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## **Nourishing Culture and Community: Exploring Food Sovereignty in Qualicum First Nations on Vancouver Island**

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*Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master in Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern and  
Indigenous Areas, November 2023*





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## **Abstract**

Although increasing urbanization has benefitted the west through economic growth, improved service provision, technological advancements, and increased access to education, it has had negative consequences for many other aspects of western society, including air and water quality, health, and food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is defined as the right of people to have culturally appropriate and healthy food, produced sustainably and ecologically, including a person's right to define their own food and agriculture system. In Canada, and particularly among the First Nations of the West coast, there has been a decrease in food sovereignty due to the growth of urbanization. Qualicum First Nations (QFN) is an Indigenous community located on Vancouver Island on Coast Salish territory, where members of the Nation are faced with various obstacles stemming from urbanization that threaten their food system. Current levels of urbanization have already caused systemic disruptions, and the future likely holds increases in development, with both policy and environmental implications. This quotation from a community member of QFN echoes the feelings of many other First Nations across Canada: "Our diets have changed, we have become more reliant on the westernized food – we've created this imbalance for a lot of the species that are out there." This thesis will identify barriers to food sovereignty in QFN by illuminating current efforts of programs designed to improve their food system. The results will also highlight external factors that may prevent the small community from accessing, harvesting, and cultivating traditional food, creating disruptions to community members' intergenerational food ways.

This thesis is based on eight semi-structured interviews conducted with community members and administrative staff of QFN. The interviewees specified that barriers to food security which will lead to sovereignty are environmental and systemic, including: financial constraints, division, racism, climate change, and reliance on western food. All these barriers inhibit traditional food access and inter-generational knowledge transfer within the QFN community. Although the QFN has known about these barriers for years, the members of the community face many challenges in dismantling them. This community is on a path to igniting and restoring cultural elements, which have been lost due to environmental and systemic barriers.

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## 1. Introduction

Indigenous traditional food is food that was collected (foraged, hunted, gathered, cultivated, or fished) through long-established methods prior to European contact on Indigenous territory (Morrison, 2011). Traditional food is associated with many concepts, acting as a source of sustenance, but also as material for clothing and shelter, medicinal treatment, spiritual need, social togetherness, and Indigenous economy (Deur & Turner, 2005). Indigenous Peoples in what is now Canada relied upon a great deal of work, knowledge, and skill to collect local food items as their exclusive source of sustenance. Their knowledge, including production, harvesting, and storage, was invaluable and passed down through generations.

However, in the past half century, Indigenous Peoples' diet has relied less on traditional foods as a result of environmental obstacles, including decreased land accessibility (Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013; Turner & Clifton, 2009; Turner & Turner, 2008). In addition to these obstacles, colonialism, especially the placement of Indigenous children in residential schools and the resultant impact on families, has prevented knowledge of Indigenous food systems from being passed down from generation to generation (Poirier & Neufeld, 2023; Turner & Clifton, 2009). As Indigenous cultures were forced to conform to the Eurocentric/colonial vision of land, which was based on constraining flora and fauna, they changed drastically. This cultural, traditional, societal, economic, and ecological assimilation has been disastrous for Indigenous Peoples in Canada and their ability to conduct traditional practices (Deur & Turner, 2005; Morrison, 2011; Muller, 2018; Turner et al., 2020).

Food security is a well-known phrase, introduced by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1996 as a state “exist(ing) when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (p. 1). This definition has been strengthened by the term ‘food sovereignty’, defined by La Vía Campesina (a coalition including peasants, farmers, rural woman, and Indigenous Peoples) as the right to people’s healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to defend their own

food and agricultural systems (Agarwhal, 2014; Edelman, 2014; McMichael, 2014; Wittman, 2009; 2011). Wittman (2011) furthers the definition of food sovereignty: “The right of local Peoples to control their own food systems, including markets, ecological resources, food cultures, and production modes.” (p. 87).

The concepts of food security and food sovereignty are not opposed but, rather, complementary (Edelman, 2014). While there is significant overlap between the two, their differences should be noted. According to Poirier and Neufeld (2023), food security focuses on individualized health and nutritional status, while food sovereignty emphasizes the well-being of the entire community. As noted by Wittman (2011), food security (a concept initially framed as a means of solving worldwide hunger) marks food to be a problem that should be solved, identifying food as an item of trade in the economy — as a commodity that should be distributed to solve the presence of hunger. However, by defining food as a right, food sovereignty involves food’s connection with the economic, social, and cultural elements of a community (Wittman, 2011). The concept of Indigenous food sovereignty was founded as a movement that seeks to eliminate the direct and indirect effects of imperialism by confronting fundamental inequities (Michnik et al., 2021). The extension of individual food security into community food sovereignty highlights the complementarity, with food security concentrating on individual health; while sovereignty prioritizes the overall well-being of communities and names food as a fundamental right connected to economic, social, governmental, and cultural aspects. *Indigenous* food sovereignty is an important distinction due to the existence of their vital connection to land (API, 2022).

The relationship that Indigenous Peoples share with the land is unique — each distinct Nation retains its own traditional territory and, along with it, specific hunting and gathering methods, traditions, food ways, and culture belonging specifically to this land (Deur et al., 2021; Deur et al., 2021a; Smith, 2005; Turner et al., 2020). Restoring traditional food practices brings a myriad of health benefits (Coté, 2019; Kamal et al., 2015; Wittman, 2011). As Coté (2015) asserts, community health is intrinsically connected to food sovereignty restoration and has an impact not only on physical nutrition, but also on mental, spiritual, and emotional health (p. 41, p. 47).

Because Indigenous Peoples have been unable to access knowledge of their traditional foods or transfer it to younger generations, they must purchase western foods. In remote communities, often the only accessible options are highly processed, less nutritious foods. Conversely, traditional Indigenous foods are highly nutritious and their inclusion in the diet has been connected to improved health outcomes (Blanchet et al., 2021; Liddell et al., 2022; Thompson et al., 2012; Turner & Clifton, 2009; Turner & Turner, 2008; Vogliano et al., 2021). Turner and Turner (2008) assert that “First Peoples are over-represented in rates of related dietary health problems, which have become common throughout North America,” (p. 9). Indigenous Peoples are noted to have higher rates of diabetes, obesity, depression, and a lower life expectancy (Dick et al., 2021; HCC 2004; Turner & Turner, 2008). Moreover, the unique relationship between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories, and the health benefits associated with restoring traditional food practices are of particular relevance to British Columbia.

## **1.1 Background**

British Columbia (B.C.), Canada's Western most province, has wide contrasts in topography, ranging from beaches, to rocky mountains, dry plateaux, stony shorelines, and snow-covered mountains. The province is also home to diverse flora and fauna. Around 300 plant species are documented as having medicinal properties, although popular culture has been slow to recognize the sophistication found in the use and control of plants by Indigenous Peoples (Turner et al., 2020). In B.C., 80% of the territory is unceded, meaning that these lands are not part of a treaty process (Poirier & Neufeld, 2023).

Vancouver Island occupies a small part of B.C. (see Figure 1 for a map of Vancouver Island). Vancouver Island's population in 2021 was 864,864, whereas B.C.'s was 5,000,879 (CP, 2021; SC, 2021). Indigenous communities on the Island comprise about 5% of the island's total population (BCAFN, n.d.). There are 50 First Nations on the Island, in three separate tribal regions: the Kwakwaka'wakw, the Nuu-chah-nulth, and the Coast Salish (VIEA. n.d.). These three regions are categorized based on three distinct language families that can be subdivided even further (Muller, 2018). Indigenous communities on the Island have historically been considered more

complex than typical hunter-gatherer groups, as they harboured permanent structures in communities, while other nations operated with temporary settlements (Smith, 2005).



Figure 1: *Geographical map of Vancouver Island*

In 1849, Vancouver Island was declared a colony of Great Britain, and these tribal groups were separated and confined to small reservations as their limited territories, from where they could not access surrounding territories or food sources (Turner & Turner, 2008). Vancouver Island was managed through the application of the Douglas treaties, which dictated rules for food cultivation. Fourteen treaties known as the Vancouver Island treaties were signed by James Douglas between 1850 and 1854, covering land around Victoria, Nanaimo, and Port Hardy (LABC, n.d). Through these treaties, the governing forces determined which nations could cultivate food only on reserve and which could cultivate it off reserve. Indigenous communities were thus restricted

from competing with non-Indigenous farmers who were often favoured (Poirier & Neufeld, 2023).

The Qualicum First Nation (QFN) was selected for this thesis as members of the Nation have expressed interest in traditional food patterns and, since colonization, have struggled with reestablishing food sovereignty in terms of their relationship with the land, and the interconnectivity of food security, health, and community members. These struggles can be attributed to the Nation's lack of access to resources required for the cultivation of traditional foods, systemic challenges, and environmental barriers. The Nation is currently aiming for food security, with the final goal of realizing food sovereignty.

Located in the Coast Salish area, QFN has a current population of over 65 band members who live on reservation land; however, according to the Elected Chief of QFN, this number expands when the population living off reservation is considered (personal communication, July 5, 2023). According to a population survey there was an overall population of 70 in 2016 (GC, 2016). Figure 2 is a map of the QFN First Nation reservation, and Figure 3 is a map of QFN territory.

The members of QFN traditionally speak the language of Pentl'atch (Punt-lach), which although not commonly used, is now being taught in schools to increase knowledge of language and culture. According to Glavin (2020), "There were once at least 3000 Pentl'atch people living in more than 90 large villages and small settlements around the area" (para. 13). Sadly, a devastating smallpox epidemic in the 1780s killed many. As noted by Grenz (2004), Indigenous languages were, and are, an important part of the Pentl'atch people's food systems. However, because most Indigenous languages comprise mainly verbs with English language nouns, (Grenz, 2004), there were many miscommunications and differences in perspective on the ways to care for food systems. The loss of language contributed to barriers to QFN's food sovereignty.

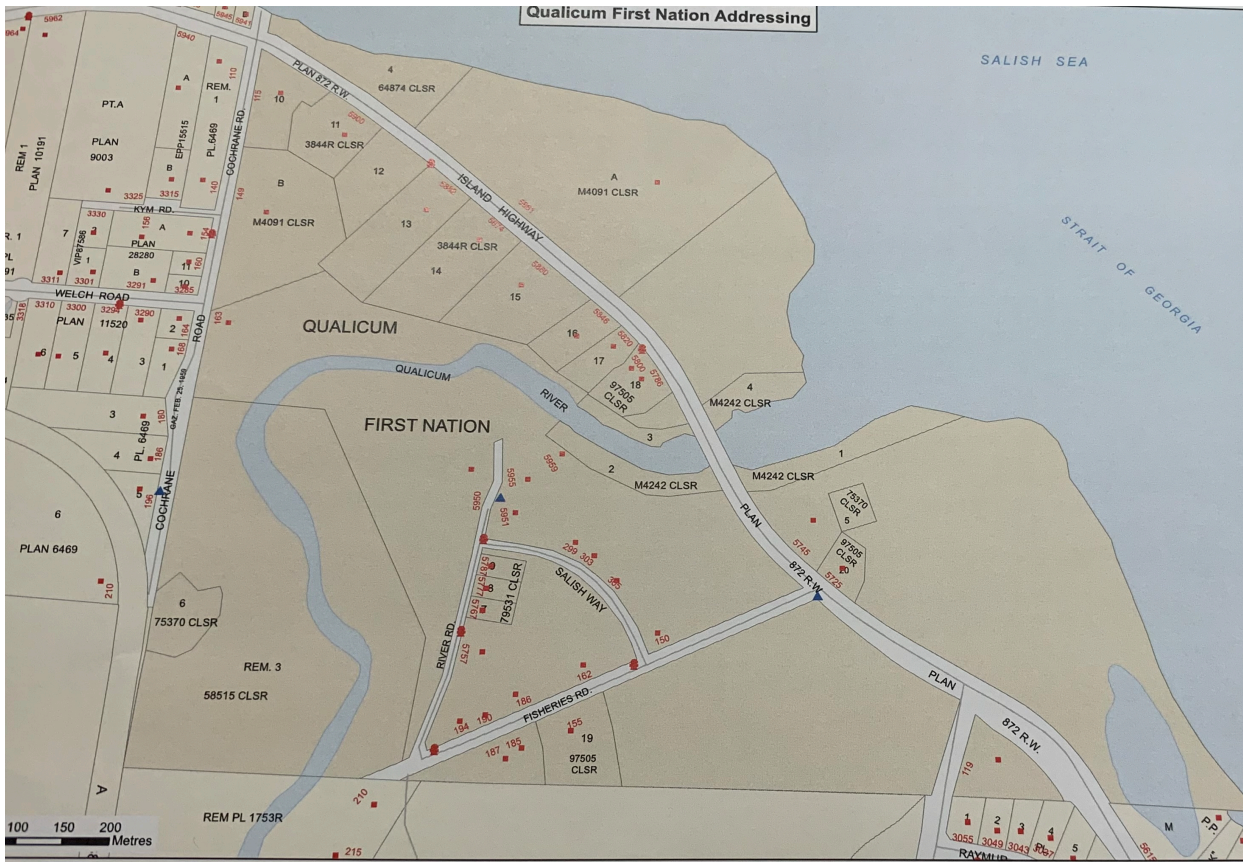


Figure 2: Qualicum First Nation reservation map

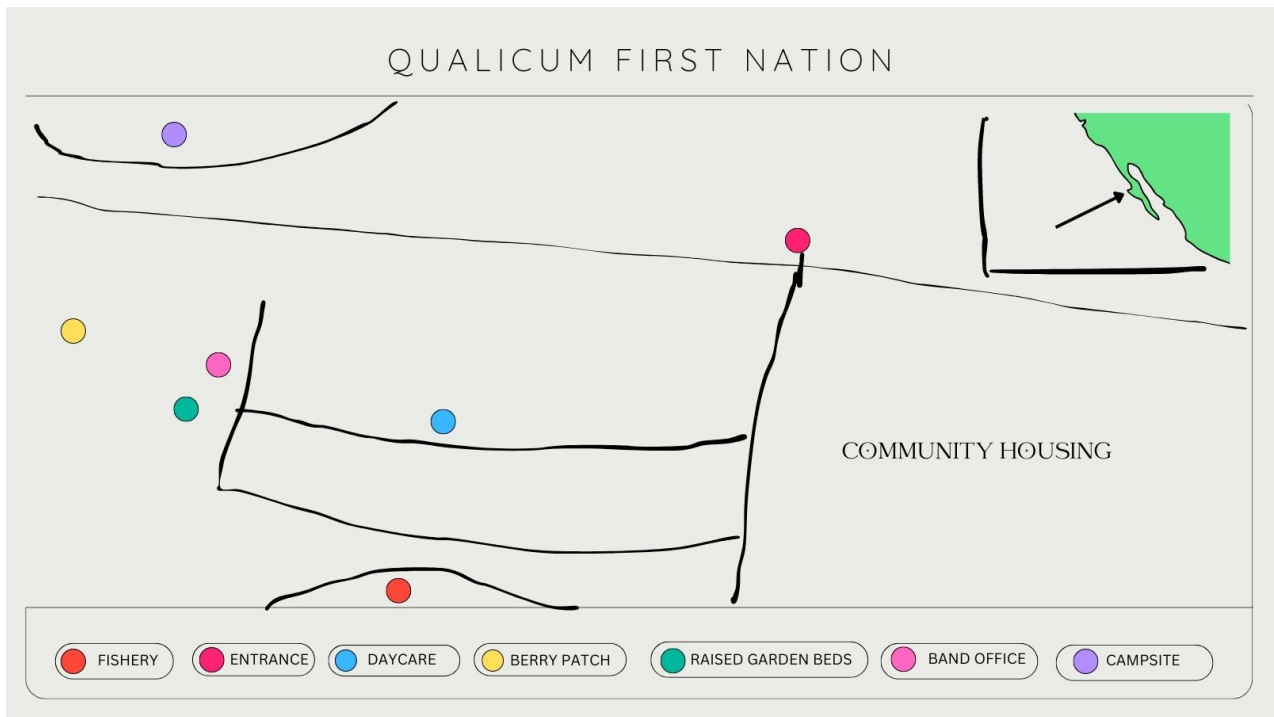


Figure 3: Map of Qualicum First Nation territory



## **1.2 Research Questions and Positionality**

This thesis will explore environmental and systemic barriers observed in QFN. The primary research question posed is this: What are the environmental and systemic barriers to food sovereignty within QFN traditional territory? The sub-questions are as follows: 1) What are the present strengths within QFN? 2) What are current initiatives and programs in place within the community? and 3) What is preventing QFN from becoming food sovereign?

This project originated in a conversation I had with a QFN community member — an individual born in what is now called the Qualicum Bay area/QFN land. A hereditary leader of the Nation and an Elder, this person has resided in QFN for most of their life and is a published author specializing in traditional food studies. In their writings and our conversations, they expressed concerns about the dwindling traditional food culture, ways, and knowledge. I subsequently confirmed these concerns with other members of the community, who agreed that the Nation was facing environmental and systemic threats. The research question, as well as the interview questions, were reviewed by Elected Chief Michael Recalma and approved by a community Elder.

I find it imperative to declare my own positionality as my background shapes the research I engage in (Bourke, 2014). This is especially important with research involving Indigenous Peoples, as it originates from a place of mutual respect and accountability (Peltier et al., 2019). My ancestors were European, and I was born and raised in Alberta, Canada on Tsuu T'ina Nation territory. I migrated to British Columbia in 2016 and am now living on the land of the Coast Salish Peoples. I was not raised in a traditional setting, but I was fortunate enough to be exposed to the culture of the Musqueam Peoples, when I worked at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Farm. I also acknowledge that I have been raised in a privileged setting. I have learned from the QFN and feel privileged to have been exposed to some of their food ways and to be inspired to solidify the food sovereignty movement. In bringing together my passions – food, nutrition, and health, and Indigenous communities and food sovereignty — I found a topic of deep meaning. My research and representation of Indigenous food security (leading to sovereignty) within the

QFN has been facilitated by the Nation itself. Together, we focused on problems and barriers that inhibit the QFN's sovereignty.

Chapter 1 has introduced the background of the project, as well as the research question and objectives. Chapter 2 is a literature review on the role of food sovereignty within Canadian Indigenous communities, highlighting food sovereignty initiatives in British Columbia and Yukon, and illuminating gaps found in the literature. Chapter 3 provides details on the research methodology of this study, while Chapters 4 and 5 describe the study's findings, highlighting the distinction between the administration and the community. Chapter 6 discusses the community strengths, Chapter 7 identifies the studies' limitations, and Chapter 8 considers the recommended next steps. Chapter 9 marks the conclusion, going over the strengths and barriers that this community faces in response to their food sovereignty concerns.

## **2. Literature Review: The Role of Food Sovereignty within Canadian Indigenous Communities**

Food sovereignty is increasingly relevant in addressing food insecurity, sustainable agriculture, and justice issues. The concept emphasizes the importance of local food systems and includes the significance of Indigenous Knowledge, and cultural practices. The term can be connected to Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous Peoples' right to control their own food system.

The adverse effects of the wholesale theft of unceded land and colonial resettlement programs still resonate today. Indigenous land is culturally, economically, politically, and traditionally instrumental to the survival of Indigenous communities. It can be argued that the land of Indigenous Peoples is not just where they are; in many substantive ways, it is *who* they are. Colonial policies have caused intergenerational trauma, eliminating knowledge of traditional food sources and the ability to pass these traditions down within families, thus limiting Indigenous Peoples' ability to cultivate and prepare these traditional foods (Turner et al., 2020). This chapter discusses food sovereignty initiatives in British Columbia and the Yukon. Section 2.1 will cover British

Columbia and 2.2 will cover the Yukon. 2.3 will discuss the relationship between the findings of this study and the gaps found in the literature that it addresses.

Although food sovereignty is an issue across Canada, in this literature review, I focus on food sovereignty research that has been conducted in British Columbia (B.C.) and the Yukon, which were selected because they share many of the same barriers to food sovereignty and because many Indigenous communities, including QFN, in both jurisdictions are isolated and remote. Research that has been done on food sovereignty in the two jurisdictions has used a variety of research methods, including community-based (CBIs) and community-led initiatives, learning circles, participatory approaches, and interviews. According to the University of Saskatchewan, there are key differences between community-based and community-led research. In community-based methods, members of the community participate in interviews, focus groups, and surveys; whereas in community-led methods, “community members help to frame research questions, develop surveys, and conduct the research itself.” (USask, n.d.). This literature review will explore both types of research initiatives because QFN, though not stated by administration as such, is in the process of undergoing community-led initiatives. The method used in this thesis, however, is community-based, meaning that these questions were formulated with the help of, and to ultimately help, the community.

The initiatives discussed in the next section emphasize the importance to food sovereignty of community and cultural connectedness, and mental and physical well-being. The reservation of QFN is in B.C., so it shares common environmental barriers with other First Nations communities located there. My focus in the Yukon was on similarly small communities, providing relevant information for QFN. Research in the Yukon has found that many Indigenous Nations there worry about climate change because temperature increases have been, and will continue to be, greater in the Yukon and Western Arctic region than almost anywhere else, and these changes are predicted to have significant impacts on land, water, flora and fauna, infrastructure, accessibility of resources, and the ability of Indigenous peoples to engage in hunting, gathering, trapping, fishing, and other livelihood activities” (p. 441, Roburn & T.H.H.D., 2012; Seguin et al., 2021;

Wilson et al., 2020). Overlap related to community-led initiatives, location, and environmental barriers was found between the initiatives that were conducted in these studies and the interviews conducted in QFN.

## **2.1 British Columbia**

CBI is increasingly common among researchers studying Indigenous communities (Blanchet et al., 2021; Domingo et al., 2021; Wesche et al., 2016). Researchers work with members of the community to identify problems that need to be explored (McLeroy et al, 2003). This approach is led by the researchers who consider the different viewpoints of members of the community. In a CBI, details are gained about the community in question, and valuable solutions are presented to members.

In the Syilx Okanagan Nation in British Columbia, a CBI was introduced with the goal of re-establishing the declining salmon population. Conducted by Blanchet et al. (2021), the study explored how the harvesting of salmon had affected the Syilx Okanagan Nation and the impact of the reintroduction of salmon on the community's well-being. Salmon, gained through the act of fishing, is an integral part of First Nations traditional food: "Because of the cultural centrality of salmon, eating it as a proxy for engaging with food sovereignty was intuitively established by the group based on Syilx knowledge of diverse individual experiences with salmon and eating salmon as a common factor." (Blanchet et al., 2021, p. 3). As a result of this CBI, cultural connectedness has greatly increased, and the role of food sovereignty in improving health and well-being is now recognized. The study results also stressed the importance of addressing Indigenous health factors holistically, supporting future Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives through displaying that traditional food connectedness may strengthen cultural well-being (Blanchet et al., 2021). Food sovereignty initiatives such as this can be a component of decolonization. Overall, this CBI resulted in increased food sovereignty by improving access to traditional foods, thereby strengthening well-being and social connectedness.

Using the technique of participatory research-based learning circles, McEachern et al. (2022) conducted a study on food sovereignty in Hazelton/Upper Skeena, B.C.. Hazelton is located on remote traditional Gitksan First Nation territory. The purpose of these learning circles was to draw knowledge and experiential understanding from participants who were representatives of Indigenous local governance, NGOs, and farms; or were members of the school (nurses, high school, secondary). Through the identification of various barriers to food access such as systemic distrust, knowledge loss, and financial barriers, the results of the circles created increased attendance in traditional food processing workshops and preparation seminars, strengthening food literacy. Discussions in these circles enabled a rise in the production of school gardens, hot-lunch programs, and overall improved community food sovereignty. These discussions also enabled limitations and barriers to be addressed, such as the western style of learning circles as a hindrance and the importance of traditional style learning (McEachern et al., 2022).

The Syilx Okanagan Nation and the Gitksan Nation study are similar to, yet different, from this QFN study. In these Nations, fish is a prevalent food source. In the Syilx Okanagan Nation, results included increased cultural connectedness, health, and well-being, which QFN hope will result from its traditional food programs. The Gitksan territory project shared the production of gardens with the community. However, the programs and methods were different. The studies were based on CBIs and learning circles, which included a group from an outside source guiding the research. The researchers worked closely with, and were chosen by, the community — encouraging interest and participation. They were not community-led, where the ideas and efforts come from within the community itself. While these studies express common focuses and methods, they vary based on the approach taken.

## **2.2 Yukon**

In the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation (THFN), traditional territories are located near Dawson City. Two community-led and community-based projects were conducted — the first on the creation of a teaching and working farm, and the second on past and current environmental changes and their effects on traditional food harvesting (Roburn & T.H.H.D., 2012; YU, 2015). The first

was based in THFN's traditional territories, where a teaching and working farm project was launched in 2016 that focused on the development of year-round foods and provided a space where citizens of THFN could work and maintain nourishment and community. This project was led by four THFN community members and two members of the then Yukon College as a research project. This was both a community-based and -led program as the initiative was sparked by the community itself (YU, 2015).

The second study in the THFN focused on the impacts of climate and environmental change on local and traditional knowledge. This was an initiative introduced by the 2007-09 International Polar Year (IPY) and the THFN, after the Nation received a grant from IPY, a government funded program. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department (THHD) led this initiative to create a safe space for a community-wide discussion about environmental changes, recognizing "the need for governments to take traditional knowledge into account in their decision making" (p. 440). The THHD led the project and worked in the community, with youth and the Elders' council, "to gather traditional knowledge of current and past environmental change" (p. 443). The THHD found that the impacts of climate change affected many aspects of traditional foods, including accessing, processing, and storage of these foods. Although this study focused on the collection of information, it was performed by the community and may lay the groundwork for follow-up initiatives (Roburn & T.H.H.D., 2012).

Both these studies had community-based and -led approaches in common with the initiatives that are being led in QFN and in this study. Community-led approaches are significant because they directly defy colonialism through the exclusion of other agencies to address their own community. In the first study, the community desire for cultivation is found in QFN and maintains food security. The second study, although focussing on environmental changes perceived, showcases the importance and necessity for further adaptations that traditional food plays in Indigenous communities — QFN is struggling with similar battles.

### **2.3 Gaps in the Literature**

In the literature reviewed, gaps were observed, such as the downplaying of socio-economic factors. These factors influence the success or failure of Indigenous initiatives and can include land rights, access to resources, and market forces. Although these points may be raised in the literature, there is often scant discussion of them. Community-based and -led initiatives may also lack appropriate representation in the literature due to the large differences between western and traditional knowledge. Indigenous ways of knowing must be incorporated into western research projects to acknowledge understanding of the tensions that may arise when external researchers integrate these methods in Indigenous communities (Simonds & Christopher, 2013).

Finally, but not exhaustively, a policy and governance gap has been observed. Regulations to which First Nations are subjected can create obstacles to food sovereignty, including the right to land and resources stemming from historical dispossession, hunting and fishing regulations, and a lack of recognition of the importance of Indigenous Knowledge (Hoover et al., 2012). As well, the impact of legal and political contexts on access to, and control of, traditional food has not been fully examined. This thesis explores the impact of socio-economic factors on Indigenous communities and government regulations. This is a community-based initiative which focusses on QFN's community-led initiatives, thereby increasing Indigenous representation.

### **3. Research Procedures**

This study was based on a qualitative approach. The social phenomenon being studied was the effect of environmental and systemic barriers on the community's food sovereignty. This qualitative research was based on multiple realities and different points of view that QFN members expressed about these realities.

In January 2023, I met with several Indigenous contacts from QFN, reviewed relevant literature, including pieces recommended by a community Elder, and drafted my research ethics board application. Ethics board approval was received from the University of Saskatchewan on May 25, 2023. I contacted potential participants based on the recommendation of a member of the QFN

administrative staff, and conducted semi-structured interviews with eight participants from May 29 to July 22, 2023 in QFN. Two sets of interviews, based on two separate sets of questions, were conducted: one with members of the community and the other with administrators. Data collection was based on trust and friendship with participants. Each participant was given a traditional plant, local and wild-sourced jelly or jam, and a locally sourced chocolate bar. These gifts were carefully selected and presented as a token of respect and appreciation for the participants' time. All interviews were transcribed manually by the researcher.

### **3.1 Participants and Interviews**

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: they have interest in, or experience with, food, food gathering, planting, foraging, sustainability, and/or hunting in QFN. The principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) were adhered to during the interviews, as well as in the processing and finalization of the thesis. These principles maintain that First Nations should control both the processes of data collection in research and how these data are used. This research abided by embracing collectivity and being completely open with participants. The ownership of collective and individual rights was upheld in this thesis in three main ways: All information was credited to QFN; a summary of results were presented to the Elected Chief of QFN and all participants after publication; and the goal of this research was to benefit QFN. Participants read over and approved their own raw data transcript prior to publication. As per ethics requirements, the document containing the combined raw data of all participants was not shared and was destroyed after publication. Additionally, on the consent form, participants were given the choice to be quoted directly as well as the option to be named or left anonymous. Those who are named directly have given their informed consent.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed me, as the researcher, to probe issues that arose, understand their provenance and background, and gain insight. Research questions were developed in collaboration with a community participant/Elder and the Elected Chief of QFN. Interviews were held in person, and the participants all consented to be interviewed and recorded.



Post-publication, study results were presented to the administration of QFN, as well as to community participants. All participants were aware of the disclosure of information from this study.

The purpose of the interviews was to expand existing knowledge of food security initiatives that were taking place, highlighting the strengths as well as concerns about these initiatives, and identifying existing environmental and systemic barriers. Eight interviews were conducted: five with community members (aged between 30 to 75) to gain perspective on their involvement, participation, interest, and opinions regarding the band's food sovereignty strengths and barriers, and three with QFN administrators to understand the current programs, initiatives, and goals of the Nation. Eight was the ideal number of interviews in this community due to the density of the population and repetition of responses.

Each group was asked similar, but also different, interview questions. The differences were intended to solicit different inputs. Aimed at the five community members, the first set of questions was geared toward community initiatives participants had been involved with, including their relationship with consuming traditional foods, barriers observed, and their insights into the successes or failures of these programs. Community members were also asked about their own experiences with familial hunting, harvesting, foraging, fishing, and processing experiences.

Directed at administrators, the second set of questions asked for the administrative perspective on funding, needs of the band office, and current initiatives. Questions delved into the specifics of QFN, the food security of the community, programs offered, and Indigenous plant protection.

Both sets of interviews addressed the Nation's current initiatives, food security, and administrative assistance offered by external sources. These questions were designed to solicit information on barriers to a food sovereign Nation. Both sets of interview questions contained six broad questions followed by probing questions: the interview guides are available in appendices one and two. During the interviews, members of both the community and administration used food

sovereignty and security interchangeably. When asked about this, the resounding response was that food security initiatives lead to overall food sovereignty.

Following the participants' approval of the transcripts, they were coded: I read the transcripts and identified relevant features that answered the research questions. I looked for commonalities in each interview and amongst their codes, categorizing the common themes, and creating initial broad themes according to the codes.

Reflexive thematic analysis was used here. Based on Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis (TA) is a foundational tool to be used for qualitative analysis. TA was used to identify and examine and concepts that were found within the data. Patterns were identified, and themes were then determined through the association of patterns and data with concepts and connections with the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Below, the discussion takes on a theoretical approach, meaning that the themes outlined are related to the researcher's theoretical interest in food sovereignty. Furthermore, the epistemology of this data focusses on an essentialist approach, where experiences and motivations are considered in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). My knowledge of the role of thematic analysis in qualitative research contributed to the development of the themes through delineation of the basic codes and concepts developed upon reviewing the interviews.

#### **4. Findings**

This chapter presents findings from the interviews organized by theme, many of which overlap. For example, the discussions about community gardens encompassed both themes of knowledge transfer and empowering communities through community programs. Themes are divided between the two groups of participants in order to showcase differences and similarities.

##### **4.1 Findings from Interviews with Community Members**

The main themes emerging from the six interviews with community members were as follows:

- Knowledge transfer: "I always remember knowing"

- Empowering communities through participatory programs
- Gender dynamics
- Barriers to food sovereignty (discussed in Chapter 5)
- Strengths of food sovereignty (discussed in Chapter 6)

#### 4.1.2 *Knowledge transfer: “I always remember knowing”*

All the community members emphasized the importance of knowledge sharing transfer, especially passing on the skill set of food foraging, preservation, preparation, and methodology. Several participants said that their family—both immediate and extended—had played a key role in teaching them skills. As this participant explained, families are crucial to knowledge sharing and transfer:

I guess it began with my mom when I was growing up and [berry picking] wasn't always my favourite activity, but I quite liked eating the berries. And then it's been a number of different people with different information like aunts and uncles who have shown me what to eat and what to not eat. I was around clam digging a lot when I was quite young.

As this community member made clear, learning and retaining knowledge about foraging is important for food sovereignty, and people like his mother have realized the important role knowledge transfer of traditional food culture plays in food sovereignty. Participants spoke about learning canning, freezing, and preserving traditional foods for winter months and using and preserving all parts of animals and plants. Others emphasized that traditional cooking and skills are often handed down in families. Another younger participant noted, they are using the skills they learned in childhood: “Our uncle taught us how to dig clams and harvest mussels and oysters, so this was all handed down to us. I didn't think much of it, but now that I'm older, I think wow, he really did do a good thing for us.”

The importance of family in passing down knowledge was also apparent in the community members' memories about learning to catch, prepare, and can fish. Participants were taught that

certain fish species were caught at certain times of the year, and members were taught processing and preservation skills. One participant remembered this about canning skills:

With fishing however, we always had different jobs in the family because we had such a big family. My job was always in the kitchen with my mom and I would help do the canning. So when I was little, I would be inside with her helping her clean all the jars and get everything ready. So whenever we got sockeye, we would have a couple of days of canning.

Many participants pointed out that they not only learned from their families but also from the wider community. A participant spoke of the community involvement in teaching him how to fish:

We were able to fish for the whole reserve. When the salmon run was peaking, we would go food fishing and get enough for everyone. So the ones that couldn't do it, it would be done for them.

This quotation not only demonstrates the significance of sharing food with the community but also the importance of fish for QFN. Some participants noted that they absorbed lessons from any family member or community member they were with. Although this participant could not remember who taught her the skills, she said that people took the trouble to teach and show her food traditions:

I always remember knowing. We always had berries in the yard, like huckleberries and salmon berries, thimbleberries, blackberries. [Someone] used to take us on nature walks and [they] showed us how to pick the shoots of thimbleberries and salmonberries. I also learned a lot here from the coordinator. My sister, who passed away, taught me a lot. She used to make a lot of natural medicines and salves. My dad used to teach me some stuff too—he passed away, but that bush called Ocean Spray is a traditional medicine and my dad said that his grandma showed him how to use it for treating diarrhea.

Unlike most community members, one noted that some skills were not passed down. This participant said that after not being raised in a hunting household, they were offered a job teaching youth how to hunt. They renewed their hunting license and started to teach youth while also learning themselves how to hunt. Now, this individual has acquired the skill of hunting that they can pass down to younger generations. This idea of being able to learn a new skill as an adult runs contrary to the views of other participants, who believe that members of the community are unlikely to learn new information later in life and are unwilling as adults to participate in formal programs. The individual who learned how to hunt was a younger community member and perhaps there is revitalization occurring and a sense of desire for tradition in the younger generation, who may be more open to attending programs than their predecessors.

All the interviewees indicated that they are eager to continue passing on their knowledge and skills to the younger generation. Several emphasized the need to teach their children how to fish, forage, harvest, and hunt, as well as techniques for canning and preserving traditional foods for winter months and using all parts of animals and plants. Passing on knowledge was central in the advancement of their knowledge of traditional food. All participants noted that the role of traditional foods has played a large role in their lives. Just as many community members described how they had learned from family and community, they also talked about the importance of passing down traditional knowledge and skills to the current younger generation. They said that knowledge transfer to younger people had benefitted from the rise of community involvement in gardening, harvesting, and food-related projects.

One community member, Bill Recalma, mentioned that he spends a good portion of his time teaching classes at a local school where he transfers his knowledge to children:

The forest has a lot of food within it, you just have to have the knowledge to know what's good for you and what isn't. I teach [children] this information, because I was taught that it's not knowledge until you hand it down, pass it on.

As Bill Recalma expressed, the passing of information, tradition, knowledge, and skills to the younger generation is imperative for traditions to survive.

As we saw earlier, some community members said that this knowledge transfer must happen in childhood for it to be effective. However, this inspirational story told by Kim Recalma-Clutesi, an Elder of QFN who has lived on the traditional territories her entire life, demonstrates it is not too late for adults to connect with their culture, community, and land.

I was at a place recently where a young man stood up and said that he never learned anything to do with our food gathering or anything—he was in his 30s. He talked about being horrendously abused and trespassed [against] when he was young. And he said that “his healing came when he understood the land” and he started to food gather as his ancestors had. He realized that he was closest to our ancestors when he was doing the fishing, the clam digging, berry picking, hunting. He said that that was when he understood what those things were. It's not about dressing up and singing a song, it's about doing those kinds of things. We have a ceremony in our culture and it's called ‘deg’hi'ta’ and it washes away things that don't belong to you, whether its pain, shock or whether someone had trespassed [against] you. [It] returns your spirit back to you only if you agree to never look back — because if you're looking back on the place of trauma, you are going to trip because you can't see where you're going. You're not only feeding yourself, but you're feeding your spirit when you're using Indigenous foods.

Here, Recalma-Clutesi explained the enormous importance of traditional food and food skills not only as sustenance, but in spirituality, healing, and wholeness.

#### *4.1.3 Empowering the community through participatory programs*

The second theme that emerged in interviews was the importance of empowering communities through participatory food programs. The rise in community involvement in gardening, harvesting, and food-related projects has positively impacted gardening and food.

To the left of the QFN band office, there are 8 raised beds and a greenhouse (as seen in the cover photo) containing a variety of vegetables. Beginning with a greenhouse, two raised beds, and no fencing to protect the crops from deer about 10 years ago, this initiative expanded, and an irrigation system was installed. This project was funded by the Canadian government through the Aboriginal diabetes program. Any adaptations or additions require further funding. A master gardener was hired for the project. These gardens do not necessarily grow traditional foods, but instead support the community's food security with crops such as strawberries, peppers, garlic, tomatoes, squash, beans, and carrots. There is also a berry patch with raspberries and blueberries located on community grounds (see Figure 3).

Some community members said that they used the community garden consistently, whereas others reported a lack of communication about the rules of the program. Most indicated that this program aided their sense of belonging. But one community member expressed that the garden project could go further:

[They were] really happy to see the gardens go up! But this initiative has to go beyond just gardening, it has to go into processing, jarring, canning, and jam making. I do, however, think that it's a very good start.

As stated by this community member, the gardens are just laying the groundwork. Other community members spoke about a resurgence in community care and emphasis on food security. One noted the importance of having outside funding in maintaining and building the gardens. To include the community, she will often let people know and post on the community page when a certain vegetable is ready. But when asked about their involvement in the garden, two community members stated that they were not privy to this information. This may be because they could not access social media, were not in regular contact with the band, or did not have an active in-

terest. One member said that they never got notifications. Although they were quite interested in berry and vegetable picking, they did not have access to that knowledge. They said: “[The initiative] could definitely be improved with communication rather than to leave it to word of mouth, as it feels like it's kind of insider information.”

Many participants remarked that food hampers were provided to the elderly during the pandemic. The contents of these hampers were decided by surveys given to community members who received them. An administration staff explained that an ingredient list was sent out weekly, and residents could check off what they wanted. Most of foods were western foods, such as white flour and sugar, conventional cereal, canned soup, and tomato paste; foods that are easy to distribute and have a long shelf life. Although these are not traditional foods, many residents found the hamper helpful as it provided basics during a difficult time when people were laid off. This is an example of building food security, ensuring that all individuals would have something to eat, which is a precursor to long-term goal of community food sovereignty.

#### *4.1.4 Gender dynamics*

A third theme that emerged from the interviews with the community members was the gender dynamics of food. Fishing and hunting were observed to be steered towards men. Male participants reported that they were often taught how to fish growing up, while women were taught traditional medicines, berry picking, harvesting, and fish processing. One participant described the relationship between gender and food this way: “We are kind of a gendered culture here. The men were in charge of hunting. And the boys are treated way different than the girls.” All participants explained that gender roles have played some part in their lives. However, as with many other things observed in QFN, these gender roles may change in the new generation. The younger participants that were interviewed displayed interest in traditional revitalization. They discussed how they were relaying traditional, cultural information to their own children — despite gender differences. Children are being taught all parts of traditions, diminishing the gender divisions.



## **4.2 Interviews with Administrators**

Three themes were identified in the interviews with the three administrative staff:

- Fostering community engagement and collaboration
- Nurturing food security and sustainability
- Harnessing traditional wisdom for food sovereignty
- Barriers to food sovereignty (discussed in Chapter 5)
- Strengths of food sovereignty (discussed in Chapter 6)

### *4.2.1 Fostering community engagement and collaboration*

The administrators noted that the QFN staff have made efforts to run community programs. These programs range from the raised beds and berry gardens referred to earlier, to workshops on traditional medicines, to classes on traditional food harvests and cooking, to programs enhancing food security such as the provision of food hampers. To expand further, Elected Chief Michael Recalma declared that food security initiatives are in progress and that these are to lay groundwork for food sovereignty initiatives. The latter is currently more out of reach due to the systemic barriers discussed.

According to the Elected Chief Recalma the community garden was created by the community. The QFN distributed a survey to community members several years ago to determine the foods that people wanted, and these are the foods that are grown in the community garden. Chief Recalma confirmed what the community members said about the garden: the project is funded by the government and a gardener is paid to look after it.

A staff member elaborated on some of the traditional food programs:

Our prevention worker does traditional food harvest programs and we have a grant for these. So once a month, she will tend to do some sort of traditional food program and feed the community. We've done oysters, clams, seafood, gooey ducks, venison. What this individual will do is have

someone who knows how to harvest or cook the product, and have them take someone who has no experience doing this and teach them.

It is possible that the grant options available are driving the traditional food programming. The presence of abundant grant opportunities may instigate such programs.

Carrie Reid, an administrative staff member of QFN, discussed a key agreement with the fish hatchery in which the fisheries are compensated in return for providing the community with fish:

So we'll get totes of fish from the hatchery after they've got their quota. So we have people that go fish on the river for their families and send the band the totes of fish to get distributed. This agreement has been going on for years.

The importance of the fish hatchery program was echoed by Chief Recalma, who spoke about the role of this program in enhancing food security for the community: “We get communal fish. The fisheries provide both food fish and FSC (food, social, and ceremonial for potlatch).” He elaborated in saying that food security was a more immediate need than food sovereignty for the community’s well-being.

The community members I interviewed said they fished with commercial fishing companies because they were able to make more profit. But, as both they and Chief Recalma emphasized, the fish was always brought back for the whole reserve to enjoy. The Chief also maintained that communal elk hunters exist: “The elk is shot, cleaned by the hunter, taken to a butcher, processed, frozen, and brought back.” He added that these hunters are compensated by the community administration, with funding from the government.

Despite the success of initiatives like the fish hatchery program, the administrators said that some of programs had problems, particularly with attendance. When talking about the medicine workshops the community ran, Carrie Reid had this to say:

We didn't get a very good turnout. I think that people share it with their family members, so it's passed on in the family. Families that have these skills pass them along, and the families that don't, don't.

Findings suggest that the low attendance is due in part to a lack of program consistency, a lack of communication on programming activity, and/or a general distrust of official programming versus familial learning. The disparity between the efforts of the administration and the interest in the community in these projects is one of the major challenges that QFN faces. The administrators expressed hope that trust, communication, consistency, and expansion of the programs can be developed.

As Reid indicated, community interest in traditional plant knowledge, practices, and skills varies depending on individual upbringing and traditional food security varies “according to individual taste,” adding, “We have a lot of people who harvest, but I think that we have a lot of people who eat fish. The ones who harvest, harvest it and the ones who don't, don't. There is probably about 50-50 who get wild food and who shop.” She highlights the divergence in the community of those who participate in traditional food practices.

#### *4.2.2 Nurturing Food Security and Sustainability*

The administrators spoke about their efforts to establish food security for the entire community, Chief Recalma reflected on community involvement with the raised bed gardens and the berry garden, remarking that people frequent the gardens often. Raised beds are also found at the day-care centre, specifically for children. His goal is for the children to be able to plant, grow, and reap the benefits of eating the food. This fosters an active participation for children, which he hopes will be carried forward.

An administrative member who spearheaded the community garden initiative spoke about it:

It started off quite little, because we previously had the greenhouse [...] and it was kind of just sitting there empty. So we got the ball rolling, because it would be wonderful, especially for people who are in need of food. It's just gotten bigger every year. About three years ago we started the berry patch and this year we planted fruit trees, so it just keeps expanding. It has had, and will continue to have, a fabulous effect. Especially right now, because of the prices of everything, people are going without fruits and vegetables and we need to change that.

Both adults and children love the raised beds. As the quotation demonstrates, people are eager for fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition to the excitement from growth, food security is also maintained from the programs and berry patch.

When asked about the support and selection of traditional knowledge holders for programming and events in their community, the answers varied between the administrative staff. According to Reid, it depends on the specific task that needs support, “It just depends on what's going on. If there's something specific going on that someone knows something, then that person will usually get approached.” Therefore, traditional knowledge holders are called upon in the community when there is a need.

There is, however, an inventory kept of all registered in the QFN band and an inventory kept on traditional knowledge holders. Most traditional knowledge is passed on through families, but as explained by Chief Recalma, sharing this knowledge with the younger generation is essential. Data did not indicate that knowledge holders were often called upon, but participants told of the

recent programs occurring, which placed a person with traditional knowledge with a younger person to facilitate inter-generational learning.

## **5. Barriers Discussed in the Interviews**

The previous chapter presented the general findings from both sets of interviews — those with community members and those with administrators. These findings included the importance of knowledge sharing and transfer, the role of participatory programs in empowering the community, and the importance of nurturing a food secure and food sovereign community. Some of the hurdles to creating participatory programs and a community in which everyone has access to healthy and traditional foods were raised in the previous chapter. They include divisions within the QFN community and communication issues. This chapter goes into detail about the systemic and environmental obstacles that are standing in the way of food security and sovereignty. The chapter not only presents the findings about obstacles; it also places them in the context of the literature.

### **5.1 Differences in Barriers Identified by the Two Interview Groups**

The two groups had different views on the barriers to food security and sovereignty that the community was facing. Recalma-Clutesi, a community member, herself a traditional knowledge holder, expressed worry:

Knowledge holders who hold this information are oftentimes not known or respected in the political realm. I continually have in my mind the image that my father spoke of a child in the Kuper Island residential school where the priests took quite a lot of joy in rolling a box of beaten up apples down the hill to children that were starved, at the same time as conducting experiments on malnutrition. The whole way that the *Indian Act* system worked up until now has been one of survival and pushing to be at the top to be able to serve yourself, rather than a calm and orderly way of being respectful to those who actually have that knowledge.

As horrendous as this story is, it suggests a possible avenue for accessing the Indigenous experience and understanding the different views on the barriers. It indicates that perhaps there may be room for Nations to gain back community independence, moving beyond the defences they have erected to allow survival in a harsh environment, to uniting as a community. It also ties trauma with food, perhaps accounting for the decreased interest in traditional foods. The trauma acts of residential schools may be arising in political systems where the government is unable to learn from the community. As we see in the following section, community members have slightly different responses to barrier identification, perhaps due to the bureaucracy in QFN administration. This bureaucracy is inevitable, as administrators must interact with various bureaucratic structures to access funding opportunities and comply with program requirements.

The community members remarked on barriers such as divisions within the community and between band members, systemic colonial barriers, climate change, and racism, while the administrative members noted financial barriers, barriers caused by development, and systemic treaty barriers. Band divisions were not overtly referred to by administrative staff, but indirectly referenced through the discussion of the population complexities that are present and the inability for some members to be recognized as having ‘status’. The differences observed may be attributed to different lived experiences, familial situations, and societal and career pressure.

Below the barriers are divided into two broad categories: environmental and systemic. It must be noted that there is considerable overlap between the two.

## **5.2 Environmental Barriers**

All the participants expressed concern over the current and future state of the environment. Environmental barriers include the impacts of climate change, which have been created by human systems, and the disruption of land and traditions by the anthropogenic exploitation of land resources.

### 5.2.1 *Climate Change*

The effects of climate change can be seen throughout QFN and this part of Vancouver Island (Turner & Clifton, 2009). One participant noted that many changes can be observed—compared with 30 years ago—in hunting, fishing, and harvesting, indicating that there is a decline of both species like salmon, and hunting opportunities on land. Other participants pointed out the severe decline in salmon. Participants expressed their worries—many community participants have noticed the changes to the water (tidal changes in the water and temperature changes of the ocean). Another participant voiced concerns about the effect on shellfish when it gets too warm, as it did in 2021 during the heat dome that covered Vancouver Island: “They all had died so when we went to harvest, all we were finding was empty clam shells. Because there was a massive die off from the heat.” The same participant expressed his unease that climate change is a catalyst for other challenges:

This also affects wildlife up in the mountains. When the snowfall dries up too early, we don't get enough water to the rivers and lakes to bring salmon in. As a result, there are some creeks that I've seen that by October were just starting to get some fish further up because it was so dry that they couldn't get past a certain point. Also, it's a problem with the seals and the sea lions, as there was a point in time where we used to hunt those quite regularly. They were a species that were sought after for food, oil, skin, bones. Because of the mercury content in a lot of the bigger ones, we don't eat them anymore. We also don't have the same taste for them any longer because we have not eaten them in so long. When I was out there in herring season, I saw more sea lions than fishing boats. Fisherman stop for part of the day and take a break. But sea lions don't, they consume herring all the time. They're eating probably as much herring as we're fishing. The fishermen have quotas, they don't have quotas.

As indicated by this participant, there is an unanticipated consequence to declines in access to traditional food brought about by climate change: an accompanying decreased desire for species,

like sea lions, that are not eaten anymore but once formed a staple of Indigenous Peoples' diets in the region.

Climate change has impacted the land animal population as well. For example, deer and elk are the main sources of food for the QFN, and there has been a huge change observed in their movement patterns because, as one participant maintained, human intrusion is pushing wildlife closer to cities and towns. These animals are struggling to find their natural habitats and migration routes, resulting in increased encounters with humans, which, in turn, disrupts Indigenous access to these animals.

Climate change has also affected plants. In terms of collecting and foraging for plants and bark, a participant told this story:

I went to harvest salmon berry and it was all fried and dried up. We live in a rainforest climate so this heat can get to a point where the berries cook. It's gotten to the point where one patch of berries does not even develop, they just get cooked. This happens a lot, it affects all sorts of berries that are around this area. That cuts down our access to a lot of food.

According to Armstrong (2020), the effects of climate change are exacerbated in Indigenous communities because they must face this transformation as they also resist systemic, colonial policies of dispossession. As has been highlighted within QFN, Indigenous individuals used to (and many still do) rely on traditional knowledge, practices, and preservation techniques to harvest food. However, under climate change the availability of natural resources and the predictability of seasonal changes are diminishing.

### *5.2.2 Disruption of Land and Traditions and Loss of Ecosystems*

Anthropogenic actions have not only contributed to climate change; they have also disrupted land and traditions, depleted resources, increased appropriation, profoundly affecting industrial scale fishing, logging, mining (Dick et al., 2022) and other activities. One of these anthropogenic



actions is taking pristine environments for land development. Participants expressed concerns about the environmental impact of the rampant development seen on Vancouver Island. A recent news report confirmed that development is occurring across the Island (CTV News, 2021). Most participants called attention to the disastrous impacts of development, particularly logging and overfishing. These activities lead to deforestation, habitat destruction, and the depletion of fish stocks. Many authors have confirmed that the disruption of ecosystems often affects wildlife populations and threatens the availability of traditional foods and medicines (Liddel et Al., 2022; Muller, 2018; Poirier & Neufeld, 2023).

Participants mentioned this anthropogenic action as a large threat to the creation of an ideal, food sovereign nation. Recalma-Clutesi put it this way:

Every time they strip log the way that they do, we lose an entire ecosystem.

We don't even understand the way that those plants speak to each other.

We're just starting to understand that science. Once it's gone, it's gone.

There is no replacing that intricate system.

As this quotation indicates, once the ecosystem is disrupted, it cannot be restored. Thus, continuing to develop lands will not only decrease food access for Indigenous communities, but also have disastrous effects on the ecosystem.

### **5.3 Systemic Barriers**

Just as environmental issues include a wide range of barriers, so do systemic issues, and in many cases, these barriers intersect or overlap. Systemic barriers are those that are built into a country's (or region's) systems. They include jurisdictional barriers, the rise of western food systems, the decline of Indigenous food systems, financial barriers, divisions and losses in the community, and racism.

As Grenz, (2004, p. 52) points out, before the occupation of Vancouver Island, Indigenous lifestyles worked in tranquility and symbiosis with nature:

After contact, everything changed. The loss of ecological balance, a consequence of colonization. We were no longer free to fulfill our role as balancers. Our role now determined instead by the settlers. Settlers described in their letters home the abundance of resources they found in the new world. While in fact, what they observed was the bounty of purposefully shaped ecosystems.

This quotation, from a dissertation exploring Vancouver Island (Cowichan area), summarizes the complex interaction between systemic and environmental obstacles that are facing First Nations in this vulnerable setting.

### *5.3.1 Jurisdictional Barriers*

The origins of systemic jurisdictional barriers are deeply rooted in treaties. As Recalma-Clutesi asserted, the creation of jurisdictions managed by different forms of government carved up what had been a holistic ecosystem that for centuries had nurtured food security among the First Nations along the West Coast:

The one barrier that we all often forget about is the Terms of Union that were signed when B.C. joined the Confederation in 1871. These terms split the jurisdictions between the federal and provincial governments without any knowledge of the intensive horticulture and mariculture that were taking place or any of the food gathering practices. The provincial government was given jurisdiction over the foreshore in B.C., where all ancient clam gardens and root gardens had existed for thousands of years.

This split between the two forms of government is problematic for Indigenous Peoples, as First Nations fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Recalma-Clutesi continued:

Erroneously, the provincial government (who has no jurisdiction over us, as we are federal entities) has control over some of the most important food gathering places in this province, like the foreshores and estuaries.

There is a division of power present in the Canadian constitution between the federal and provincial authorities; the federal government has typically attempted to limit its responsibilities to the status Indigenous people living on reserves (Fryer & Leblanc-Laurendeau, 2019). As indicated in this quotation, areas of concern for Indigenous people often fall under the jurisdiction of provincial governments, where there is conflict over acceptable resource uses and how these intersect with inherent Indigenous rights.

The federal government is legally obliged to consult with and accommodate Indigenous groups where Indigenous rights may be adversely impacted. Despite these legal obligations, traditional rights and knowledge have not always been recognized or respected (Bankes, 2020; Brideau, 2019). Participants pointed to the behaviour of developers who interfere with the rights of the QFN. For example, many of the participants from both groups said that developers have little regard for the environment, usage, tradition, or culture that the land may hold. As noted by Elected Chief Recalma, “When developers show up, they just tend to kind of nuke the forest and there goes your garden in the name of progress.”

Developers’ actions create challenges in the ability to readily access traditional foods. Recalma-Clutesi explained how distressed band members feel because the dominant society feels no urgency when it comes to protection:

The legislation and the rules in place now harm the access to all of these things. It also puts us in a place of competition—we are really an interest group where under the law our access to ceremonial and societal needs is supposed to come after conservation. They don’t!

Heiner et al., (2019) echo the point made above by Recalma-Clutesi. Conservation and land protection needs appear at the bottom of the hierarchy when it comes to land use decisions, but the social and cultural values of Indigenous governance systems should be primary in these deci-

sions (Heiner et al., 2019). This was repeated in QFN —there are many development projects underway in their territory and surrounding.

Development is difficult to resist because the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and the provincial government are incentivized to encourage developments because they attract tourism and provide housing (BCGN, 2021; Zeidler, 2021). With such incentives, there is unlikely to be the political will needed to limit habitat encroachment and land use that negatively affect food sovereignty. However, as Reid noted, this political will is essential if QFN is to develop food sovereignty. To manage this discrepancy, QFN must be able to relay their worries regarding conservation to the RDN.

Land-use barriers are linked to environmental barriers, specifically when it comes to quotas. Quotas were developed with the goal of preserve stocks of fish, a resource that belongs to everyone (Emery, 1993). As one community member said, “The problem is that there weren't quotas 30 years ago,” and “There's a declining population of fish now because of the existence of quotas.” This community member elaborated:

It's a strange problem because yes, we [the QFN] do have access to Crown lands that are blocked off to the public as logging roads during the week—but only because the forestry companies are allowing us to have access. For harvesting something like cedar bark [or hunting], people in our community do not have time to harvest or hunt during the week, so there is interference and a clash with the public who often will be up there in dirt bike competitions [on weekends].

This statement reveals conflicts in land use: the dominant society has distinctly different motivations from the traditional occupants. It also raises the fact that there are different land uses and that Indigenous Nations are fighting against the State for access to resources. In British Columbia, where the research took place on QFN land, these barriers are present despite the com-

munity's remote location. In fact, they may even be exacerbated as this community is on an island hemmed in by development.

This example cited by Recalma-Clutesi demonstrates the intersection between systemic and environmental barriers:

The current jurisdictions that allow logging and mining provincially have annihilated the watersheds to the point where there is no amount of managing the strait of the Salish Sea or the Queen Charlotte Sound, or any of the Pacific Ocean that can protect the watersheds and spawning grounds. We are allowing clear-cutting throughout all of these areas and have been calling for decades now for people to stop logging the watersheds, because we are hurting the salmon population and the medicines.

This is a powerful statement because it clarifies the complex interconnection between systemic barriers and environmental barriers. The provincial government gives the right to resource extraction companies to log and mine and these activities have devastating externalities on the environment, including on QFN's traditional food culture. QFN therefore suffers from food insecurity and struggles to attain food sovereignty. In the meantime, First Nations communities that seek to protect the environment have few rights, despite the presence of the duty to consult in the Canadian constitution. The duty to consult is a mechanism through which these rights and environmental concerns should be addressed through engagement and negotiation between Indigenous communities and government and industry stakeholders (Brideau, 2019). Indigenous peoples have a right to be involved in decisions that affect their rights and lands, especially when those decisions pertain to activities with potential negative environmental consequences, as described in the context of logging and mining in the watersheds. The follow through and enforcement of this duty is apparently rare, due to the gaps present in the process (Gonzalez, 2020).

### *5.3.2 The Rise of Western Food Systems*

Perhaps the greatest threat to food sovereignty for QFN is the western food system. This barrier is almost impossible to surmount. Agricultural trade, as Edelman et al. (2014) point out, is powered by cheap, highly-processed foods. The world's consumers, particularly the less well off, rely on these foods, which is a barrier to food sovereignty.

Systemic barriers to food sovereignty are rooted in the historical and ongoing colonial system within Canada. This system has created inequalities in income and access to land, which has harmed traditional food systems and access to culturally appropriate food. The predominance of the western food system barriers make it difficult for QFN initiatives to flourish, including traditional food harvesting, access, processing, traditions, culture, and skill sets.

The western food system is linked to capitalism and the need for food producers, middlemen, and suppliers to make a profit. A participant explained how capitalism erects barriers:

Essentially what always seems to come before our access to food and resources is capitalism. It feels like we are essentially limited from free rein on our resources so long as we are within our boundaries. It's not good to be just sort of picking from the same patch, you've got to work on the diversity of where you're harvesting from, as a means of crop rotation. We don't quite have that in the same way that we did before. I think especially because our territories are fairly well known for their shellfish population so when it comes to our [community sustenance], we don't have access except for what is on our own territory. Because [if we do venture off our land], then all of a sudden we are stealing, from land that was stolen from us.

### *5.3.3 Decline of Indigenous Food Systems*

With the proliferation of cheap western food, traditional foods do not occupy a central role in Nations like QFN. The participants cited many reasons for why traditional food is not consumed

as much as food on QFN. First, traditional foods take longer to forage, gather, hunt, fish, process, and store, and western food prices, at least until recently, have been relatively cheap. Second, not everyone likes traditional foods, as this participant explained: “I’m actually kind of picky about traditional foods. I don’t love the taste of a lot of it.” This dislike of traditional foods and preference for western foods was a commonality in half the interviews. Although not asked directly about this, participants spoke about the cultural subjugation of colonialism and the severe, inter-generational, long-term effects of assimilation, which started in residential schools. Children in the schools were denied access to traditional foods, thereby losing the taste for it. Pihama and Lee-Morgan (2019) assert that when communities were subjected to western values and lifestyles, they developed feelings of shame about their traditional customs surrounding food. The authors argue that this shame resulted in a loss of traditional knowledge and an accompanying dislike of traditional foods.

Another reason for the decline in eating traditional foods is logistical challenges. First Nations’ members need to work, reducing the time they have to prepare traditional food and take part in gatherings. Finally the environmental barriers discussed in the previous section, including restricted access to lands suitable for traditional food gathering, the declining availability of game and edible plants, and climate change have made it increasingly challenging to maintain traditional food practices. Recalma-Clutesi expressed the relationship between systemic and environmental barriers when it comes to food insecurity and the decline of traditional foods:

There are certainly a couple things that are causing us to be food insecure, it’s not about us getting dollars so that we can have subservient, western foods that are cheap, cause diabetes, and exacerbate other diseases, we need access to a lot of endangered species now.

As we have seen, food security in small communities is affected by many factors, which has created a system in which wellbeing is not valued due to a long-standing history. The factors discussed here have distanced Indigenous populations from their culinary heritage and fostered a growing dependence on the convenience of western foods.

The access to traditional foods is being threatened, while tastes for Indigenous foods have shifted, affecting the health of Indigenous communities, impacting not only past but future generations. One participant described the origins of some of the underlying challenges that Indigenous communities face when trying to overcome systemic challenges:

It was all pretty quiet back then. And some of it was because we were groomed so hard to be secret keepers around anything to do with our culture. My grandmother's brother was beaten to death for speaking the traditional language. A lot of people have family members where that has happened. Laws change, but attitudes don't. Fast forward to today's Elected Chief and council structures, who are agents of the federal government - this makes it very difficult to protect our environment, pass on our knowledge, and educate the next generation.

As indicated in this quotation, the structure of Indigenous communities was laid out by the government in the *Indian Act*. As remarked by Coates (2008), the current Indigenous electoral process mandates elections rather than a system of hereditary chiefs, which is why they “are equated with the *Indian Act* government systems” (p. 9). Elections are most commonly held under the *Indian Act*, where Indigenous Services Canada approves “the appointment of electoral officers, trains and supports electoral officers during the election, approves the First Nation council's choice of electoral officer and receives, investigates, and decides on election appeals” (GC, n.d). Colonialism is still affecting political systems of Indigenous nations.

#### 5.3.4 *Financial Barriers*

Financial barriers were raised by both administrators and community members. These barriers are considered systemic because they are rooted in long-established systems of inequality. For community members, these barriers may be difficulties finding employment and stem from historical disadvantages, which have had lasting impacts on their economic well-being. They may



also come from educational disparities, geographic barriers, cultural and language differences, and discrimination.

These indirect colonial barriers impact the access and availability of traditional foods to QFN members. In this way, members often do not have the time, money, or knowledge to harvest traditional foods for these reasons. Employment is a large factor: working multiple jobs or being unable to find work will limit time and money.

### *5.3.5 Divisions and Losses in the Community*

Barriers, in the form of divisions and losses, also exist within the community itself. This community member explains why these divisions have arisen:

Division is a barrier. There are old politics that keep bubbling up in places where it doesn't need to be. This prevents people from getting together throughout generations. But at the same time there's a natural sort of growth where people sort of start to go over generations and as that happens, unfortunately people can start to elicit who has control over rights, who belongs and doesn't.

Another community member remarked that they did not remember so many people living on the reserve in their childhood. With fewer people, this person thought it was easier for people to get together and plan things out as a community, as there were band meetings every week:

Whereas now, there hasn't really been a band meeting for years... Things are different now in the community. It's more like people are kind of out for themselves, not really getting together as much as we used to as families. There is a division that exists within this Nation. There are Coast Salish traditions that are followed and there are K'wakwaka'wakw from Fort Rupert.

Clashes tend to arise as these conflicting sources of culture face off. There are either vast or minuscule differences (depending on who you ask) between these two cultures, and these differences have created challenges navigating two distinct cultural arenas with dissimilar factors relating to language, food, tradition, and knowledge.

A definite barrier stems from the complexity of the QFN population. Community members and administrative staff were asked about the population of the band. Various answers were received. The administration said the population was divided between those members who live on reserve and off:

We have about 120 [people] in the community. On reserve here, this is probably about half of the total band members. And then we have more band members as far as Alberta and the Yukon. We do keep an inventory of these individuals and where they currently live.

By comparison, the community members had a different response, of which the following is an example:

Approximately 130 [are] registered to our band. There are actually a lot of people who live here, but they're not status anymore because of the government rules on who can get status and who can't. [...] My grandparents started passing away mid 2000s and there was a good chunk of the population that was very self-sufficient that was lost between mid 2000s and early 2010.

This population loss has contributed to the decrease of knowledge within QFN, also forming a path within the community for methods of revitalization.

The split between band and non-band members, combined with members who live on reserve compared to those off, has created a problematic setting as discussed by a member of the administration:

There are a number of people in the community who are not band members. They're either married to band members or are children of band members who don't have status. So they don't have voting rights within the band.

A community member further explained:

There are actually a lot of people who live here, but they're not status anymore because of the government rules on who can get status and who can't. A lot of people now have divisions caused in their families which has basically been bureaucratic genocide. People were born and raised here, are part of our community, but don't have status so they are not eligible for programs because the government set these rules. For every funding program that we have access to, to have access to the funding, these programs all have different requirements for on-reserve individuals, band members, or on-reserve status Indians, or for people living on the reserve regardless of their status. There are very little funding opportunities for all band members.

This barrier stems from colonial policies under the *Indian Act*. Although this Act has been amended since its formation in 1876, the amendments have not fully addressed the disruption caused by the initial Act. They have not addressed the problems that started after the initial passing of the Act. For example, although amended, in 1927, the Act deemed it illegal for First Nations Peoples to hire lawyers or create land claims against the government. As recently as 2017 and 2019, amendments to the Act were introduced to attempt to fix status of non-members and reinstate rightful status of Indigenous descendants (Bill S-3) (C.E., n.d).

The many long-standing repercussions of the *Indian Act* have created many direct and indirect barriers in the modern day. For example, funding eligibility tied to status has impacted initiatives administered by QFN in terms of access to community programs such as food hampers, cooking classes, and other programs.

### 5.3.6 *Racism*

The interview findings indicated that direct racism is still present as a systemic barrier to achieving food sovereignty. The participants recounted various incidences with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) where Indigenous individuals were approached while fishing for seemingly no reason and interrogated. Other participants discussed direct experiences with law-enforcement in which Indigenous individuals, on the way to traditional hunting grounds, have been pulled over on the highway and questioned, despite not being impaired. Another community member discussed how this barrier has affected the generational transfer of traditional knowledge:

It's no secret that there's a significant amount of racism in the area. The survival thing sort of became: you have to adapt to fit in, so everybody would sort of hide anything that they felt shame towards like Indigenous practices that get passed down.

The intergenerational shame demonstrated in this quotation is very troubling. A new generation of families is growing up who may be more aware of their culture, but this will not stop racist behaviour from occurring. Racism cannot be improved by awareness within communities; it may only be remedied by changes to the dominant culture.

## **6 Strengths**

“I think that culture is coming back and it's coming back with a vengeance.” As this quotation suggests, despite hurdles, the QFN is making significant strides in reintroducing its cultural heritage. The Nation is flourishing with the revitalization of its traditional language, Pentl'ach, as well as its prioritization of food security. Both community and administration members alike noted that overcoming the past has been arduous. However, QFN is entering a prosperous phase. This can be observed through the current initiatives that focus on cultural transference to the younger generation, the solidarity of the community in ensuring that all members achieve food

security, and the community-wide support in passing down knowledge—whether it be familial or alternatively sourced knowledge.

Although at QFN the barriers discussed above exist, such as poor attendance in some programs, these programs are just beginning. All interview participants indicated that they gained traditional knowledge from a variety of sources. They emphasized that QFN has a bright future—from clam digging, berry picking, fishing, and hunting, and stripping bark off cedar trees, to plant identification, traditional cooking, and processing. Through the support of the administration, the community is actively making progress to becoming food secure, and eventually food sovereign. There was a wide acknowledgement from all participants that this movement to regain knowledge is in its formative stages, but merely having everyone in the community committed and on-board is a large feat that bodes well for the future of the community's food sovereignty.

## **7. Limitations**

The study had several limitations. Since QFN is a small nation and is sequestered on Vancouver Island, the findings may not be applicable to other communities, and barriers affecting other nations may differ. The barriers observed within this nation were specific to the participants, each of whom discussed their own personal experiences, which may have been affected by upbringing and by familial and systemic political influences. Moreover, the administrative staff may have felt pressures to maintain an attitude or position. In addition, it is possible that other community members may have other views or hold other positions.

## **8. Next Steps**

As a commonality, food systems, which are inherently land and sea-based, bring together both Indigenous Peoples and settlers. As Elliott et al. (2021) assert, food sovereignty initiatives can be effective in carrying out reconciliation initiatives because they connect Indigenous peoples and settlers as inhabitants of a common land. Efforts to support food sovereignty for Indigenous communities must prioritize the restoration of land rights and the recognition of Indigenous Knowledge and practices, while also addressing the systemic barriers that limit access to re-

sources and funding. By tackling areas of food security first through the community garden, berry field, and food hampers, QFN is taking the initiative to reclaim its food sovereignty as well through various programs such as intergenerational learning programs. These are effective measures and can be compared to initiatives taking place in Northern Canada—by the north, for the north and made in the North solutions, all of which are community-led initiatives that target Indigenous self-determination. These initiatives are targeted and adjusted specifically to the cultural, geographic, environmental, and political context of the community in question (Wilson et al., 2019).

QFN is striving to overcome environmental and systemic barriers to food sovereignty. One barrier is internal communication: communication on community events, traditional food workshops, and teachings. To overcome this barrier, I recommend the promotion of community-wide programming through means other than Internet community boards and pages. To reach older and younger members (who may not have access to computers), these methods could be adapted, through, for example, direct communication by word of mouth with Elders, posters displayed around the community and the daycare centre. Another idea is to start a community-specific website that would include all members, and social media sources to target the younger generation. If the QFN could improve communication, revealing, for example, previously unknown spots to forage and the location of abundant resources, other environmental and systemic barriers could be overcome.

It may be more difficult for QFN to address environmental threats in the form of climate. Climate change is a global issue, impacting everyone — and must be addressed through laws and rulings. Consequently, it is not possible for QFN to address this issue independently, however the First Nation may be able to sway political opinion on present and future developments in the area through advocacy.

QFN may be able to progress in overcoming some of the other systemic barriers, such as community divisions, reliance on western foods, declines in Indigenous Knowledge about food sys-

tems, and financial barriers, by reigniting interest in traditional culture. Through this action, community members can be involved in the programs, and initiatives. This involvement supports community solidarity, as well as the reintegration of traditional foods, especially into the lives of the younger generation. Administrative staff are actively applying for funds and grants from the B.C. government, as well as working with the RDN to improve land ownership through the ceding of tracts of land to QFN for their economic development (SED, 2023). The commonality that was observed across-the-board was the presence of government interventions. The federal and provincial governments have been largely responsible for most of the environmental and systemic barriers observed. Therefore, a topic for future possible research is the elimination of the government's direction in Western Canadian Coastal Indigenous communities, incorporating Indigenous Knowledge (community-led) food security initiatives.

## **9. Conclusion**

In this thesis, the concept of food sovereignty in an Indigenous community was examined. The involvement of community, food security, culture, systemic influence, land, and overall culture were tied to the concept. A literature review reviewed recent initiatives in Indigenous communities in British Columbia and the Yukon. These studies revealed both similarities to and differences from the experiences of QFN. Commonalties were found in British Columbia: a shared location, similar results of food sovereignty programs, and a garden program. In the Yukon studies, environmental and systemic barriers were shared, as well as the method of community-based and community-led programs.

The purpose of the study was to understand the perspectives of QFN's lived experiences of food sovereignty. Specifically, I sought to determine what barriers have affected them and how they are using their strengths as community to address challenges. To develop a fuller understanding of QFN's food system, both community members and administrative staff were interviewed.

This research has confirmed that food systems affect a nation's independence, well-being, culture, and traditions. The results of this study showed that the barriers to food sovereignty in QFN

are numerous. Two types of barriers found in this study were expected and addressed in the research question—environmental and systemic barriers. Other barriers, such as band divisions, racism, climate change, and reliance on western foods were grouped into these broader categories. I have emphasized that these barriers cannot be viewed in isolation, as many overlap and influence each other.

The two groups interviewed remarked on and emphasized different barriers. Community members spoke about barriers such as climate change, divisions, systemic colonial barriers, and racism, while the administrative members pointed to systemic jurisdictional and treaty barriers, barriers caused by development, and financial barriers. The administrative staff indirectly referenced divisions between band members in a discussion of population complexities and the inability for some members to be recognized as having ‘status’. The differences observed between the barriers raised by the two groups may be attributed to different life experiences, familial situations, and societal and career pressure. Despite the many barriers that exist, the research demonstrated the resilience of the community.

Food sovereignty is a part of every food system, but it is especially important for Indigenous food systems, as demonstrated in this study. The importance of initiatives to support food security, leading to sovereignty was stressed in this research. These efforts are most effective when they are run and led by the community itself, as QFN is doing with various programs. As relayed in most of the interviews, traditional food programming is coming back. Knowledge that was once considered lost is being actively sought after and re-introduced to the younger generation. These initiatives are still in the early phase, as, other than the garden beds, QFN community initiatives began only a few years ago. Food sovereignty initiatives at QFN were instigated by the administration of the community itself. The community of QFN has identified the environmental and systemic barriers that it is facing. Their community-led efforts, although only recently developed, have been successful and will continue to grow: QFN is on the path to success in dealing with the barriers that they face.



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**Appendix one:** Community Member Interview Questions

OPENING: Can you tell me more about your community?

- How long have you lived there? Your whole life, or did you relocate (when)?

Q1: Can you talk about the raised bed gardens that are beside the QFN office?

- *Probing question:* How have you participated or had the option to participate?
  - *Probing question:* What are some positive aspects of the program?

Q2: Can you tell me about your experiences harvesting, foraging, or hunting?

- *Probing question:* Who taught you these skills (hunting, fishing, foraging)?
- *Probing question:* Can you talk about its role in your childhood?
- *Probing question:* Can you tell me about the processing of these foods?
- *Probing question:* Can you discuss your access to traditional foods?
- *Probing question:* How have these experiences changed since your childhood?

Q3: How do you participate in traditional food activities?

- *Probing question:* what are opportunities to participation in traditional food activities?
- *Probing question:* What are the barriers to your participation in traditional food activities?
- If you fish - what kind and how many people are involved? Is the equipment that you use now different to what was used 50 years ago?

What kind of fishing? Commercial?

- Can you talk about being limited to fishing by access/regulation issues?
- What times of the year do you harvest?
- What species do you harvest?
- How do you preserve what you collect? In preserving, do you preserve traditionally or a mix of modern and traditional?
- *Probing question:* If they do not participate, Can you talk about not participating in traditional food activities? Where are there opportunities to have access?
- Have family members participated generationally?
- Can you discuss the sharing of traditional foods from local harvesters to your community?

Q4: Can you tell me about traditional practices related to food in your community?

- *Probing question:* if they've noticed a change - What about these practices has changed?
  - o What differences have you noticed about traditional practices between generations, how are practices being passed down in your family? (*This could be the upgrade of equipment.*)



- *Probing question:* What programs exist to encourage intergenerational knowledge?
- *Probing question:* What programs exist to encourage work with native plant species?

Q5: Can you discuss your relationship with consuming traditional foods?

- *Probing question:* What barriers can you identify to harvesting traditional foods?
- How do you preserve this food for the winter months?
- How do you share this food with community members?

Q6: Can you talk about the successes or failures of these programs and initiatives?

- *Probing question:* In your opinion, what do you think made them successful?
- If you did not think they were successful, what do you think could make them successful?

## ***Appendix two:*** Administrative Staff Interview Questions

Q1: Can you talk about the raised bed gardens that are right beside the QFN office?

- *Probing question:* When were they created? By whom?
- *Probing question:* How does this affect food security?
- *Probing question:* Did you get outside funding to build or maintain these gardens? If so, is this funding secure?
- *Probing question:* How involved is the community in this project each year?
  - What is done to include the community?
  - How easily accessible is the garden to the community?
- *Probing question:* Can you discuss programs that work with native plant species?
- Tell me about assets or people in the community who specialize in traditional knowledge.

What is the population of QFN?

Q2: When I'm interviewing with the community, I'm going to be asking them if they use traditional knowledge, how does the community work with traditional knowledge holders?

- *Probing question:* How do you select knowledge holders?
- *Probing question:* What is being done within these programs to pass this knowledge on to the next generation?
- *Probing question:* What are the barriers for the band in helping people access knowledge holders?
- *Probing question:* What is the difference between members and non-members who live on reserve?

Q3: Tell me about how residents feed themselves?

- *Probing question:* How are community members supported?
- Probing question:* How are foods shared in the community?

*Probing question:* How do knowledge holders harvest for the entire community?

Q4: Do you offer assistance in food security?

- *Probing question:* if you receive extra funding how is this money put towards helping the community with food?
- *Probing question:* For example, I've done a lot of research on food sovereignty across Canada and during COVID-19, northwestern Ontario was able to coordinate with elders, knowledge keepers, and allies to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to the community. In Manitoba, the government provided food supply discounts for the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation. Were any similar initiatives attempted in your community?

Q5: How do to protect Indigenous plants that grow on your territory?

- Probing question: For example, I was always impressed with Oak Bay in Victoria because they had so much protection on their fields of Camas! I've noticed that you have a field of Camas - near the campground, what is being done to harvest and protect it?

Q6: What would it look like to have a healthy, food secure community? Probing question: Can you tell me about how this vision could be funded?

### *Appendix three:* Executive Summary

Food sovereignty is a term that is used to describe having access to safe, affordable, culturally acceptable foods that are produced sustainably and ecologically. This concept describes parts of Indigenous food systems, as it adheres to the situation, barriers, and potential opportunities that Indigenous communities face with their traditional food. Traditional foods are highly nutritious and boast both mental and physical health outcomes. In Indigenous communities specifically, the concept of traditional food becomes much more complex when applied to the extent of production, processing, canning, jarring, harvesting, and storage.

Literature related to food sovereignty initiatives in Indigenous communities in British Columbia and the Yukon, Canada. These were carefully chosen as they shared similar barriers and strengths and similar research methods. These research methods were community-based and community-led initiatives.

This study included eight informal semi-structured interviews divided between community members and administrative staff of Qualicum First Nation (QFN). The study answered the primary research question of: What are the environmental and systemic barriers to food sovereignty within QFN traditional territory? In effect, this answered the following subquestions: 1) what are the present strengths within QFN? 2) what are current initiatives and programs in place within the community?, and 3) what is preventing QFN from becoming food sovereign?

Two different sets of interviews were carried out: the first with five community members and the second with three administrative staff of QFN. For the community member interviews, three themes were recognized: Knowledge transfer: “I always remember knowing”, gender dynamics in food sovereignty, and empowering communities through participatory programs. This was followed by administration interviews, with three themes identified: Fostering community engagement and collaboration, nurturing food security and sustainability, harnessing traditional wisdom for food sovereignty, and envisioning a nourished and food secure community future.

Barriers to the Nation achieving food sovereignty were presented. They were generally stated as being environmental and systemic barriers, with subsets defined. For example, climate change was present as an environmental barrier, and systemic barriers included reliance on western foods, division within the nation, and racism.

Strengths of QFN's food sovereignty efforts and initiatives were explained. QFN is headed toward cultural resurgence with the revitalization of their traditional language as well as various food sovereignty initiatives. Specifically, intergenerational knowledge, food security, and the overall togetherness of the community is promising. Through community-led initiatives, which include programs designed to transfer food knowledge, show that QFN is making strides toward food security and future food sovereignty. There was a wide acknowledgement of the support of both the community and the administration.

The next steps in fully regaining food sovereignty power is the strengthening of communication methods in regards to community-wide events to increase accessibility for all ages and increasing communication related to foraging and location of resources to combat environmental degradation. There may be an opportunity for the Nation to advocate for decreasing the impact of developments in the area, where they may be able to sway political opinion at the regional level.

Although these initiatives are in the early phase, food sovereignty initiatives were instigated from the administration of the community itself. The powerful community of QFN has identified the environmental and systemic barriers that it is facing. It has been determined that their community-led efforts, although recently developed, have been effective and will continue and increase in success.

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