onion is translucent and the garlic begins to slightly brown, about 5-7 minutes. Add in diced tomatoes, and simmer on medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens into a sauce. If using dried herbs add them in now while your sauce is still thickening.
- While your sauce thickens and your squash bakes, remove the stems from the kale and tear the kale leaves into large bite-sized pieces. Set aside.
- If you're using fresh basil or oregano, remove the leaves from the stems, chop finely and set aside.
- Once your sauce is nearly done, gently fold the kale leaves and any fresh herbs you're using. Stir until kale leaves are wilted. Turn off the heat and set aside.
- Remove your squash from the oven. If serving as a main dish you can use a fork to scrap the squash "noodles" away from the skin, using the skin as a bowl for your pasta! If sharing or serving as a side dish you can scrap the noodles into a separate bowl.
- Pour your tomato sauce over the squash noodles. Garnish with spicy chili peppers, parmesan cheese or herbs. Enjoy!
- Try all of your favourite pasta sauces with spaghetti squash!

Three Sister Stew

Prep time: 1 hour

Cook time: 40 minutes

Total time: 1 hour 40 minutes

Serves: 8 to 10

Ingredients

- 1 small sugar pumpkin, 1 large butternut or hubbard squash (about 2 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 to 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium green or red bell pepper, cut into short narrow strips
- 14- to 16-ounce can fire-roasted diced tomatoes, with liquid
- 2 to 3 cups cooked or canned (drained and rinsed) beans
- 2 cups corn kernels (from 2 large or 3 medium ears, or frozen)
- 1 cup homemade or canned vegetable stock, or water
- 1 or 2 small fresh hot chiles, seeded and minced, or one 4-ounce can chopped mild green chiles
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons chilli powder or more, to taste
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ¼ cup minced fresh cilantro or parsley

What to do?

- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Remove stem from the pumpkin or squash and cut in half lengthwise. Cover with aluminum foil and place the halves, cut side up, in a foil-lined shallow baking pan. If your knives aren't sharp

- enough, just wrap the pumpkin or squash in foil and bake it whole. Bake for roughly 45 minutes, or until you can pierce through with a knife, with a little resistance.
- When cool enough to handle, scrape out the seeds and fibers (clean the seeds for roasting, if you'd like)! Slice and peel, then largely dice.
 - Heat the oil in a soup pot. Add the onion and sauté over medium-low heat until translucent. Add the garlic and continue to sauté until the onion is golden.
 - Add the pumpkin or squash and all the remaining ingredients except the last 2, and bring to a simmer. Simmer gently, covered, until all the vegetables are tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
 - If time allows, let the stew stand for 1 to 2 hours before serving, then heat through as needed. Just before serving, stir in the cilantro. The stew should be thick and very moist but not soupy; add additional stock or water if needed. Adjust seasonings to your liking. Serve in bowls.

Red Beet Borscht

Prep time: 25 minutes

Cook time: 40 minutes

Total time: 1 hour and 5 minutes

Serves: 8-10 people

Ingredients

- 3 medium beets, peeled and shredded
- 3 carrots, peeled and shredded
- 3 medium baking potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion (yellow or white, chopped)
- ½ head cabbage, sliced
- 8-ounce can diced tomatoes, drained
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1-3 tablespoons lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ cup sour cream for topping
- Dill, fresh or dried, for garnish

What to do?

- Heat oil in a large pot, add onion and cook until translucent, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and continue to cook until onion slightly brown.
- Fill a large pot halfway with water and bring to a boil. Add the shredded beets and cook until they have lost their colour.
- Add carrots and potatoes, and cook until tender, about 15 minutes.
- Add cabbage and diced tomatoes, continue to cook until cabbage is tender, about 5 minutes.
- Season with salt, pepper and dill.
- Serve with a spoonful of sour cream and fresh dill.
- You can also add ground pork or beef or wild meats. Cook in the oil before adding the onion and garlic for a heartier version of this soup!
- Try cracking an egg into the hot soup and waiting for it to cook before eating!

Bok Choy Coleslaw

Prep time: 10 minutes

Total time: 10 minutes

Serves: 4 people

Ingredients

- 4-6 heads of bok choy, rinsed and thinly sliced
- 1 apple, cored, quartered and cut into matchsticks
- 2 cups of carrots, washed and cut into matchsticks
- 2 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon honey
- Salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste

What to do?

- Slice the washed bok choy, both the crunchy white and the green leafy parts.
- Cut carrots and apples into matchsticks, add to a bowl with the sliced bok choy
- In a separate bowl mix the mayo, apple cider vinegar, and honey.
- Pour dressing over the bok choy, mixing well.
- Season to taste and enjoy with anything you'd eat coleslaw with!

Honey Glazed Carrots

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Total time: 15 minutes

Serves: 4 people

Ingredients

- 6 to 8 large carrots, sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh or dried parsley to garnish

What to do?

- In a pan heat oil, adding carrots and cooking on medium heat for 5-6 minutes.
- Once tender but not fully cooked, add honey, lemon juice and salt and pepper, cooking for another 5 minutes until carrots coated in sauce.
- Sprinkle with parsley and serve as a side dish or a healthy snack.

Whole Wheat Oat Baked Bannock

[Recipe courtesy of UBC Farm, via the T'Silhqot'in National Government Health Hub]

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 40 minutes

Total time: 50 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 cups white flour
- 2 cups oatmeal
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 cups water

What to do?

- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- In a big mixing bowl mix all dry ingredients together and then make a well in the middle.
- In a smaller mixing bowl beat the eggs, add the oil and beat again, then add the water and mix until fully combined.
- Slowly pour the wet mixture into the dry well.
- Keep gently stirring with a fork until the until the wet mixture is mostly mixed in, then make into a ball. If you need it to be wetter, add a little water; if you need it to be drier add a little white flour.
- Flour the counter a bit and keep moving the ball around with your hands to make sure there is no stickiness leftover. Don't KNEAD the bread. If you beat up the dough too much the bannock will be tough!
- Put in a touch of oil in a 6' by 6' cake pan and spread it around to grease it. Put the dough in the pan and spread it and flatten slightly to the corners.
- Place the pan on the bottom rack of the oven and bake for 40 minutes. A knife should come out clean when poked if done. Pop it out and place on a cooling rack immediately.
- Allow to cool for a few minutes and enjoy!

Apple Crumble

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 45 minutes

Serves: 8-10 people

Ingredients

- 10 granny smith apples, cored and sliced
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup oats

- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon all purpose flour
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup butter, softened

What to do?

- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- Mix the apples with 1 tablespoon of flour, 2 tablespoon white sugar and cinnamon and place in a pan.
- Combine soft butter, 1 cup flour, ½ cup brown sugar, baking soda and powder in a bowl. Crumble over the apple mixture.
- Bake for about 45 minutes, or until apples soft and crumble nicely browned.
- Serve warm or chilled, alone, with ice cream or milk.