

# Indigenous youth exploring identities through food security in Canada and Brazil

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**Abstract:** This article, which is based on a review of the literature and the findings of a research project, focuses on Indigenous youth in two communities. One is a First Nation in eastern Canada and the other is in interior Brazil. The paper explores food security and cultural practices regarding food as part of Indigenous youth identity in two different parts of the world. The research methodology included the cultural practices and spirituality of those who participated. Findings from the project support and add to the existing literature, reveal many similarities between the two groups and offer suggestions for the development of youth leadership within Indigenous communities.

**Keywords:** Food security; identity; Indigenous youth; leadership

## Introduction

In 2005, I was approached by Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security (CSFS) to become part of the Centre to conduct research and write about food security and Indigenous peoples. I agreed, as food is not only a structural determinant of health, but also has cultural and spiritual meanings for Indigenous peoples worldwide.

In the spring of 2006, the Centre invited me to visit interior Brazil where its team was involved in a food security project. A small group of Indigenous peoples, who had recently migrated to an area close to where the project was taking place, expressed an interest in what the team was doing on food security. Everyone agreed that an Aboriginal person involved with the Centre should be one of the members to meet with this group.

Since the population I am most interested in conducting research with is youth, and I was already involved in a project with a group in rural New Brunswick which included youth from the Elsipogtog First Nation, I decided to investigate the possibility of a research project that would involve some of them and those from the village in Brazil. The aim was to learn about and compare the young people of these two Indigenous communities, particularly around how food (traditional foods and their meanings, access and choices, past and present practices) is connected to youth identities. I had no idea that it was going to be a spiritual journey as well.

## Literature review

### *Who are Indigenous peoples?*

Terms such as 'Original Peoples', 'Aboriginal', 'Indigenous', 'Native', 'First Nations' and 'Indian' are commonly used around the globe, often interchangeably, to describe groups of people whose distinct identities comprise both being the original inhabitants of a particular territory and a history of having been colonized by European Nations. These groups of people include those who identify themselves as Indigenous or who can trace their ancestry to peoples who first inhabited a particular area, prior to the arrival of European peoples (Sanders, 1999). In this article the terms Aboriginal and Indigenous will primarily be used and are intended to include all of the above descriptors.

### ***What is food security?***

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (1996) defines food security as a “condition in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” CSFS (2008) adds the following five components to this definition:

- Availability: sufficient food for all
- Accessibility: physical and economic access to food for all
- Adequacy: access to food that is nutritious, safe and produced in environmentally sustainable ways
- Acceptability: access to culturally acceptable food, produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise dignity, self-respect or human rights
- Agency: policies and processes that enable the achievement of food security.

### ***Indigenous Youth***

In Canada, the population of Aboriginal youth is rapidly increasing as 48% of the total population of Aboriginal peoples are under the age of 24 compared to 31% of the non-Aboriginal youth population (Statistics Canada, 2008). This is significant as Indigenous youth play an integral part in the formation of Indigenous identities and the continuation and sustainability of cultural practices and traditions given that they are the future leaders of their communities. The interests, preferences and factors that influence and directly affect youth also contribute to the formation of cultures and identities. As understood by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996), issues pertaining to culture and identity are a primary concern for Aboriginal youth in Canada. Identity formation for youth is a fundamental component of human development since it directly impacts self-esteem and how youth view themselves and their role within the world.

Despite the vast differences in cultures, Indigenous youth around the globe share similarities that include a sacred connection to their lands, lived experiences that are rooted in colonization, and recognition that they are distinct people in their homelands (In Focus, 1999). Various factors that connect colonization and poverty for Indigenous youth include a housing shortage, lack of access to services, distrust in governments and institutions, and isolation. However, forms of resistance on the part of Indigenous youth also exist such as restoring cultural practices and traditions and defending Indigenous rights by way of public demonstrations.

### ***Colonization: Roots of current Indigenous struggles***

Like most Indigenous populations around the world, Brazil’s Indigenous peoples once lived a subsistence way of life, hunting and gathering in their particular tribe’s specific territories. With the arrival of European peoples in Brazil 500 years ago, much of the land has been gradually taken over by ranchers or industrial projects thereby pushing Indigenous peoples off their territories. Originally a population estimated at four million, today only 519,000 identified Indigenous peoples live in Brazil (Wikipedia, 2008).

A research study conducted in 1995, resulting in a poverty profile, indicates that 53% of Indigenous peoples in Brazil live in poverty (Neri, 1999). As noted by Neri, rural poverty for Indigenous peoples is among the highest in Brazil with contributing factors such as female headed households, lack of schooling and employment, and large family size (1999). However, at the heart of poverty is the exploitation of land and its resources and government failure to recognize Indigenous rights that include self-determination (Amnesty International, 2005). Resembling Canada’s Aboriginal peoples, many of Brazil’s Indigenous tribes have also been historically forced onto pieces of land designated as “reserves” (Amnesty International, 2005).

As experienced by Aboriginal youth in Canada, Indigenous youth in Brazil have been subjected to colonization with its many impacts negatively affecting their livelihoods,

languages, cultures and lands (Ballengee-Morris, 2000). In many of Brazil's rural communities, the lives of Indigenous peoples are negatively affected through economic development sanctioned by the government and various corporations whereby mining and tourism damage and exploit traditional lands and resources. For example, for the Cinta-Largas tribe, deposits of diamonds discovered on their "reservation" bring calamity as miners attempt to exploit the community with alcohol, drugs and diseases (Rohter, 2006). Furthermore, violent disputes over land ownership is common in Brazil as evidenced by the fact that from 1994 to 2003, 165 murders of Indigenous peoples were registered (McMahon, 2006; Osava, 2006).

Exploitation of Indigenous peoples also threatens their traditional knowledges and practices. For example, logging companies are invading the Brazilian Amazon which is the territory of the Arara tribe (Osava, 2006). Forests and land, respected by the Arara, are being destroyed and many of this tribe are now restricted or forbidden to exercise traditional hunting practices. Similar impacts affect Inuit communities across the Canadian Arctic. For example, country foods and traditional practices around food, such as reciprocity, social events, feasts and gatherings, are at risk since contaminants from the south are entering the food chain in Canada's far north (Weber, 1996). Foods such as fish, seal, caribou and moose, customary to Inuit peoples, now pose long term risks to their health if consumed on a regular basis thereby clearly threatening their cultural practices (Wuttunee, 1992). In addition, this disrupted way of life leads to a decline in youth participating in hunting, fishing and food rituals.

With a loss of control over traditional lands and resources, poor health, poverty and despair prevails among many Indigenous peoples around the globe (McNeish & Eversole, 2005; Stephens et al., 2006). For Indigenous youth, poverty is linked to violence, substance abuse, malnutrition and even suicide. For instance, youth suicide among some of the Guarani-Kaiowa communities in Brazil is high with 305 reported suicides between 1986 and 1999 (Amnesty International, 2005). According to the Fundacao Nacional de Saude (FUNASA) (2004), a Brazilian government health agency, the numbers continue to rise as 132 suicides occurred between 2001 and 2003. In Canada, suicide rates for Aboriginal youth are five to seven times higher than those for non-Aboriginal youth (Health Canada, 2006). Moreover, Inuit youth suicides are among the highest in the world at 11 times the national average (Health Canada, 2006).

### ***Resistance: Food security development***

Initiatives addressing food security with Indigenous youth exist, such as a community kitchen programme in Vancouver, British Columbia and a garden project in Hagstaff, Arizona. The Vancouver project, called *The Urban Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden Project*, assists youth to reconnect to "Mother Earth" by learning about gardening and nutrition (Vancouver Native Health Society, 2005). Participants are transported by bus to a farm on the outskirts of the city where they harvest their own vegetables and celebrate traditions around food. There is also a community kitchen on site which allows participants to experience the "seed to table" or "eat what they grow" idea.

The second project, called *Cultivating the Seeds of Change*, is an Aboriginal youth garden initiated by the Hopi and Dine Nations (Indigenous Youth Coalition, 2006). The aim of this project is to reclaim traditional knowledges regarding food security. It is a learning project that engages, trains and inspires youth by providing hands-on opportunities to grow their own foods, learn about traditional ecological knowledge, practice ceremonies around food, understand environmental impacts and participate in community development. The project shows some success at assisting youth to think about social justice issues related to food security while re-claiming healthy Aboriginal identities, pride and self-sufficiency.

## Visiting with the Pankararu and Pataxo peoples in Brazil

### ***Conversation with an ally***

The first part of the Brazilian journey was to the town of Aracuai in the state of Minas Gerais. There I met with Geraldo who is a knowledgeable and passionate Brazilian woman who has been working with Indigenous peoples since 1980. Geraldo's current work involves organizing with Indigenous peoples in self-identification in order to be counted and registered with the government for the purpose of eligibility to collectively claim a parcel of land rather than be landless and scattered throughout the state. The following is a record of one of several conversations with Geraldo:

*Cyndy:* How do you know so much about Indigenous peoples in Brazil?

*Geraldo:* I have done a lot of research over the years, searching, going through archives and talking with Indigenous peoples to figure out the true history about them prior to, during and after colonization.

*Cyndy:* Could you tell me about what you've learned regarding contact between Indigenous peoples and Portuguese colonizers?

*Geraldo:* Historically, there have been three periods. The initial period of contact meant slaughter, enslavement and rape for Indigenous peoples. Some were abducted and taken to Portugal to be studied and put on display for the public to look at. Indigenous peoples were viewed as uncivilized, faithless and inferior. The colonizers exploited the land for whatever they wanted and pushed the Indigenous peoples out of the way.

The next period shifted to a focus on assimilation whereby the state and church encouraged Indigenous, Black and poor Portuguese peoples to inter-marry and have children. This way, they would all mix together and become only Brazilian people meaning that they would be a new race, a new Nation. No one would be Indigenous, Black or White. Everyone would be Brazilian. If the people inter-married like this, they would get a piece of land. Of course, this mixing did not apply to rich Portuguese peoples.

Then, since 1988, the emphasis has changed to looking at Brazil as a multi-ethnic country. Now Indigenous peoples are re-claiming their identities and land. They are a growing population because of a higher birth rate and being counted and registered. They are organizing and many are strong and radical about their rights.

*Cyndy:* I'm struck, as always, by the similar processes of colonization that happened throughout the world. Do you think Indigenous peoples globally have other aspects in common?

*Geraldo:* Absolutely! Even though there is diversity amongst Indigenous Nations, the foundation of what they believe is always the same, for example a connection to the land and the sacredness of all of creation.

*Cyndy:* How do you go about organizing and counting groups of Indigenous peoples that are so scattered throughout the country?

*Geraldo:* We hear about one group from another group. Plus, sometimes what happens is mining or pulp and paper companies go into isolated areas where Indigenous peoples are living. The companies contact health services who then go into these areas to vaccinate the people against diseases which they will now be

exposed to due to contact with Brazilian people. We hear about this and go talk to them.

Often, these groups don't identify themselves as Indigenous though. They call themselves "the people" in their own languages. Then when those helping to count and register people ask specific questions about the beliefs and practices of their cultures and spiritualities, they explain and eventually say, "okay, we're Indigenous peoples."

*Cyndy:* Why do you think food insecurity is so prevalent for Indigenous peoples here?

*Geraldo:* Colonization is responsible. The Portuguese colonizers pushed Indigenous peoples out of their original territories. They built dams and poisoned rivers that have disrupted how things naturally work. They destroyed the economic base of Indigenous peoples' way of life.

This is what happened to both the Pankararu and Pataxo peoples who now live in the community outside of Aracuai. They have been removed from their territories at least twice. The last time they were living on a river, but a dam was built on it and poison was put in the water killing the fish. They could no longer live on the river, so they moved up into the woods, but this isn't their traditional way of life. They have to begin a whole new community.

### **Visiting my relatives**

The tiny community of the Pankararu and Pataxo called Aldeia Cinta Vermelha is on 78 hectares of arid land which supports six families of approximately 35 people, the majority of who are children and youth. The group has lived there for less than three years and have to do everything on their own from clearing land to building homes. They receive no financial or other support from the government. Each family has their own plot of land for a garden and a simple small house with two or three rooms made of clay, brick and wood. There is no indoor plumbing, electricity or sewer system. Everyone speaks their original language and the official language of Brazil which is Portuguese.

Although the Pankararu and Pataxo have been "given" this parcel of land, there is much bureaucracy to get through before it will be theirs. Many details about the land and its occupants are required to be made public and published in the media so that anyone may come forward to claim that it 'belongs' to them. Should this be the case, the claimant will be financially compensated for the land by the government. Once this compensation is completed, the land will officially be that of the Pankararu and Pataxo and they will be able to access a small amount of government funding for development.

There is a two-room school house where one of the community members teaches the children. He and one of the women there are currently in a university programme which educates Indigenous peoples to be teachers. At the school, children learn about their culture, language and spirituality as well as Brazilian school topics. Parents want their children to learn both, so they will know who they are as Pankararu and Pataxo peoples, be computer literate and prepared to attend university. Some of the villagers work at jobs in Aracuai, such as health workers to assist Indigenous peoples, while others create and sell beautiful crafts such as jewellery, from multi-coloured seeds. Within the village, there is also a communal area where ceremonies are held. This area is clearly a special place as it overlooks the river.

All of the people gathered to spend time with me when I visited their territory. Most of the discussions were initiated by the community's Elder and the young political leader. The Elder took on the role of escorting me around the village, explaining things and offering teachings. He stated that even though he is only middle-aged, he is the oldest one in the community. He clearly feels the huge responsibility of this, for he humbly stated, "I have a lot to learn in

order to be the people's Elder." He, like all the other people present were welcoming, open and generous as expressed through their allowance of photographs to be taken and sharing information.

The people were interested in learning as much as they could about Aboriginal peoples in Canada such as about the different Nations, life today, commonalities with them, traditional foods and representation in government. They also wanted to know about me, my family and community. Through a translator and drawing diagrams in the dirt with a stick, I explained as best I could. Afterwards, the Elder announced, "all Indigenous peoples are related. You are our relative."

When the group from Canada first arrived in the community, the people there were dressed in shorts and skirts, but later they changed into their traditional regalia. They wanted to conduct a ceremony for me. They formed a circle and danced while singing. Then they called out, asking, "where is our relative?" They brought me into the circle to dance with them and sang an honour song. The Elder explained the meaning of the song, "Your strength comes to us and our strength goes to you. Your clan is the fish and the fish from where our original territory is will protect you and give you strength always." This was only the first time I cried from feeling spiritually overwhelmed. They asked for a song and, of course, I sang one of thanks. When it was time to leave, the families presented gifts of jewellery. The Elder gave me one of his shakers and a bow with three arrows. I cried again. We joked and laughed for a bit before my departure. Two years have passed, but these memories remain vivid. I was fundamentally changed by this visit in ways that seem impossible to articulate.

### ***Background to the research project***

With contacts already developed and consolidated in Brazil through visiting with the Pankararu and the Pataxo peoples and in New Brunswick through working and developing relationships there, I decided to conduct research on investigating the role of food and food security in shaping identities of Indigenous youth. While not intended to be a comparative study in the usual sense, the project meant to look at two communities as parallel cases in order to inform each other through the generation of questions and discussions that could be transposed to the different sites.

Food and food security can provide a conduit for recovering identities and preserving the cultures of Indigenous peoples, especially when youth are empowered to participate in reaffirming pride in their traditions (Indigenous Youth Coalition, 2006; Vancouver Native Youth Society, 2005). Despite, or even because of, their differences, youth from the two communities have much to offer each other. One of the aims of the research project was to explore how Indigenous communities in different parts of the world can work together in supporting their youth.

Breaking Barriers Resource Centre (BBRC) is a grassroots initiative working to bring Mi'kmaq, Anglophone and Acadian (French-speaking) youth together to develop healthy identities and appreciation of diversity through anti-racist education and community development. BBRC has two co-ordinators, a non-Aboriginal adult with many years of experience working with Aboriginal peoples and a Mi'kmaq youth from Elsipogtog. This community has a population of approximately 2,700 with 90% of the people on social assistance, 85% of them speaking Mi'kmaq and 55% under the age of 30. Elsipogtog is a community near the Atlantic Ocean and the Richibucto River runs through it. Elsipogtog translates into the English language as "River of Fire." It is of concern that Elsipogtog First Nation had the highest youth suicide rate in Canada during the early 1990s (RCAP, 1996). Suicide prevention continues to be of very high priority in this community.

The youth of Elsipogtog and the co-ordinator of BBRC seemed to be an amazing match for the people of Aldeia Cinta Vermelha and Geraldo. Both Indigenous groups are people of the

river, with the vast majority of their populations being youth. Plus, each of these communities had a non-Aboriginal ally who was working with them in de-colonizing ways.

With funding from Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security and the Faculty of Community Services, in June 2007 youth from Elsipogtog and Aldeia Cinta Vermelha and their allies came to Toronto to participate in this research project. The three young people from Aldeia Cinta Vermelha were Yamany ("Mother Of Water"), who is attending university to become a teacher; Itxai ("Big Star") who is also studying to become a teacher; and Toe ("Fire") who is the community's political leader. The two Mi'kmaq youth from Elsipogtog were Katrina who is also studying to be a teacher and is one of the two co-ordinators of BBRC and Dean who attends high school in a town near his community and is a member of BBRC. The allies were Geraldo from Aracuai who was previously introduced and Ann, the other co-ordinator of BBRC and a long time educator and activist.

However, before the research could begin, relationships needed to be developed and the guests familiarized with the environment. This involved visits to Aboriginal agencies, Six Nations First Nation, a barbeque and participation at a pow wow and a National Aboriginal Day celebration. In their visits with Aboriginal peoples, all of the guests were struck by the many similarities in worldviews. As one explained, "We're happy to meet so many Indigenous peoples as it's so easy to connect with them. Even though the languages are different, we have so much in common like our histories, spirituality and connection to Mother Earth."

The group next spent two days together in circle gathering information about youth identities and food security in each of the Indigenous communities. "In circle" meant that we followed the cultural protocols of those present by opening and closing each day with a prayer and song, smudging, eating traditional foods prepared by an Anishnawbe cook, including offerings to the spirits, inviting participants to tell their stories rather than ask direct questions and allowing each person to speak without interruption for as long as needed. Our communication occurred through spoken words, symbols such as shakers and an eagle feather, and diagrams sketched on a white board.

### ***The stories***

Each of the young people shared their communities' struggles with development and their areas of focus in food security. Excerpts follow:

*Katrina:* One of the important ways we link youth identity and food is by feeding our ancestors with traditional foods in our ceremonies like putting food on the rocks when in the sweat lodge. Identity is about who you are, where you come from and who your family is. Food is a big part of this because it brings people together.

*Dean:* The men in Elsipogtog have seasonal employment around food like harvesting lobsters and snow crabs. There's hunting in the fall. I've been hunting and fishing most of my life like my father and grandfather and most of my friends. Some of the men who hunt give meat away from house to house where the Elders and old people live. They sell smelts this way during the winter. Blueberry raking is something that many families do together. But we have a lot of lost youth who are into drugs and attempt suicide who are searching for who they are, trying to find their true selves.

*Katrina:* For a lot of our people, how can you bring in culture and identity in connection to food when you live in poverty? When all you can afford to eat is cheap fast mainstream food? When you have no access to healthy traditional foods? It's really hard to focus on culture and identity when you have to focus on economics.

*Toe:* We understand poverty as well when it comes to lack of resources and government responsibility. In Brazil, money is power and the goal is development at all costs. Indigenous peoples are portrayed, especially in the media, as backward and holding Brazil back from this development.

For Indigenous peoples in Brazil, the government will help a little with medicines from a drugstore and some food, but not our traditional medicines and food. People don't want to refuse government assistance, but do want more control over what they can get and use. This control, which is part of sovereignty, is our goal.

*Yamany:* Women are developing leadership around land and food and we do not separate children and youth from the activities that go with this. Our focus is on education, health and the need for younger leadership, so we pass on culture and language. Younger people and women must take over from the Elders.

*Katrina:* Youth in Elsipogtog need to do more of this as well. We need to go to some of the adults and Elders for teachings. We need to identify those who might help us with, say, community gardens. The youth have not experienced community gardening, so we need to learn about growing and harvesting food. We need to build memory by asking older people about these things and recording it so it can be passed on to the next generation.

*Itaxi:* I understand what you're saying about not knowing about community gardening. It is like this for us in our community as well because we are new to the territory we are now on and we have to figure out how the environment works and grow a community, including food, from scratch.

I am taking a course on an agricultural technique called "perma culture". This technique is good for the environment so it fits with how we understand the world. We have a vision about what we want our community to be like based on working with nature around us. In our vision, everything is connected and has a purpose. First, because the land is arid, we need to collect rain water and irrigate. We want to recover Indigenous plants, including medicinal ones, so we will plant potatoes to bring foliage to help cover the ground. We will have fish tanks to raise taipilia so we can put the waste into the earth for fertilizer for our vegetable gardens. We will grow beans like ivy as a fence around the plants, so the goats, pigs and chickens we'll raise can't get at them. Around all this area and along our road to the main road, we will preserve the trees because they grow the seeds that we use to make the crafts we sell.

We also want to focus on a school and a health clinic. The school will have its own garden for children to learn about, look after and eat the vegetables while they're in school. The health centre will grow medicines and there will be a sauna like building hooked up to a wood stove outside. The medicines will go into the stove and the vapours from them will go into the sauna for healing people.

Some people think we are crazy to be where we are. But we feel we are solution-focused and believe we can help heal the land that has been almost destroyed by White ranchers, miners and the government. The whole principle is to work responsibly with the earth, take care, nourish and restore what is there, and do as less harm as possible to Her.

At the end of the two days of circle, gifts were exchanged. Toe was presented with a white eagle feather representing leadership. He was overcome with emotion, cried (as almost everyone else did) and needed to take some time before he could speak. When he could, he simply said, "I hope I can live up to being a leader and deserving of this feather."

When Toe gave gifts from their community to Katrina and Dean, I cried once again, witnessing a powerful spiritual and emotional event. He told them about how he has become his community's political leader at such a young age:

At 18, I went to a meeting in the city about issues of land and Indigenous peoples. I was called upon to speak. I didn't want to, but I did. After participating in this meeting, the Elders and other leaders spoke to me about how young people need to step into leadership roles because the older ones can't do it all, like travelling and always having to speak. They then asked me to become the political leader of my community. I didn't want this responsibility, I was afraid and didn't think I could do such a thing, but I did. I acknowledge Katrina and Dean and encourage them to believe in themselves and what they can do.

The final words came from Yamany after I mentioned how inspired I was from the people of her community who have so little materially and yet are so generous and glowing with happiness:

We need money for certain things, so we can be comfortable, but that's all. We don't need or want many materialistic things. We don't want to accumulate a lot of things, but rather share amongst ourselves. We are a group of people who want to be together and enjoy doing things together. We love to live. We like each other. We like ourselves. We want to live free.

### ***Taking it home***

During their time spent together, all of the participants learned that as Indigenous peoples from different geographical sites, they have more in common than not in terms of worldviews, colonization and de-colonizing through re-clamation of identities and land. This recognition is empowering and leads to a vision of connecting Indigenous youth globally.

From their visits to Aboriginal agencies, conversations about getting the Canadian government to fund services such as access to traditional medicine healers, and learning more about how political processes work between Aboriginal peoples and the government, the visitors from Aldeia Cinta Vermelha gained information on strategies that they will attempt to implement in their dealings with the Brazilian government. They were responsible for bringing information back to their community, so they left with many notes, photographs, audio recordings and videotapes of their time spent in Toronto.

The youth from Elsipogtog learned about the possibilities of community gardening and left Toronto with a plan for beginning one for they had picked the site, other youth they thought would be interested and the Elders they would approach for assistance. They were inspired to learn about perma culture and the plans for Aldeia Cinta Vermelha in this area. They shared their knowledge of raising fish (there is a salmon restoration project in Elsipogtog) and healing in a sauna like building (there is a sweat lodge in the community) and learned about ideas for Aboriginal youth-led eco-tourism (this is being done by some Indigenous youth in Brazil known to the three who visited). They were also excited about the youth leadership in Aldeia Cinta Vermelha and how youth are encouraged and supported in taking on these roles. This information offered strategies for them in approaching their community's leaders for such support.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from this research project supports the literature that exists on how Indigenous peoples around the globe share identities that emphasize a sacred connection to their lands, a lived experience of colonization and forms of resistance through re-claiming these identities.

They also support the possibilities of Indigenous youth connecting globally and how they can become involved in food security initiatives in their communities. The findings from the project add to the literature on Indigenous youth by highlighting their strengths and knowledges in the areas of land, food security and leadership development.

Future research in the area of Indigenous youth identities as connected to food security and traditional food practices would be helpful as a relatively non-intrusive way of engaging them in sharing information on leadership development and community involvement. Such research with Indigenous youth could then explore how to connect them to social justice initiatives leading to positive action.

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