

A FULL PLATE: THE INGREDIENTS FOR INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

ADDRESSING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN FOUR COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLANS

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INTRODUCTION

Many First Nation communities experience unequal access to healthy and affordable food. This contributes to many Indigenous people suffering from greater health disparities than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Food insecurity among Indigenous people should be understood as deeply rooted in colonialism, racism and the marginalization of Indigenous people. Many First Nation communities are demonstrating acts of self-determination through the development of long-term comprehensive community plans. Food sovereignty is an important aspect of self-determination, and the intent of this research is to gain an understanding of how food is being represented in comprehensive community plans. My research looks at four comprehensive community plans throughout Canada. Two are located in Manitoba, one in Ontario, and one in British Columbia.

CONTEXT

The food insecurity First Nation communities experience is due to a variety of factors. Some First Nations suffer from food insecurity due to being in remote locations and fly in only communities. However, this capstone project demonstrates this is only a portion of the problem. Below are additional causes contributing to food insecurity for First Nations, as well as the health implications associated with this.

The cost of healthy food is a significant feature in contributing to food insecurity for First Nation communities. Transportation plays an essential role in determining the price of food in rural Manitoba. Transportation impacts the costs of food due to such things as infrastructure challenges, fuel costs, weather conditions, a maximum capacity for weight limits the volume of purchases made and greater risk of damage or loss to perishable items.

Residential schools are a significant factor in the history of Indigenous people's relationship to food in Canada. Research has shown the residential school system used starvation tactics and other various methods used as a form of abuse towards Indigenous children. The long-term implications of this abuse have been linked to stunted growth and compromised immune systems leading to increased risk of infections and disease. Research has shown these complications have an intergenerational impact psychologically and culturally.

Poor health is a serious concern for many Indigenous people across Canada. Indigenous people have shorter life expectancies than their non-Indigenous counterparts and have higher risks of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Research has shown that food insecurity is a major factor contributing to the health status of First Nations people.

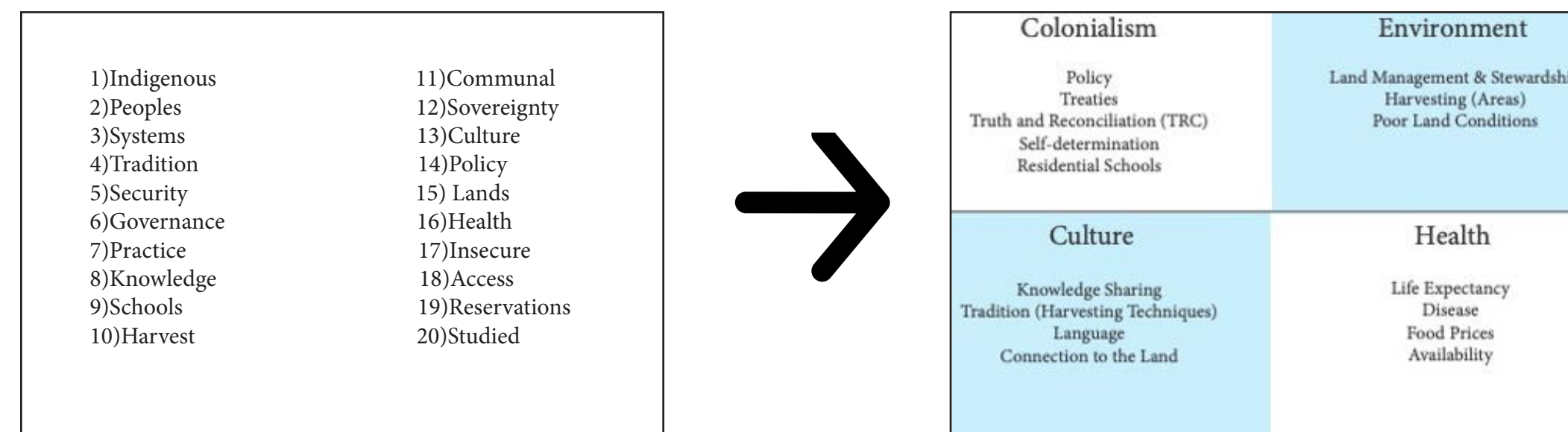
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Many First Nations in Canada are moving towards developing comprehensive community plans for their communities in order to create and establish their long-term vision. My research aims to look at the CCPs of four First Nations in Canada. Are these CCPs addressing food? Is food being discussed in these CCPs in such a way that it will help these communities achieve food sovereignty? If so, how are they reflecting their ideas of food sovereignty?

FINDINGS

METHODS

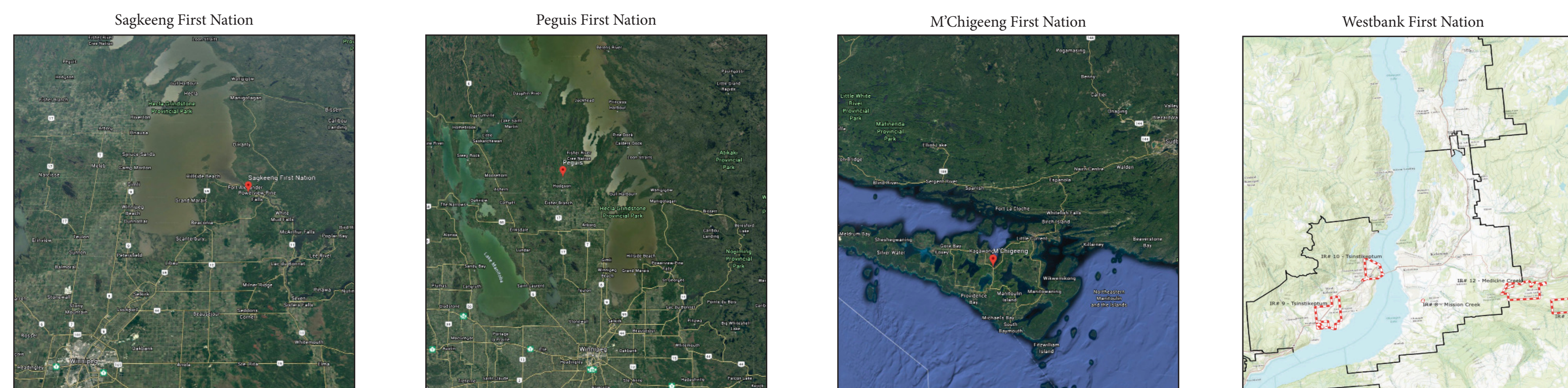
My method includes a discourse analysis of four comprehensive community plans. To analyze the CCPs, I used a framework consisting of four themes, which each theme having its own set of subthemes. This framework was created based on literature surrounding food sovereignty and self-determination. Below are images demonstrating the evolution of the framework. It started with a list of 20 words, which was generated in NVivo, these were used to create the final 4 themes.



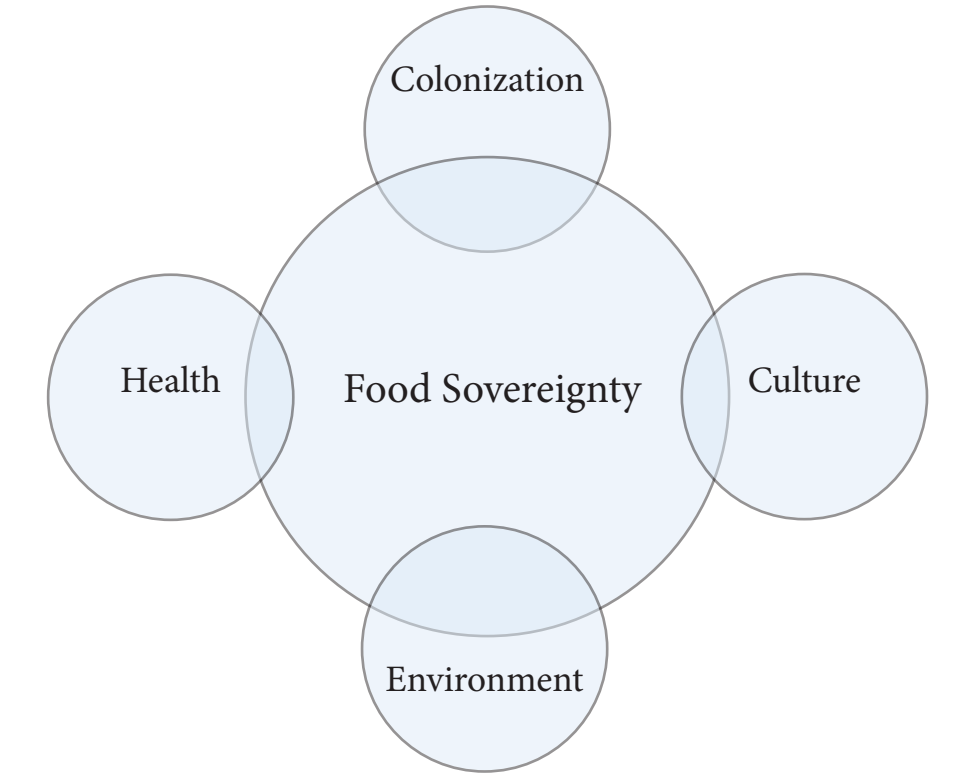
Community	Mentions Related to Food	Mentions Not Related to Food
Sagkeeng First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability
Peguis First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability
M'Chigeeng First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability
Westbank First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colonialism: Policy (Imposed), TRC, Treaties, Self-determination, Residential Schools Culture: Knowledge Sharing, Tradition (Harvesting Techniques), Language, Connection to the Land Environment: Land Management and Stewardship, Harvesting (Areas), Poor Land Conditions Health: Life Expectancy, Disease, Food Prices, Availability

COMMUNITIES

Below are maps of the four communities I looked at. Sagkeeng First Nation is a rural community located in Manitoba along the south and north shores of the Winnipeg River and Traverse Bay. Sagkeeng First Nation is located on reserve number 3, has year-round road access and is approximately 150 kilometres north-east of Winnipeg. Peguis First Nation is a rural community located in Manitoba on Treaty 1 territory. It is made up of nine reserves which makes it the largest First Nation in Manitoba. Peguis has year-round road access and is located approximately 196 kilometres north of Winnipeg. M'Chigeeng First Nation is a rural reserve located on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. This First Nation is centrally located on the island where Highway 540 and Highway 551 meet. M'Chigeeng First Nation has year-round road access and is approximately 173 kilometres away from Sudbury, Ontario. Westbank First Nation is a self-governing urban reserve located in the Regional District of Central Okanagan. Westbank is the only self-governing First Nation within this project. All reserves part of Westbank are located within 10 kilometres of Kelowna, British Columbia.



ANALYSIS



- Colonial influence on Indigenous lives can be seen in discriminatory policies, antiquated treaties, and intergenerational trauma from residential schools. All of these factors directly influence how Indigenous people exercise self-determination and sovereignty over the health of their communities, their food, their governance, and their land.
- Culture is made up of many different elements such as knowledge sharing, traditional harvesting techniques, language and a spiritual connection to the land. The connection to the land and the nourishment it has provided Indigenous people for thousands of years is deeply embedded in Indigenous culture and history.
- The quality of the environment is a key aspect of Indigenous self-determination and food sovereignty. Indigenous food sovereignty will only be meaningful if it is economically, environmentally and culturally viable.
- Indigenous people in Canada have long suffered poor health due to a variety of factors. Poor health among Indigenous populations contributes to shorter life expectancy and high rates of chronic disease. Many First Nation communities are located on reserves that are isolated from urban centres and major food suppliers. The declining health status of Indigenous people can be seen as starting when residential schools were introduced.

My findings indicate that the four themes spoken of in the literature as being important elements to food sovereignty are being addressed within the four comprehensive community plans. Although each plan doesn't explicitly use the terminology "food sovereignty", each plan emphasizes each theme as having an impact on Indigenous health and wellbeing.

RECOMMENDATION

My recommendation is for the adoption of the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management. A running theme across all four CCPs was the benefits and importance of economic opportunities for First Nations. Many First Nations operating under the Indian Act have been limited in their ability to control their land, and because of this have less changes to develop economic opportunities linked to land. This tool is a beneficial way for First Nations to achieve more autonomy regarding land use decisions on their reserve. The framework agreement creates a government to government relationship. Signing onto the framework agreement allows First Nations to opt out of the Indian Act regarding land use decisions. Once a First Nation signs on, they must create a land code. A comprehensive community plan is to be used in partnership with a land use code. The land code will replace approximately 44 sections of the Indian Act, and Canada will no longer be the primary decision maker regarding issues relating to the 44 sections the land code replaces.