

Northern and Rural Aboriginal Food Security

The image features a solid teal background. At the bottom, there is a silhouette of a mountain range in a darker shade of teal. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Social Exclusion

- ◆ Today's situation of inequality can only be understood in the context of more than four hundred years of Colonization
- ◆ Aboriginal peoples in Canada have been subjected to severe inequality, disadvantage and mistreatment
- ◆ Exploitation of lands and resources

Social Exclusion

Racism & Discrimination

- ◆ Policies- 1876 Indian Act, which governs First Nations people in Canada
- ◆ Policies- Residential School System & Child Welfare e.g., the “Sixties Scoop”
- ◆ As a result, Aboriginal peoples and communities confronted by a multitude of social problems e.g., income, health, identity and food security to name but a few

Social Inclusion Continued...

- ◆ As the gap between the rich and poor increases, inequality and social exclusion worsens
- ◆ 350 million Indigenous peoples in the world or 5% of the global population- comprise of 15% of all the poor in the world (International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, 2007)
- ◆ About 0.13 % of the worlds population controlled 25% of the world's assets in 2004
- ◆ 51% of the world's 100 hundred wealthiest bodies are corporations

Social Exclusion

- ◆ Rural Aboriginal peoples experience much of the same underlying food security issues as urban Aboriginal peoples however, some issues of quality and access to food can differ slightly due to the remote location of many communities particularly in the north e.g., fly-in, far removed from urban areas
- ◆ Living far from urban centers of commerce and power, Aboriginal peoples may find it difficult to influence the policies, laws and institutions that could improve their living conditions

Poverty and Income

- ◆ In the 2001 Census, over 1.3 million Canadians reported some Aboriginal ancestry or 4.4% of the total population (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003)
- ◆ Rate of poverty among Aboriginal families with children living in rural/northern communities is over 50% (Statistics Canada, 2001)
- ◆ In this same census, 52.1% of all Aboriginal children throughout Canada were identified as poor and 46% of the Aboriginal population had an annual income of \$10,000, which is way below the poverty line in Canada (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003)

Fishing, Hunting & Trapping Rights

- ◆ First Nations people have always had a special relationship with the natural life forms that the land provides such as fish and wildlife
- ◆ This relationship is based on subsistence needs and cultural values extending back thousand of years
- ◆ The Natural Resources Transfer Agreement which forms part of the Constitution Act 1930, provides that Aboriginal people “have the right, which the Province hereby assures to them, of hunting, trapping and fishing game and fish for food at all seasons of the year on all unoccupied Crown lands and on any other lands to which they have a right of access”

Unjust “Rights”

- ◆ Must provide “proof of your rights” when you exercise your right to hunt, trap or fish for food i.e., Indian Status Card
- ◆ Proof of rights can be problematic for those without status e.g., Bill C-31
- ◆ Federal regulations dealing with boat safety equipment, firearm licensing and safe storage of firearms
- ◆ Access and Availability of fish and wildlife e.g., The Innu of Davis Inlet, Labrador made national news for a brief time during the late 1990s due to the rampant situation of solvent abuse by its Innu children and youth (CBC Archives, 1999)
- ◆ The crisis in Davis Inlet, Labrador, is an example of how poverty and a myriad of other social, economic and health issues can affect a community. Utshimaasits (Davis Inlet) faced especially difficult social problems, many stemming from having been settled in 1967 in an unsuitable location, with an inadequate water supply, on an island from which access to the mainland for hunting is difficult for several months each year

Aboriginal Traditional/Country Foods

- ◆ Food security involved a diet of “traditional” food sources which were high in nutritional value, such as fish, moose, deer, beaver, seal, caribou and whale
- ◆ Long ago, quality and quantity were never an issue, however, today the level of environmental contaminants in water and traditional food sources is a significant problem (Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Report, 2003)
- ◆ Climate change and pollution destroys Aboriginal food-Toxins from the south (DDT, mercury, radiation and other poisons), travel to the north in ocean and wind currents and enter the food chain resulting in exposure and possible long term effects (Hass, 2002)
- ◆ Despite pollutants, many Aboriginal peoples still rely on traditional foods for food security and as a cultural food preference, but as a result of contamination those consuming such foods are putting their health at risk

Aboriginal Traditional/Country Foods

- ◆ Another issue associated with accessing a diet of traditional food sources is income security since obtaining it has a financial cost, making it not always accessible (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004)
- ◆ In view of elevated poverty rates among Aboriginal peoples, many people cannot afford to hunt since the cost of equipment, fuel/gas and additional supplies required, can be costly
- ◆ Overall, the cost of living can be quite expensive particularly in northern and remote communities e.g., Monthly Internet service rates can range from basic \$120-\$400 (Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, 2006)

The Commodification & Corporatization of Food

Nunatsiaq News, Iqaluit, Nunavut, September 30, 2005

One out of two Nunavummiut go hungry

"Listening to the local radio, there is a constant number of callers who want to borrow money for food"

Nunatsiaq News, Iqaluit, Nunavut, September 22, 2006

Nunavik food prices 57 per cent higher than in south

"KRG plans to lobby for higher transport subsidies"

The Commodification & Corporatization of Food

- ◆ Massive corporate control of the food industry- The production, transportation, distribution and consumption of food are subject to the same social forces and economic laws that work and apply to other commodities (Riches, 1999)
- ◆ The increasing corporatization of food is creating and intensifying the conditions of poverty
- ◆ The difference in transportation costs, retail operating costs, wholesale prices and retail competition is a concern faced by many Aboriginal peoples, particularly those in remote communities (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004)
- ◆ Delivering wholesome food to many isolated communities can be a taxing process due to lengthy travelling times, extreme weather conditions combined with costly transportation. Isolated communities do not have year round access by roads resulting in most food shipped by air carrier (Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, 2003). These factors potentially contribute to the quality of food since shipments that take longer than usual can result in its spoiling



THE PRICE IS RIGHT: NUNAVUT EDITION

Sunday, October 02, 2005

Bananas, 1kg in Rankin Inlet \$5.69, \$1.59 in Toronto

Oranges 3 lbs, \$9.89 in Rankin Inlet, \$1.99 in Toronto.

Apples, 3 lbs, \$10.39 in Rankin Inlet, \$2.49 in Toronto.





Rice \$12.89 in Rankin Inlet, 4.99 in Toronto
Peas \$9.19 in Rankin Inlet, 3.99 in Toronto.
Chicken \$9.74 in Rankin Inlet, \$5.50 in
Toronto.



Sauce, \$7.99 in Rankin Inlet, \$1.99 in Toronto
Pasta \$5.75 in Rankin Inlet, \$1.89 in Toronto
Ground beef \$6.15 in Rankin Inlet, \$3.55 in Toronto



\$31 for 24 cans in Rankin Inlet, \$9.99 in Toronto.



\$12.99 for 12 in Rankin Inlet, \$2.99 in Toronto



₹30.49 in Rankin Inlet, \$19.99 in Toronto



The Commodification & Corporatization of Food

- ◆ As previously indicated, more than half of the population of Aboriginal peoples in Canada live in poverty (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003).
- ◆ Needless to say, since the cost of food is expensive many peoples of the north cannot afford to purchase nutritional food due to a low income from employment and/or government social assistance (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004)
- ◆ In light of this, many experience hunger which can impact health and well-being

Food Mail Programs

- ◆ Food Mail is a Government of Canada program that pays part of the cost of shipping nutritious food and other essential items from the south by air to isolated northern communities that are not accessible year round by road, rail or marine service
- ◆ There are approximately 140 isolated northern communities in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta that are eligible to participate in the program (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003)
- ◆ Anyone in the community can receive Food Mail including individuals and retailers, although an account and all other arrangements must be set up with a supplier in the south through Canada Post and Food Mail. Then parcels must be picked up at community airports
- ◆ Problems that exist with Food Mail projects can include many issues that are related to poverty, access and the delivery of food. However, not all communities participate in this program, shipping prices may vary with smaller remote communities having to pay more and those that do participate only receive a cheaper cost for shipping, but not a less expensive cost on the actual food (Indian and Northern Affairs, 2004)

Nutrition

- ◆ Aboriginal peoples living on a low income still deal with the issue of not being able to afford a basic nutritious diet. In addition, (regarding Food Mail Programs) if they are without a car and/or cannot afford the gas it may cost to travel, then access is an issue since food is not delivered to an individual home or business. As for the delivery of fresh food, it is received from the south, which can take considerable time and effort. With that in mind, fresh food such as milk, fruit and vegetables are usually not of high quality.
- ◆ Evidence has shown that family poverty leads to an ailing health status in children, poor nutrition, dental problems, learning disabilities, chronic diseases (e.g., cardiovascular and diabetes) and even suicide (Dieticians of Canada, 2004)
- ◆ Aboriginal peoples in Canada who experience food shortages and hunger also suffer from psychological effects such as low self-esteem, depression, frustration, shame and hopelessness (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003)

“Traditional” Practices & Competing World-views

- ◆ Societal factors that influence eating behaviour e.g., mainstream media and advertisement
- ◆ The younger generations are losing some of the knowledge of harvesting and preparing their traditional foods
- ◆ Today, Aboriginal youth and young adults have diets very different from their parents and grandparents
- ◆ Aboriginal peoples are consuming greater amounts of non-traditional fats and oils in their diet
- ◆ The contemporary diet has replaced traditional foods with supermarket foods (e.g., processed and “junk” foods), many of which are of low nutritional quality

Development

- ◆ Increase social assistance rates and minimum wage
- ◆ Provide employment (obtain & maintain) and support educational opportunities
- ◆ Increase public awareness, sharing of information and resources
- ◆ Influence public policy
- ◆ Support local actions e.g., food banks, community kitchens & local food sharing
- ◆ ACTION, ACTION, & MORE ACTION!!! Get Involved...

Urban Aboriginal Peoples and Food Security

Colonization

- As mentioned by both Cyndy and Bonnie:
The effects of the Indian Act, residential schools and other racist government policies have left the Aboriginal population of Canada in a destitute state in one of the wealthiest countries of the world.

**FOOD INSECURITY IS AN EFFECT OF
COLONIZATION!!**

Manifestation of Colonization

- For Aboriginal peoples living in urban centres, the ongoing effects of colonization have manifested into various symptoms that include poverty, high unemployment rates, lack of education, inadequate or lack of affordable housing, family violence, welfare dependency and substance abuse (Shah, 2004).

Urban Aboriginal Population

- 69% of Aboriginal peoples live in urban settings
- Median pre-tax income of all persons indicating Aboriginal identity is \$13,526, or 61% of median income for all Canadians (\$22,120). (Anderson, 2003)
- Twelve percent of Aboriginal families in urban areas are headed by parents under age 25, with single mothers at 27%, and of these, 40% earn less than \$12,000 per year (Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, 2000).

The Urban Poorest

- Due to a lack of affordable housing and a high cost of living in cities such as Toronto, many people receiving government social assistance spend most of their income on accommodation with little left to purchase basic needs including food (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, 2005).
- Aboriginal peoples are four times more likely than other peoples living in cities to report experiencing hunger and many families rely on food relief programs such as food banks (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2005).

Urban Aboriginal Population

- Toronto's Aboriginal population: 11,370 (2001)
- Aboriginal youth remain two-and-a-half times more likely than non-Aboriginal Canadians to drop out of high school. (Quesnel, 2007)

Aboriginal families in urban centres throughout Ontario (Anderson, 2003)

- 35% of respondents who were in paid work reported that their children had gone hungry because the family had run out of food or money to buy food;
- 44% of respondents who were receiving social assistance reported that their children had gone hungry;
- 11% of respondents stated that their children had missed school because of lack of food; and
- 24% responded that they, or other parents they knew, were involved with the child welfare system because of food shortages.

- Community-based approaches to food security, including community kitchens, food skills workshops, food-buying cooperatives and community gardens foster Aboriginal values such as self-help, reciprocity and community development.

Projects in Toronto

- Food security projects, specifically for Aboriginal peoples in Toronto for example, include Mizwi Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, Tumivit Youth Shelter community garden, Council Fires' roof top garden, and food banks at agencies such as Native Women's Resource Centre. The first two mentioned agencies employ and train their service users to tend community food and traditional medicine/herb gardens.

Evergreen and Miziwe Biik

In the summer of 2003 a partnership between these two organizations created a community garden at Miziwe Biik. During the summer of 2006 over 50 Aboriginal people and community members spent time working or enjoying the garden.





Young woman's reconnection to Nature

- "I put a seed in the ground, I watered it and stuff popped up, it was the most humbling experience I have had in a long time." -Garden Collective member 2006

This might just look like a bowl of soup to you, but....



Adding hope and education

- 6 week restoration course with Tumivut EarthKeepers
- Cooking and Healthy Eating workshops
- Feasts (Spring and Harvest)
- And my JOB...Miziwe Biik Community Development Intern program @ Evergreen



**ABORIGINAL PEOPLES & FOOD
SECURITY:
RURAL & URBAN DIFFICULTIES,
DEVELOPMENTS & RESEARCH**

**FOOD FOR TALK
CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN FOOD SECURITY
RYERSON UNIVERSITY
FEBRUARY 16, 2007**

QUESTIONS

- 1) What research is important and worthwhile to carry out?
- 2) Who will conduct the research?
- 3) How will it be carried out?
- 4) Who will own the research?
- 5) Who will the research benefit and what positive differences will it make?
- 6) How does conventional research support local capacities to undertake their own research?

Wilson, A. C. (1998). Grandmother to granddaughter: Generations of oral history in a Dakota family. In D. A. Mihesuah (Ed.), *Natives and academics: Discussions on researching and writing about American Indians* (pp. 27-36). Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.

The scholar must understand the internal mechanisms Native people have for determining within their own communities whether they have information relevant to a scholar's study, whether they feel a scholar is respectful enough of their culture to share their valuable insights, who within the community is authorized and informed enough to share the information, and what information is appropriate to share (26).

Young, I. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*.
Princeton, NJ: University of Princeton Press.

Assumptions of the universality of the perspective and experience of the privileged are dislodged when the oppressed themselves expose those assumptions by expressing positive images of their experience. By creating their own cultural images they shake up received stereotypes about them (155).

King. C. (1997). Here come the anthros. In I. Biolsi, & L. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Indians and anthropologists: Vine Deloria Jr. and the critique of anthropology* (pp. 115-119). Phoenix, AZ: The University of Arizona Press.

...it is not for the outsider to set the rules of conduct on our lands and in our communities. It is our right and responsibility as aboriginal nations to do that. It is the right and responsibility of researchers to respect and comply with our standards...Creative approaches must be discussed and debated by aboriginal communities, academic institutions, and individual researchers to reach a working relationship that neither constricts the advancement of knowledge nor denigrates the aboriginal communities' legitimate authority over the integrity of their own intellectual traditions (118).

Tuhiwai-Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press.

Aboriginal research is being developed “which privileges indigenous concerns, indigenous practices and indigenous participation as researchers and researched” (107)

...becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples (116).

Research and research findings...

- be the intellectual and cultural property of the community;
- be of direct benefit to families and communities;
- transfer skills;
- include mechanisms for continued gains/work;
- be reviewed to ensure accuracy; and
- include community members as co-authors in publications.

Apffel-Marglin, F. (1998). *The spirit of regeneration: Andean culture confronting Western notions of development*. London: Zed Books.

“...collective action way of making knowledge, emotional bonding with particular others is what generates new insights and knowledge. Knowledge here is not separated from emotion” (20).”

Colorado, P. (1988). *American Indian science. 46th congress of the Americanists.* Amsterdam, Netherlands.

You don't just jump in. You have to visit, make the other person feel comfortable...Some people I know; I can visit them right away. Others I don't know so I go to visit once or twice just to get them comfortable...In every interview you have to establish trust; you have to put a relation thing in it (6).

Statistics Canada (2001). *2001 community profiles*.
Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada.

- 13% of the non-Aboriginal population in Canada are youth
- 50% of the total population of Aboriginal peoples is under the age of 25

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *People to people, nation to nation: Highlights from the report of the royal commission on Aboriginal peoples*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada.

Key themes...

- the loss of culture and identity through denial and suppression;
- language;
- the role of parents and elders; and
- institutional barriers experienced by youth which do not reflect Aboriginal values

The Mi'kmaq community of Elsipogtog...

- has a population of approximately 2,700
- 90% of the people on social assistance
- 85% speak Mi'kmaq
- 55% under the age of 30
- near the Atlantic Ocean
- Richibucto River runs through it
- Elsipogtog translates into the English language as “River of Fire”
- highest youth suicide rate in Canada during the early 1990s (RCAP, 1994)
- suicide prevention continues to be of very high priority in this community

The Pataxo community...

- outside Araçuaí in interior Brazil
- just over one year old
- six families (a total of 28 people)
- 78 hectares of land
- majority are children and youth
- traditionally people of the river, they have been re-located at least twice in-land where they are attempting to grow and harvest food
- speak both their traditional language and Portuguese, practice their culture and spirituality, and pass all of these on to their children
- although economically impoverished, they are wealthy in terms of their culture, generosity and hope







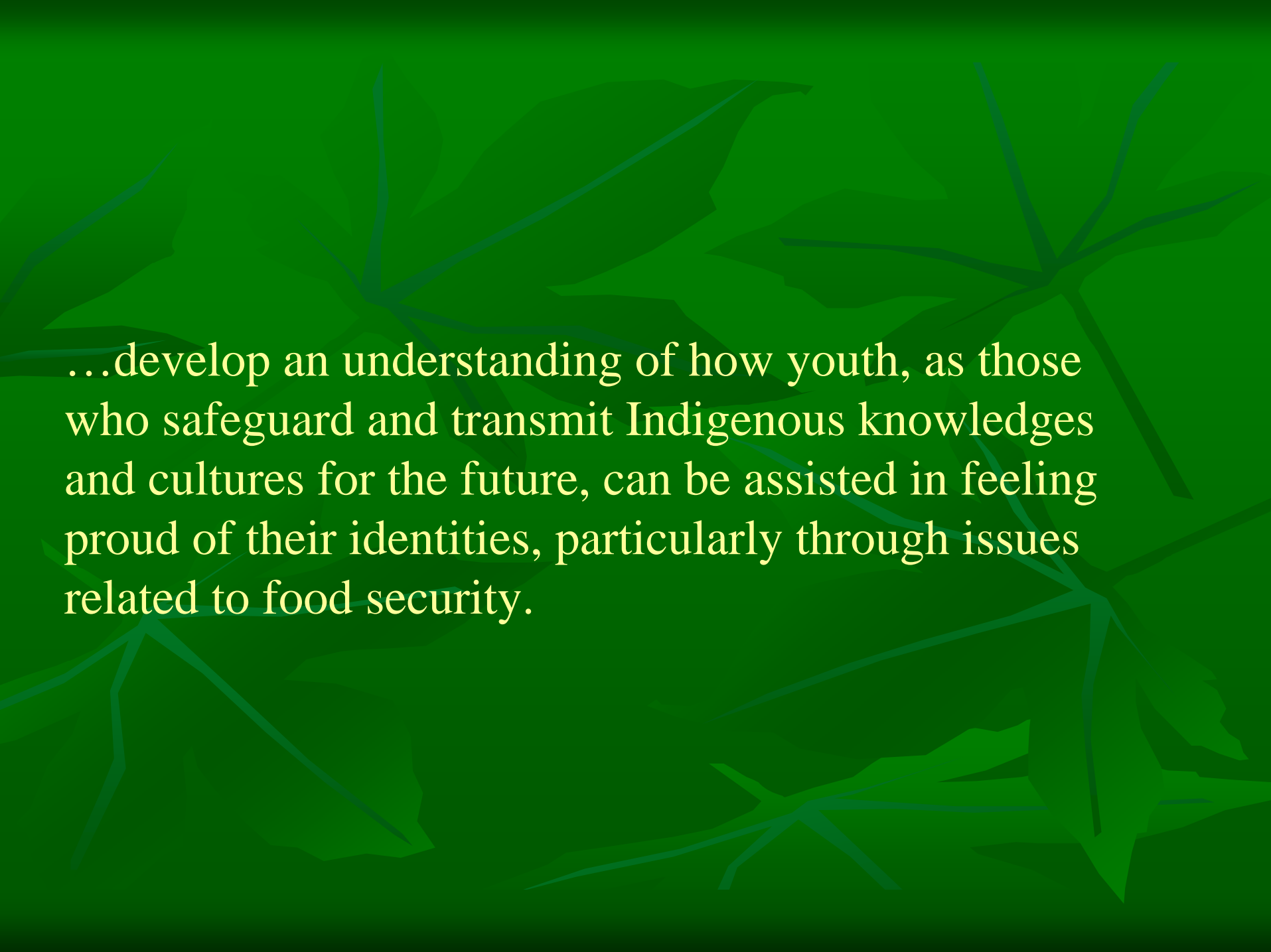





Possible research explorations...

...data collection because in most countries there are no available separate data that accurately reflects the situation of Indigenous peoples as compared to other population groups UNPFII (2006). *What is at stake at the fifth session? Millennium development goals and Indigenous peoples.*

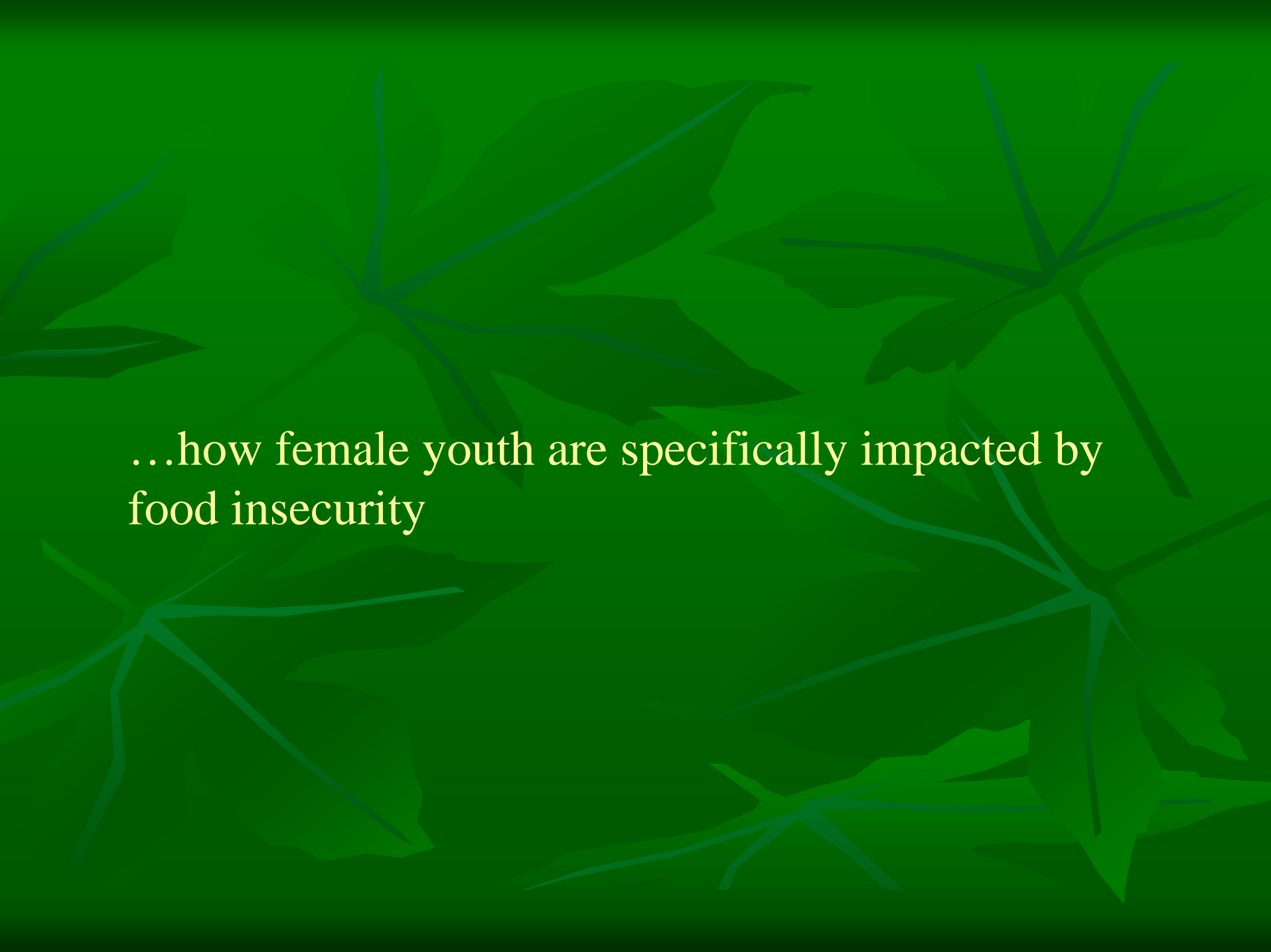
www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/



...develop an understanding of how youth, as those who safeguard and transmit Indigenous knowledges and cultures for the future, can be assisted in feeling proud of their identities, particularly through issues related to food security.



...youth's ideas for ways of conceptualizing development policies for their communities that would reflect their identities and cultures around the meanings of food and what food security encompasses

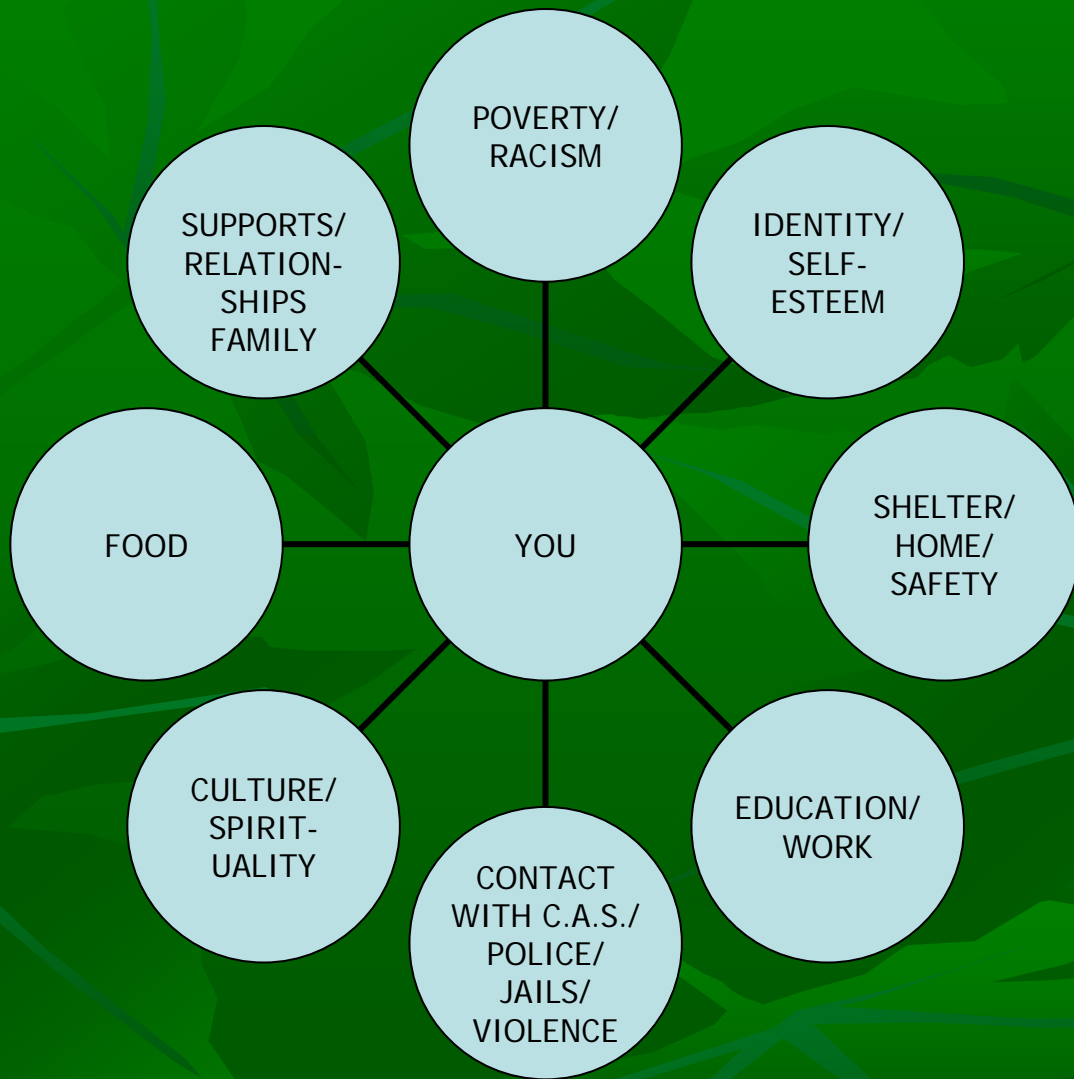


...how female youth are specifically impacted by
food insecurity

STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH

These are the ones I've been working on in my research with Aboriginal youth so far. I believe each of these is important to how healthy – physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually - we are or are not. I call them structural because society around us, governments, those who are in control and have positions of power, the institutions that control what we have and have not, etc. are underneath each of these things. This means they decide who has and who has not when it comes to how well or how healthy we are.

The project I want to work on now focuses on food as a determinant of our health and well being.



Ideas I would like to talk with Elsipogtog, NB and Aracuai, Brazil youth about regarding this:

- what helps us be healthy in mind, body, feelings and spirit
- how is food connected to who you are as an Indigenous youth
- who teaches you about traditional food, land and water
- what does food have to do with you going to school, etc.
- when do you eat traditional foods
- what role do you have in providing food for yourself and others
- what meanings does food have for you other than eating it
- what is food a symbol of
- are any traditional foods connected to men's roles and to women's roles

I would also like to talk with youth about research:

- what it is
- what it is for
- how it has not been helpful to Indigenous peoples in the past
- how we as Aboriginal peoples can do it differently
- how we can make sure it will be of use to us
- what cultural ethics from your Aboriginal Nation could be part of the research
- what cultural teachings from your Aboriginal Nation could be part of the research
- how can we teach you to do research