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## Tracing the terrain of Indigenous food *sovereignties*

Michelle Daigle

Food sovereignty scholars are increasingly re-conceptualizing sovereignty by accounting for its diverse expressions across space according to specific histories, identities, and local socio-ecological realities and dynamics. In grappling with the multiple bases of sovereignty, attention has been directed toward *Indigenous* food sovereignty in North America. Specifically, food scholars are examining how the regeneration of Indigenous food harvesting and sharing practices shapes movements for decolonization and self-determination. While this is a crucial and much-welcomed intervention, much more is needed to understand the diverse Indigenous political and legal orders and authorities that shape how multiple Indigenous food sovereignties are lived every day across diverse landscapes. In this contribution, I examine how Anishinaabe people in and beyond the Treaty 3 territory in Ontario, Canada, protect and renew their food harvesting grounds, waters and foodways through everyday acts of resurgence that are rooted in their law of *mino bimaadiziwin*.

**Keywords:** Indigenous food sovereignty; Indigenous self-determination; decolonization; resurgence; colonial capitalism; Anishinaabe nation

### Introduction

Increasingly, food sovereignty scholars are drawing attention to the diverse expressions and everyday practices of food sovereignty embodied across space. This particularly came to fruition in two special issues in *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (2014) and *Globalizations* (2015), in which scholars called for nuanced understandings of the ways sovereignty is shaped across space according to specific histories and identities, and local socio-ecological realities and dynamics (Agarwal 2014; Bernstein 2014; Desmarais and Wittman 2014; Fontana 2014; Figueroa 2015; Gupta 2015; Schiavoni 2015; Shattuck, Schiavoni, and Van-Gelder 2015). In grappling with the multiple bases of sovereignty, attention has been directed toward *Indigenous* food sovereignty in North America (Desmarais and Wittman 2014; Jarosz 2014; Trauger 2014; Gupta 2015; Kamal et al. 2015; Grey and Patel 2015).<sup>1</sup> Specifically, there has been a move toward understanding how the regeneration of Indigenous food harvesting and sharing practices shapes movements for decolonization and Indigenous self-determination, while simultaneously complicating Euro-centric notions of sovereignty and resisting state sovereign power in settler colonial contexts (Gupta 2015; Kamal et al. 2015; Grey and Patel 2015).

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<sup>1</sup>I use the term ‘Indigenous’ to identify descendants of nations that occupied the land of what is now known as Canada before the arrival of European colonizers, settlers, and state powers, and to refer to peoples united internationally under this political identity.

In this contribution, I seek to build on the growing body of scholarship on the multi-valent nature of food sovereignty (Morrison 2011; Figueroa 2015; Gupta 2015; Kamal et al. 2015). Specifically, I aim to contribute to theorizations of Indigenous food sovereignty by centering Indigenous political and legal orders that, in one way, shape everyday practices of protecting and regenerating Indigenous foodways and, in another way, are simultaneously cultivated through food practices. By Indigenous political and legal orders, I am referring to the Indigenous laws, political principles and kinship structures such as clan-ship systems which center the leadership roles of women, Elders, youths, queer, trans and two-spirited peoples as well as non-human kin, and which become the basis of Indigenous forms of authority and governance. In this way, I contrast Indigenous political and legal orders to those they have been subjected to through settler colonial governments, such as the hetero-patriarchal band council system and jurisdictional laws aimed at confining Indigenous peoples to colonial territorial boundaries such as the reserve system.

I draw from resurgence scholarship in Indigenous studies which centers the plurality of Indigenous political and legal orders and authorities that give rise to multiple Indigenous food sovereignties across space. That is, a resurgent politics centers the multiple sovereignties that are lived across diverse Indigenous landscapes, from one nation to another, in addition to the multiple political and legal authorities within each of these nations. Moreover, a resurgence framework directs our attention to the multiple and interconnected scales of colonial-capitalist dispossession, and thus the diverse sites and relationships that must be accounted for to consider how the resurgence of Indigenous foodways figures into larger processes of decolonization and self-determination. I define the latter by drawing on Jeff Corntassel (Tsalagi) and Cheryl Bryce's (Songhees) concept of sustainable self-determination, which rejects the notion that self-determination is solely and narrowly political and legal entitlements as defined by the settler colonial state (Corntassel and Bryce 2012). Rather, self-determination is grounded in everyday practices of resurgence that are based on Indigenous ontologies and respectful and reciprocal relationships with the human and non-human world.

I root my analysis in the everyday acts of resurgence embodied in Anishinaabe communities in and beyond what is now known as the Treaty 3 territory in northwestern Ontario, Canada. This treaty territory, which was signed between the Anishinaabe nation and the Dominion of Canada in 1873, comprises 55,000 square miles, 28 First Nation reserves, and a population of 25,000 members with half living on-reserve and half living off-reserve (Figure 1). Anishinaabe ancestral lands and waters, however, expand beyond the colonial confines of reserves, the treaty territory, and the geopolitical boundary of Canada, as reflected through everyday food practices, which I explore more thoroughly by drawing on interviews conducted with 30 members of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

Members interviewed and cited throughout this paper are Knowledge Holders, or political and legal authorities in Anishinaabe food practices, including associated customs such as ceremony, storytelling and Anishinaabemowin (the Anishinaabe language).<sup>3</sup> I draw on the

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<sup>2</sup>Interviews were conducted from fall 2013 to spring 2014. Participants ranged in age from Elders to young adults and included an equal representation of males and females. Interviewees requested to be identified by their Anishinaabe name, by their Anglo name or by a pseudonym, which I honor in this contribution. Throughout the paper, I identify the First Nation communities that each interviewee is from.

<sup>3</sup>I use the term Knowledge Holders interchangeably with political and legal authorities throughout this paper to denote Indigenous peoples who are knowledgeable and authorities in their community and nation's land/water-based philosophies and practices. These individuals may not yet be of the age of an Elder; however, they are important leaders and intellectuals within their communities and nations.



Figure 1. Map of the Treaty 3 territory. Source: Seven Generations Education Institute.

grounded knowledge generously shared by these individuals to explore how Anishinaabe people contextualize and embody their food practices through their respective laws and political principles while simultaneously examining how the resurgence of food practices helps regenerate these political and legal orders.<sup>4</sup> I do not claim to speak for the Anishinaabe nation. Rather, I draw on the grounded knowledge I have gained as a member of the Cree nation and Constance Lake First Nation, located in the neighboring Treaty 9 territory, who has kinship relations in the Treaty 3, and who has learned about Anishinaabe foodways through active participation.<sup>5</sup> Hence, I speak as a Cree woman who has learned from my kinship relations that extend into Anishinaabe territory, which have informed my own understanding and embodiment of self-determination, in addition to others from my community and nation (Daigle 2016). In this way, I hope to contribute to the rise of food sovereignty scholarship that centers the voices and legal traditions of Indigenous peoples, and that is based on long-term, reflexive and reciprocal relationship building (LaDuke 1999, 2007; Coté 2010, 2016; Morrison 2011; Gupta 2015; Kamal et al. 2015).

<sup>4</sup>I use the term grounded knowledge to denote the epistemological basis of acquiring and learning Indigenous knowledge through direct experience, and through an intimate relationship with land, water and the non-human world.

<sup>5</sup>This research started through familial connections. While I followed ethical guidelines and consent procedures as defined by the University of Washington, as part of my doctoral research, I simultaneously engaged in Anishinaabe community protocols to request consent from each Knowledge Holder.

I begin by briefly exploring how Indigenous food sovereignty has been taken up thus far in theorizations of multiple food sovereignties. Following this, I build on food sovereignty's emergent interdisciplinary dialogue with Indigenous studies by drawing on key themes from resurgence scholarship. Specifically, I consider the distinct decolonial and Indigenous-centered scalar politics that are cultivated through everyday acts of resurgence. I then examine how these everyday acts of resurgence are embodied across Anishinaabe territory, and end by considering future directions in food sovereignty scholarship.

### **Cultivating space for multiple Indigenous sovereignties**

Bourgeoning debates on multiple and competing food sovereignties are increasingly complicating Euro-centric accounts of sovereignty by connecting specific histories, identities and structures of power to contemporary food struggles across space and, crucially, to various forms of authority which incite resistance to such injustices (Patel 2009; Desmarais and Wittman 2014; Figueroa 2015; Gupta 2015; Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015; Kamal et al. 2015; Li 2015; Grey and Patel 2015; Shattuck, Schiavoni, and VanGelder 2015). A key intervention has centered on complicating state-centric food sovereignty discourses that limitedly frame the political actors and territoriality in food sovereignty. Namely, scholars have drawn attention to the relationship between the authority of the state and that of a range of political actors who mobilize, sometimes simultaneously, within and outside of state political and legal pathways (Patel 2009; Grey and Patel 2015; Schiavoni 2015). Additionally, they have problematized state-centric discourses that narrowly conceptualize food sovereignty within the territorial boundaries of the state, thus discounting how multiple sovereignties are lived every day according to a relational politics that is based on kinship relations and interdependent ecologies that expand beyond these boundaries (Gupta 2015; Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015; Schiavoni 2015, 2016).

Indigenous foodways and efforts for self-determination have increasingly become a focal point in such debates (Coté 2010, 2016; Morrison 2011; Desmarais and Wittman 2014; Gupta 2015; Kamal et al. 2015; Grey and Patel 2015). As Dawn Morrison (Secwempec), the founder and co-chair of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS), argues, ag-centric and state-centric food sovereignty discourses overlook Indigenous land/water-based food practices such as hunting, fishing and trapping, which bring to bear expansive landscapes that continue to be divided and privatized through colonial-capitalist boundaries and enclosures (Morrison 2011). At the root of the problem, such discourses do not contend with the contested sovereignties internal to settler colonial states, in which Indigenous peoples continue to be dispossessed of their food harvesting grounds and waters for the state's own political and economic sovereignty (Patel 2009; Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015; Schiavoni 2015). Furthermore, such discourses do not engage with Indigenous ontologies on and relationships with their non-human kin (land, water, animals and plants), which complicate Euro-centric notions of sovereignty that are based on Lockean conceptions of land as property that can be enclosed, owned and controlled (Morrison 2011; Desmarais and Wittman 2014; Jarosz 2014; Gupta 2015; Grey and Patel 2015; Kamal et al. 2015). As Morrison explains:

Food is a gift from the Creator. In this respect, the right to food is sacred and cannot be constrained or recalled by colonial laws, policies or institutions. Indigenous food sovereignty is ultimately achieved by upholding our long-standing sacred responsibilities to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food. (Morrison 2011, 100)

Drawing from extensive Indigenous studies' scholarship, Grey and Patel argue that Indigenous food sovereignty efforts are, at once, forms of resistance against colonial-capitalist legacies and continuities, and part of a more general political, legal and economic resurgence (Grey and Patel 2015). In this way, they characterize sovereignty in Indigenous food sovereignty as both a resistance against the inter-workings of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism, and as a resurgence of Indigenous forms of authority and autonomy. Gupta (2015) builds on this intervention by examining how Indigenous Hawaiians on the island of Molokai balance a politics of resistance and resurgence through the notion of aloha 'aina, which translates to 'love of the land'. Specifically, she examines how aloha 'aina is used in Indigenous resistance against genetically modified organisms reproduced through the biotechnology seed corn industry and, simultaneously, to restore community responsibilities to the land. Kamal et al. (2015) center the notion of pasekonekewin, or 'taking the person by the hand and helping her or him stand', to examine how the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, in what is now known as Manitoba, are restoring intimate and reciprocal relationships between youths and their homeland. Likewise, Nuu-chah-nulth scholar, Charlotte Coté (2016), frames the regeneration of her nation's food harvesting and sharing practices through the philosophies of hishuk'ish tsawalk (everything is one), uu-a-thluk (taking care of), and iisaak (respect).

Building on such works, I turn toward everyday acts of resistance and resurgence unfolding in Anishinaabe territory by centering the nation's political and legal orders and authorities. Specifically, I center the Anishinaabe law of *mino bimaadiziwin* or 'living the good life'. It is crucial to point out, however, that this is but one Anishinaabe law amongst many that encompass longstanding political and legal frameworks that govern the way diverse people within the nation relate with one another, with members of other clans and Indigenous nations, and with their non-human kin. Before delving into these everyday practices, however, I engage with resurgence scholarship as I seek to build an interdisciplinary dialogue between food sovereignty scholarship and Indigenous studies, as the latter has extensively delved into questions of settler colonialism, sovereignty and self-determination. A resurgent politics is particularly cogent for re-conceptualizations of food sovereignty and, specifically, Indigenous food sovereignties, as it decenters the role of settler colonial states in Indigenous efforts for self-determination and, instead, looks toward Indigenous political and legal authorities. Moreover, resurgence unpacks the co-constitutive scales of Indigenous political and legal orders, and directs our attention to the various leaders and authorities that sustain Indigenous foodways, and who are driving forces in the larger processes of decolonization and self-determination. In this way, resurgence centers the multiple sovereignties that are lived across diverse Indigenous landscapes, from one nation to another, from one clan to another, from one community to another, but also the multiple sources of authority within each of these nations, clans and communities, which have been systematically excluded from settler colonial and neoliberal spaces.

### **Indigenous resurgence: the relational scales of Indigenous political and legal orders**

Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows first deployed the term 'resurgence' in Indigenous studies with his call for the renewal of Indigenous laws (Borrows 2002). Borrows argues that, during pre-settler times, Indigenous peoples existed as diverse nations shaped by their ancestral lands, kinship relations, governance structures, economic trading networks, ceremonial practices, linguistic traditions, and well-established yet fluid legal orders (cf. Daigle 2016). These political, economic and legal structures, albeit variously impacted

across space through colonial regimes of dispossession, continue to shape Indigenous nations today and are key in embodying an emancipatory politics, not through a rigid reading of tradition, but by renewing them to account for the realities that shape the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples today (L. Simpson 2013).

The multiple and relational scales of a resurgent politics are particularly pertinent to understanding how Indigenous food practices are part of the larger process of decolonization and self-determination. As Schiavoni argues, as an analytical lens, scale can be taken up in a number of different ways to examine how food sovereignty is politically constructed and lived across space (Schiavoni 2015). One such way, she contends, is to consider scale relational, or as a set of relationships that transcend what are oftentimes perceived as bounded levels of the local, regional and national. Scale as relation opens up renewed possibilities for negotiation, engagement, power sharing and solidarity building amongst diverse sovereign actors and institutions at multiple levels. As Iles and Montenegro de Wit (2015) contend, the embodiment of sovereignty is relational in that it emerges through peoples and communities working together for common political objectives.

A resurgent politics expands upon food sovereignty scholarship's theorizations of scale by foregrounding a distinct decolonial and Indigenous-centered framing of this concept/reality. It does so by drawing attention to the everyday and intimate spaces in which Indigenous political and legal relationships and forms of authority are renewed through food practices. Specifically, a resurgent politics is premised on how these intimate relations and everyday renewals of authority (including the authority of non-human kin) are co-constitutive to building larger scale political, legal and economic relations within and across Indigenous nations, which complicate settler colonial conceptualizations of authority, including its territorial reach.

As Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson recounts through the story of 'The Seven Fires Prophecy', a resurgent politics is founded on intimate relationships with family, and the natural and spiritual world, which are scaled up to larger levels of kinship relations including pre-settler treaties between Indigenous nations, and with animal and plant nations (L. Simpson 2008, 2013). Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt adds to this by arguing that macro scales of resurgence, in this instance the rebuilding of pre-settler treaties, are co-constitutive to the more intimate scales of resurgence, as colonial violence has attacked all kinship relations within Indigenous communities (Hunt 2015). In this way, a resurgent politics draws attention to the multi-scalar spaces and relationships in which colonial-capitalist dispossession is embodied. Embodiment, as framed here, goes beyond the reporting of health disparities that are tied to a shift from a land/water-based diet to a market-based one, and localized manifestations of policymaking. Rather, it entails an analysis of how the dispossession of Indigenous foodways is a direct attack on Indigenous ontologies, kinship relations, governance structures, and their political and legal lives.

Without a doubt, the recounting of dispossession should necessarily focus on the structures of violence that have dispossessed and continue to dispossess Anishinaabe people of their food harvesting grounds and practices. This includes an extensive colonial-capitalist project of land dispossession through the legalization and materialization of settler colonial jurisdictions such as the Canada-US border, which crosses food harvesting grounds in Anishinaabe territory, as well as the rigid boundaries of provinces, treaty territories and reserves, which do not reflect Anishinaabe political mobilities and kinship networks, nor do they pertain to food harvesting and sharing. Additionally, the dispossession of Anishinaabe foodways must be situated within genocidal practices of assimilation implemented through the Indian Act, such as forced residential schooling and the banning of Indigenous ceremonies and gatherings, which were aimed at disrupting Anishinaabe peoples' ability to visit harvesting grounds and waters, and

to engage in the legal protocols that are central to food practices. A gendered analysis would shed light on how a growing settler economy reconfigured Indigenous women's roles in land/water-based food practices as they were increasingly relegated to the confines of the home to serve as social reproductive labor to support men's cheaply paid labor in the lumber industry starting in the late nineteenth century. Meanwhile, land dispossession and alienation is escalating through the increased privatization of Anishinaabe land for the influx of city-dweller cottagers, otherwise known as cottage colonization, and the environmental degradation and contamination reproduced by resource-extractive industries.

Indeed, the list goes on as the dispossession of Anishinaabe foodways can be traced through myriad, overlapping and mutually reinforcing structures of power. Exclusive attention to structural macro scales, or even the local, however, risks missing the intimate impacts to Indigenous ontologies and political and legal lives, and how this differs across community members based on the intersectionality of multiple axes such as gender and age (Hunt 2015). As Sara Geyschick from Seine River First Nation expresses, colonial-capitalist dispossession has had disciplinary effects on some community members' mobility across their ancestral lands: 'People get tied up in imaginary boundaries. And, if the young people are not familiar with the area, because they haven't spent time out on the land, all they see is signs that say no trespassing, private property'.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, others expressed concerns over how some community members are internalizing market-oriented ways of thinking about and relating with their non-human kin. As Gary Smith, from Naincatchewenin First Nation, states: 'People aren't harvesting beaver anymore because the market value is low'.<sup>7</sup> These shifting ontologies and relationships with non-human kin are in stark contrast to those still embodied by many Knowledge Holders. For example, Ogimaagwanebiik from Nicickousemenecaning First Nation, the matriarch of the Jones family and a knowledgeable trapper and hunter, describes Anishinaabe food as *gigi-mini-gozeimin*, which translates to 'our gifts from the Creator', reframing food from a resource or commodity to living beings and relatives that are sacred to Anishinaabe lifeways.<sup>8</sup> Her grandson, Jason Jones, reiterates this by saying 'We don't see food as an object that you consume. You have to pay your respect'<sup>9</sup>, thus centering the authority of non-human kin that Anishinaabe people are vulnerable to and dependent on.

In another way, colonial capitalism has had profound impacts on the ways community members relate with one another. As stated, the political and legal authority of a range of community members, including women, Elders, youths and queer, trans and two-spirited peoples who are Knowledge Holders in the caretaking of land and water, have been historically targeted by settler colonial policies and capitalist development. As a number of Elders expressed, the culmination of colonial-capitalist technologies of power has resulted in the weakening of Anishinaabe political and legal relationships, such as those between Elders and youths, which were once widely cultivated through everyday practices of food harvesting and sharing. It is these Anishinaabe ways of relating to kin at multiple and interconnected scales, both human and non-human, that need to be further centered as we consider how the resurgence of Indigenous foodways is part of the larger process of decolonization and self-determination. That is, a resurgent politics reframes self-determination from solely and narrowly rights and entitlements granted by settler colonial authorities to

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<sup>6</sup>Sherri and Mike Kabatay, Linda Oshawee and Sara Geyschick, personal interview, March 2014.

<sup>7</sup>Gary Smith, personal interview, March 2014.

<sup>8</sup>Ogimaagwanebiik, personal interview, February 2014.

<sup>9</sup>Jason and Gail Jones, personal interview, December 2013.



the everyday spaces in which Indigenous peoples are reclaiming their own kinship relations and forms of authority (Cornassel and Bryce 2012).

When these everyday practices of resurgence pertain to food, some community members of the Anishinaabe nation employ the term food sovereignty. Initial use of the term was incited by relatives across the geopolitical border, in what is now known as the state of Minnesota in the US.<sup>10</sup> The White Earth Land Recovery Project, for example, has organized food sovereignty initiatives that promote the protection of Indigenous seeds and plants, such as rice and corn, against genetic modification and toxic contamination from the agricultural and mining industries, in addition to hosting an annual Indigenous farming conference for the last 13 years. Environmental and food activist Winona LaDuke, who is a member of the White Earth nation, has assumed a leadership role in many of these initiatives, and has made strategic use of food sovereignty to mobilize community members and settler allies (First Voices Indigenous Radio 2006).

Over time, the language of food sovereignty has also been employed in the Treaty 3 territory. The regional governmental body, the Grand Council Treaty #3, for example, has used food sovereignty language to develop a health initiative that connects rising rates of diabetes to the dispossession and contamination of Anishinaabe lands and waterways by lumber and mining industries. Moreover, community members have organized gatherings such as the 'Indigenous Food Sovereignty Summit' held in the summer of 2016, which covered a range of topics, including threats to Anishinaabe foodways, understanding food through Anishinaabemowin, the centrality of hunting and feasting to Anishinaabe governance, the importance of protecting and sharing Indigenous seeds, relationships between food and water, and the political role of Elders and women in food practices. These working groups, initiatives and annual gatherings, however, are but a meager aspect of the everyday practices that protect and renew Anishinaabe foodways. Moreover, the concept of food sovereignty is not used by all members of the nation who are regenerating food practices, and protecting ancestral lands and waterways, nor do those who employ the term make use of it in all contexts. As Sherri Kabatay from Seine River First Nation states:

The word sovereignty came from somewhere. So then that concept originated from that (Euro-western) source, from that period of time and place. That word itself has those frameworks and conceptions. When you think about that, what happens when you start to frame everything within that term?<sup>11</sup>

As some scholars have argued, many communities that do not explicitly use the language of food sovereignty nonetheless engage in strategies that fall in line with the food sovereignty framework (Desmarais and Wittman 2014; Gupta 2015). However, as we work with these communities, particularly when we are not members of them as is the case in this instance, it is crucial that such strategies are not narrowly framed and entirely appropriated through the food sovereignty framework. Rather, it is crucial to explicitly engage community members on the utility of the food sovereignty discourse by addressing crucial interventions such as those articulated by Sherri. Without such an engagement, explorations of how community-based strategies might connect with food sovereignty discourses and activism will

<sup>10</sup>Anishinaabe kinship ties in the Treaty 3 extend into the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin, including familial relationships, political relationships cultivated through the clanship system, economic relationships reproduced through the sharing and trading of food, and legal relationships such as those that govern the protection and use of food harvesting grounds and waters.

<sup>11</sup>Sherri Kabatay, personal interview, December 2013.

necessarily be blunted and misguided. For instance, while LaDuke, mentioned earlier, makes strategic use of food sovereignty, she situates land/water-based food practices within the Anishinaabe law of *mino bimaadiziwin*, which she defines as a ‘continuous rebirth’ of Anishinaabe authority and autonomy (LaDuke 1999, 4; cf. L. Simpson 2013). Likewise, Ogiimaagwanebiik states: ‘For me, *mino bimaadiziwin* is about living the good life. It is about helping one another and respecting the Creator’s creation, mutual respect. It is about sharing [our traditional foods]. I think it is also about being thankful’ (Ogiimaagwanebiik 2013). Tracing these Indigenous political and legal principles, as expressed through Indigenous ontologies and the language itself, unpacks how important *living* and *acting* on relational responsibilities and accountabilities is to Indigenous self-determination, and that this should not be constrained to the oppressive parameters of settler colonial authorities and jurisdictions (L. Simpson 2013; Gupta 2015; Kamal et al. 2015). For this reason, I now turn my attention to the everyday practices of resurgence that give life to, and which actively renew, *mino bimaadiziwin* in Anishinaabe territory.

### **Everyday acts of resurgence in Anishinaabe territory**

As argued in the previous section, a resurgent politics is deeply embedded in acts of resistance against the inter-workings of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism, including the ways Indigenous peoples fight every day to protect food harvesting grounds and waters. For example, the erection of a 10-year roadblock by Grassy Narrows First Nation in 2002, to resist clear-cutting by the British pulp and paper company AbitibiBowater, is a necessary act of resistance against extractive industry so that local hunters, trappers, fishers and foragers can continue harvesting food. Likewise, when Anishinaabe people go deer hunting, they are engaging in the renewal of local foodways just as they are simultaneously navigating and resisting settler colonial jurisdictions. For this reason, I first turn toward the everyday forms of resistance embodied by Anishinaabe people as they seek to protect their food harvesting grounds, waters and practices.

### **Resistance**

As Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues, Indigenous resistance is oftentimes framed as either allegedly legitimate or illegitimate by the media and public discourse (Coulthard 2014). So-called legitimate forms of resistance are formal negotiations between state actors and Indigenous leadership that are, at times, accompanied by symbolic acts of peaceful protest that abide by Canada’s rule of law. Such forms of resistance, Coulthard argues, center on land claims, self-government packages, economic development initiatives and treaty agreements that are negotiated through political and legal pathways recognized by the state. Many Indigenous peoples view such political pathways, however, as a form of settler colonial subjugation, as diverse Indigenous political and legal orders have been forcefully relegated to an externally imposed system (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014). So-called illegitimate forms of resistance, on the other hand, are more consistent with Indigenous laws and political responsibilities and accountabilities to kinship relations. They are embodiments of direct action that seek to influence power in a more confrontational way, such as the 10-year roadblock embodied by Grassy Narrows First Nation. While it is the latter, Coulthard argues, that opens up the possibility for a transformative emancipatory politics, he simultaneously acknowledges that engagements with settler colonial and capitalist industry actors cannot be completely dismissed as they continue to disrupt Indigenous autonomy, and land- and water-based relations.

Coulthard's framing of resistance is useful in that it helps us understand the myriad of resistance strategies that Anishinaabe people embody on a daily basis, some of which fall more in line with what the media and public discourse frame as legitimate pathways. Specifically, many community members continue to invest an overwhelming amount of energy and time in negotiating with the Canadian state through the political body of the Grand Council Treaty #3. For example, in 2005, the grand council established the Trapper Steering Committee, which at this time was made up of 18 Elders, trappers and Treaty 3 Chiefs. The steering committee was a result of several years of negotiation between the Treaty 3, the province of Ontario (specifically the Ministry of Natural Resources, MNR), and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.<sup>12</sup> The negotiation centered on the notion that trapping issues, as argued by Anishinaabe people, should be considered a self-government matter and thus administratively controlled by the Grand Council Treaty #3 both on and off reserve, as opposed to the MNR having authority (Treaty 3 2015). The final agreement details that the MNR will continue to administer non-Indigenous trapping while the grand council will assume control over Indigenous trapping in the Treaty 3. Furthermore, the agreement outlines that Indigenous trappers should have autonomy over the management of their traplines, rather than being subjected to the MNR's quota system.

While many Anishinaabe trappers expressed that this agreement has made a difference in their day-to-day lives, with regards to the removal of the MNR's quota system, they simultaneously contend that they continue to be subjected to the disciplinary power of the state. For example, David Lindsey, a community member of the Treaty 3 and the fish and wildlife officer for the Grand Council Treaty #3, expressed concern over the never-ending bureaucratic and funding debacles that the grand council continues to struggle against. Since 2005, a lack of government funding has limited the size of the trapping committee from the original 18 members to six members who rarely meet in person to engage in face-to-face dialogues. Moreover, he explained how the agreement is on an ongoing renewable basis, which exhausts the grand council's funding and resources. While the agreement was originally on a five-year renewable basis, it has decreased to as short as one year due to conservative neoliberal leadership within the Canadian government, thus forcing the grand council to allocate a disproportionate amount of resources to continual negotiations.<sup>13</sup>

More to the point, the agreement merely delineates the day-to-day administration of trapping rather than colonial readings of the Treaty 3 agreement, and of Anishinaabe territory. The agreement does not address the fact that the Anishinaabe nation and their lands and waters continue to be subjected to settler colonial and capitalist dispossession, including how the grand council itself is a colonial administrative body. For example, trappers shared how their autonomy remains compromised as they continue to experience encroachment by settler cottagers, poachers and clear-cutting from logging companies. As Lindsey states: 'We continue to have issues with traplines being [tree] harvested by logging companies without permission'.<sup>14</sup> Ogimaagwanebiik reiterated this by reflecting on how trappers continue to struggle to build respectful relationships with MNR representatives and extractive industry:

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<sup>12</sup>In November 2015, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada became Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

<sup>13</sup>At the time of the interviews, the conservative party had a majority leadership in the Canadian parliament.

<sup>14</sup>David Lindsey, personal interview, March 2014.

We [the trapper's committee] work together well and we work hard. But, we're not being listened to. We're talking to bureaucrats in Ottawa and they don't see why it's important for someone like me to keep my trapline. Right now, we're trying to get a five-year agreement. But, what's the use of running it if it's [the trapline] getting stripped down [clear-cut by the lumber industry]?<sup>15</sup>

While the trapper committee has certainly ensured the leadership of Elders and trappers, this leadership, and thus the overall self-determination of the Anishinaabe nation, remains entangled in settler colonial institutions and legal jurisdictions. For example, while Anishinaabe people are able to apply for permission to hunt and fish in another treaty territory, their ability to do so on Crown lands, unceded territories, and their food harvesting grounds and waters which now fall within the geopolitical boundaries of the US remain entrenched in jurisdictional restrictions. Moreover, Anishinaabe people continue to be expected to seek permission from colonial governmental authorities, rather than upholding their own forms of land governance supported through their kinship structures and political processes of consensus and decision-making. For instance, women's roles in the caretaking of land and water are not upheld in negotiations with settler colonial governments. Rather, these Anishinaabe authorities are disregarded by the state, while land and water governance becomes reconfigured into colonial jurisdictions that abide solely by Canada's rule of law. As Sherri Kabatay expresses, there is limited emancipatory potential in such a politics of inclusion: 'When you try to bring it [Anishinaabe political orders] into that system, it looks like you're trying to bring it back. It has that surface level, but the depth isn't there'.<sup>16</sup>

In many other instances, community members have sought to protect their food harvesting grounds and waters by employing strategies outside of the Treaty 3 governmental body. For example, Iris and Steve Jourdain from Lac La Croix First Nation recounted how community members embodied a politics of refusal in asserting their fishing grounds, which is now divided by the Canada-US border (A. Simpson 2014). As Steve shares, the border poses geopolitical challenges for community members seeking to harvest fish on their local waterways, as they are subjected to the colonial jurisdictions of both Canada and the US: 'We're exempt from the law in Canada but not in the United States'. Iris added to this by saying:

The lake is divided down the middle, one side is the US and the other side is Canadian. So it's an imaginary line. Sometimes people veer off, sometimes without even intending to because it's their traditional fishing grounds where people have gone for generations.<sup>17</sup>

As the Jourdains recounted, border crossings by community members resulted in violent confrontations with US authorities, which they continue to struggle against in the present:

They [US authorities] were going to put patrol boats there. There were gun battles back in the 1970s and 1980s, between the First Nations and US authorities. They went all the way to the White House to end that fight. They [US border patrol] chased community members all the way into the reservation waters ... . The argument we used in Washington was that our traditional food harvesting grounds crossed the border. But they wouldn't let us cross. They wouldn't budge on that. But they allowed us to go across after the fishing season. They fly drones over here now. There are 250 of us here. And, they are going to send patrol boats over here

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<sup>15</sup>Ogimaagwanebiik, personal interview, February 2014.

<sup>16</sup>Sherri Kabatay, personal interview, December 2013.

<sup>17</sup>Steve and Iris Jourdain, personal interview, December 2013.

just for us? They're just some guys playing cowboy and Indians. But the guys here fought back and we *refused* to go to court when we were charged. This is our home territory. We didn't recognize the boundary. At different seasons we would go out on the lake. In the fall the walleyes would go on that side of the lake. And that's something we couldn't understand. To be a good provider you have to go where the fish are. (*italics mine*)<sup>18</sup>

This moment of resistance as juxtaposed to allegedly more legitimate forms of resistance is crucial. In one way, Anishinaabe people, like many other Indigenous peoples in North America, continue to negotiate with settler colonial governments, corporate industry and individual settlers (as in the case of cottagers, for example). In fact, many Knowledge Holders interviewed welcome this process if it is built on a commensurable, respectful and reciprocal relationship. This becomes increasingly difficult, however, as potential threats to land vary from one cottager to a massive influx of cottage dwellers, and from small-scale businesses (there have been a number of fishing resorts established in the Treaty 3 that community members have developed respectful relationships with) to structural issues with colonial state authorities and capitalist industry, as the power differentials and ultimate objectives of a range of external actors vary dramatically. Regardless of these variations, however, the Lac La Croix example unpacks the importance of varied resistance tactics in Anishinaabe people's efforts to claim their inherent rights to harvest and share food, and to fulfill their land- and water-based responsibilities. The direct confrontation shared by Steve and Iris confirms that, for many Anishinaabe people, their long-standing responsibilities supersede all forms of external authority, including the deliberative processes they are expected to pursue through state pathways.

Yet these forms of resistance, both within and outside of colonial governmental bodies, would not exist if Anishinaabe people were not grounded in their nation's laws and political orders. Community members working within and without state political and legal pathways, sometimes simultaneously, expressed how their commitment to resist colonial capitalist violence and to fulfill responsibilities to their human and non-human kin has been cultivated, in part, through food traditions. For this reason, many community members expressed concern over disconnections from land/water-based food practices. As Kabatay shares:

If you can't even go and sit on the land for an hour, how are you going to have it in you to protect that land? That's what I think. If you don't have that connection there, you're not going to fight for that [...] You need to accept your spirit. You need to see the world through that spirituality. That's the change that needs to happen. It's really about teaching young people to identify themselves through their Anishinaabe ways of thinking. There has to be a whole resurgence about that.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, these responsibilities to kin are not exclusively cultivated by land/water-based food practices. They are also learned, transmitted and renewed through Anishinaabemowin, storytelling, ceremonies, art and so on. At the same time, these practices are not mutually exclusive. The resurgence of food is always embedded in a nexus of cultural traditions, all of which demand lived practices that build on and collectivize political and legal orders that have been maintained throughout generations of colonial-capitalist violence (L. Simpson 2013). And so, while harvesting and sharing food may not be part of every community

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<sup>18</sup>Steve and Iris Jourdain, personal interview, December 2013.

<sup>19</sup>Sherri Kabatay, personal interview, December 2013.

member's daily resurgent practices, they remain, as do all other aspects of Anishinaabe life-ways, necessary to the nation's self-determination, to *mino bimaadiziwin*. To this end, I now turn to some of the everyday acts of resurgence unfolding in Anishinaabe territory.

### ***Resurgence***

As I have mentioned, the clanship system is central to Anishinaabe political and legal life as it once assumed a primary role in shaping Anishinaabe kinship structures and political decision-making. Al Hunter from Rainy River First Nation, a knowledgeable hunter and fisher, recounted how women assume leadership in the clanship system through their roles as Clan Mothers, or *Ogiichitakwe*, which translates to 'the ones who are burdened with peace' or 'the leaders, protectors and carriers of knowledge'.<sup>20</sup> Once decisions were reached by *Ogiichitakwe*, they were oftentimes communicated to other communities and nations through the role of men.

As Sherri Kabatay recounted, many Anishinaabe people in the Treaty 3 lost memory of their clans through generations of colonial violence.<sup>21</sup> In the 1970s, and once again in the 1980s, community members sought to revitalize the clanship system, although it was a difficult process, as many of them no longer remembered their clanship affiliations. Challenges arose as they tried to implement a clanship governance structure within the colonial band council system.

For this reason, community members decided that more time and energy needed to be redirected toward revitalizing kinship relations that make up Anishinaabe political orders, particularly those which have been most severely impacted through colonial-capitalist intervention, including relationships with non-human kin, mentoring relationships between youths, adults and Elders, relationships with women, and political and economic relationships that expand beyond the confines of reserves and the treaty territory.

While the resurgence of these kinship relationships has taken various everyday forms across Anishinaabe communities, the role of food harvesting and sharing practices has been central to this larger process of decolonization and self-determination. For example, over the last two decades, community members have revitalized the fall harvest, a pre-colonial gathering in which Anishinaabe people would prepare, process, trade and gift foods before the long arduous winters, while also renewing political and economic relationships through protocols and ceremony. Today, the fall harvest takes place over the course of three days, and while it continues to center on the renewal of kinship relations across Anishinaabe territory (and beyond, as many other Indigenous peoples attend the harvest), it has simultaneously adopted a renewed focus by rebuilding mentoring relationships between youths and adult Knowledge Holders and Elders. Specifically, the fall harvest cultivates a space in which Anishinaabe youths can learn food processing and preparation from various community leaders, as defined by their political and legal authority in the caretaking of land and waterways, and in the harvesting and sharing of food. Leadership roles at the fall harvest are primarily taken on by women and Elders, as they lead opening and closing protocols, and assume teaching roles throughout the harvest. As Gary Smith shared: 'We need to surround our children with women in the community so they can learn the teachings'.<sup>22</sup> Yet many community members shared how much more is needed to constantly renew these

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<sup>20</sup>Albert Hunter, personal interview, February 2014.

<sup>21</sup>Sherri Kabatay, personal interview, December 2013.

<sup>22</sup>Gary Smith, personal interview, March 2014.

kinship relations, and to expand them into all aspects of Anishinaabe community life. As Sherri Kabatay states: ‘The fall harvest, for some of the kids, those three days or one day, or that four or five hours, that’s the only connection that they get. What we really need is real connection’.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, Knowledge Holders throughout Anishinaabe territory are seeking to renew such kinship relations on a continual basis, and across multiple scales, whether those are communal gatherings such as the fall harvest or family outings on food harvesting grounds and waters. In doing so, many community members are committed to rupturing Eurocentric notions of the nuclear family as well as colonial territorial boundaries, particularly as they recognize the lack of mentorship that might exist across households and within a single reserve. The Jones family from Nicickousemenecaning, for example, has taken on a mentoring role by rebuilding relationships across reserve communities, the treaty boundaries and the Canadian border. Dennis Jones leads an annual summer camp for youths on his family’s food harvesting grounds. Likewise, his mother and siblings have started to organize trapping workshops for Anishinaabe people, as well as other Indigenous peoples they have built relationships with in other treaty boundaries, and the state of Minnesota. For example, in February 2014, the family hosted a trapping workshop as part of an Anishinaabemowin immersion program. Over the course of the weekend, adults learned all of the components of trapping, including dimensions of processing and preparing animals, and how to do this according to Anishinaabe laws. Ogimaagwanebiik led the workshop, and recognized that many adults who attended did not have mentors within their own families either due to a loss of memory of food practices, a rupture within familial relationships, or the loss of food harvesting grounds and waters. As Jason Jones reflected, he has witnessed and experienced the ways these decolonial kinship relations are being renewed across colonial boundaries:

Despite being divided from one community to another, we still share. I noticed it this summer with the wild rice. It has not been around like it used to be, during the last three years. But up north, they have lots of wild rice. They said ‘come on up and get some wild rice’. They still have that idea of sharing. Despite of residential schools, they still have that. I thought that was really powerful even though they don’t know me and I don’t know them. It made me feel proud that that part of being respectful and sharing is still there.<sup>24</sup>

While the fall harvest and trapping workshop are placing Anishinaabe people within their long-standing kinship relations with human kin, they are simultaneously renewing those with non-human kin. Specifically, they are reclaiming relationships with places, land and waterways, that are simultaneously inscribed with Anishinaabe authority and colonial-capitalist violence. The fall harvest, for example, reclaims a site where their ancestors once gathered for this same gathering but which is simultaneously marked by the colonial violence of St. Marguerites residential school, which many Elders attended from 1902 to 1974 in this same place. Additionally, community members from Rainy River First Nation have reclaimed an island where their ancestors lived before they were forced onto the confined spaces of reserves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The island now holds three communal cabins that can be used throughout the year while people hunt, fish, rice and forage.

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<sup>23</sup>Sherri Kabatay, personal interview, December 2013.

<sup>24</sup>Jason Jones, personal interview, February 2014.

At the most intimate scale, Knowledge Holders shared how they learned about Anishinaabe laws, local socio-ecologies and health benefits of regional plant and animal life, through their non-human kin. Many, such as Ogimaagwanebiik, expressed how this is cultivated through close observation and experiential learning, what some are increasingly calling land-based pedagogies (L. Simpson 2014; Wildcat et al. 2014):

She [grandmother] took me to where the beavers live, to the pond and the lake. She said ‘Come here and just watch how the beavers build their lodge’. And, I watched them. They got sticks from the bush, they knocked a tree down and they chewed on the bark ... And then they went down, they dove in the water, and they brought up a plant and they ate that plant. Grandma said this is what the beaver eats, what he uses to make medicine when you get sick. So when you eat the beaver, you are curing yourself.<sup>25</sup>

As Sherri Kabatay shared, these intimate relationships cultivate a recognition, respect and reciprocity with non-human kin who are sovereign kin:

When I think of food and sovereignty, they are not connected. Because, you can’t really say that you’re sovereign over your own food. It’s the plants and the animals that pity us. Our life depends on them. I can’t say my sovereignty trumps that of the animal ... And, in order for me to live I have to ask for him or her [the animals and the plants] to help me live.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have only skimmed the surface of the colonial-capitalist dispossession of Indigenous lands, waters and foodways, with the intention of centering the everyday politics of resistance and resurgence unfolding in Anishinaabe territory. Building on works such as Grey and Patel (2015), however, there remains a great deal of space to explore the diverse ways Indigenous peoples continue to be dispossessed of their food harvesting grounds and waters, either through direct removal or through environmental contamination and degradation. Given the rapid speed and scale at which capitalist extractive developments are unfolding in settler colonial contexts such as Canada and the US, more attention should be channeled toward the impacts on Indigenous foodways by mining, hydro-electric dams, hydraulic fracking, and pipelines transporting crude and refined oil. Such analyses, I argue, should interrogate the legitimacy of legal frameworks that colonial governments and capitalist industry continue to mobilize to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their food harvesting grounds and waters (Hall 2013; Preston 2013; Hoogeveen 2015; Pasternak 2014, 2015). Further, the nexus of resource extraction, water contamination and resultant impacts on Indigenous foodways remains a crucial area of analysis as a vast number of Indigenous nations are dependent on marine and freshwater food sources, as well as land-based animals and plants that are affected by rising mercury levels. The interdependent ecologies of regional waterways present a particularly crucial entry point to consider whether and how multiple Indigenous communities and nations interact with one another, and with surrounding settler communities, as they seek to protect their local waterways and animal and plant kin.

Further, while I have argued for a closer examination of the multiple political and legal authorities within Indigenous nations, clans and communities who give rise and continuity

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<sup>25</sup>Ogimaagwanebiik, personal interview, February 2014.

<sup>26</sup>Sherri Kabatay, personal interview, December 2013.



to Indigenous foodways, my analysis is nonetheless limited. I have only begun to foreground the multiple and diverse sovereign authorities within Indigenous communities, particularly those who have been systematically excluded from colonial governmental and legal spaces and, even at times, larger social movements. My hope, however, is that this will incite future work that centers the role of Indigenous women, youths, Elders, queer, trans and two-spirited peoples as these sovereign authorities are central in the caretaking of food harvesting grounds and waters, and in the regeneration of Indigenous foodways. The political and legal orders that these individuals embody means that any discussion of Indigenous food sovereignty and self-determination will necessarily be blunted without carefully attending to their knowledge and experiences. With this in mind, and given the increased interdisciplinary dialogue between food sovereignty scholarship and Indigenous studies, ongoing dialogues on Indigenous food sovereignty should draw on the critical and extensive scholarship on Indigenous resurgence and self-determination generated by Indigenous feminist and queer scholars (L. Simpson 2013; A. Simpson 2014, 2015; Hunt and Holmes 2015; Hunt 2015). My hope is that such an engagement will generate critical and reciprocal work that asks how the regeneration of Indigenous food practices refuses and ruptures the hetero-patriarchy of settler colonialism.

In another way, the everyday embodiments of resistance and resurgence unfolding in Anishinaabe territory give us insight into the ways Indigenous foodways refuse colonial territorial boundaries. In this sense, how do alternative economies of food harvesting, sharing and gifting rupture colonial constructions of space and borders, including binaries between the rural and urban, as they are simultaneously embodying alternatives to a capitalist economy? Further, how is this happening in the city, given the growing urban-based Indigenous population in North America, and that major metropolitan areas are occupying Indigenous lands? What are the distinct experiences of dispossession within urban contexts, and how do Indigenous peoples from a vast number of different nations interact with each other, and with the Indigenous laws of the lands on which they live on in such contexts?

Contested sovereignties between Indigenous peoples and settler food actors also remain a crucial area of examination (Desmarais and Wittman 2014). Building on existing literature on the internal dynamics of sovereignty and the notion of relational sovereignty, what are the points of connection that are bringing Indigenous peoples and settler food actors into dialogue, negotiation and solidarity building (Patel 2009; Schiavoni 2015)? Crucially, however, how are such connections and affinities complicated by the power asymmetries that continue to shape Indigenous-settler relations in North America, and other settler colonial contexts across the globe? How might well-intentioned settler food activists impede Indigenous efforts for land reclamation and self-determination? What do everyday practices of responsibility and accountability look like for settler food actors as they live and work on contested and occupied Indigenous lands? Further, how can relations of accountability and solidarity contend with logics of white supremacy while refusing to re-center white fragility and, simultaneously, complicate the category of settler? For example, how can radical forms of solidarity be built between Indigenous communities and other racialized communities in settler colonial contexts, to resist against white supremacy and overlapping yet distinct forms of dispossession entangled in the colonial-capitalist production of food across space?

Finally, how might food sovereignty scholarship and activism be more accountable to the Indigenous laws and political orders that are increasingly being foregrounded in analyses of Indigenous foodways? What will the movement, and its supporters, lobbyists and activists, do to be accountable to Indigenous movements for decolonization and self-determination? As reflected throughout this paper, Indigenous peoples are working every

day to embody responsibilities to their kin. Moving forward, how might such a grounded and everyday politics be truly recognized and honored by relating to and acting according to the Indigenous political and legal orders that animate the lands and waters that so many people depend on?

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