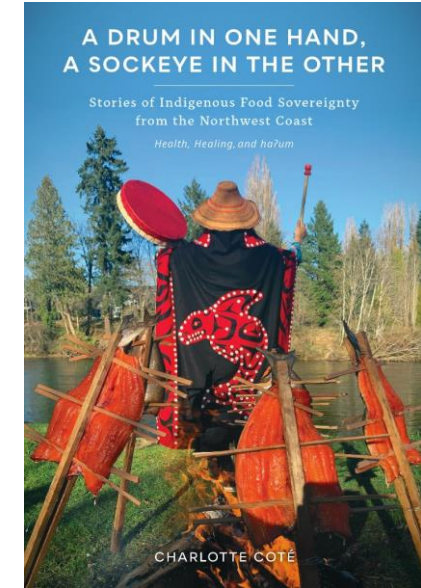


tiič̓saq̓λ

# Nurturing Pathways to Holistic Health and Community Wellbeing through Indigenous Food Sovereignty

First Nations Health Authority  
Health and Wellness Summit  
April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

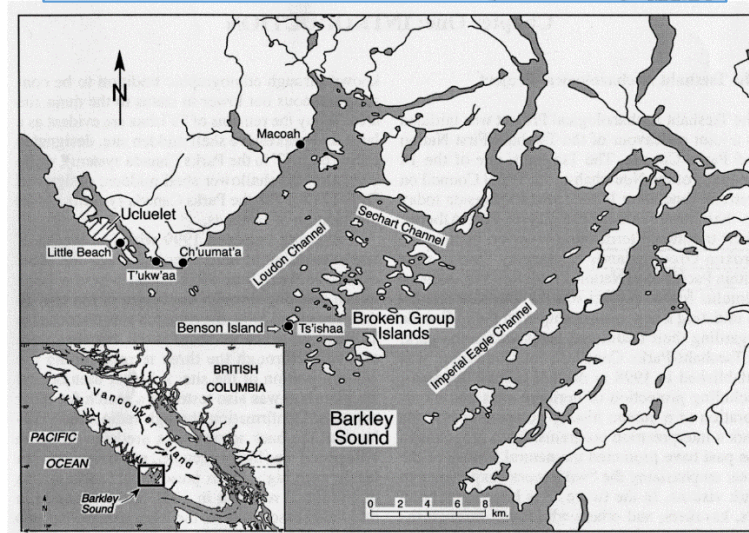
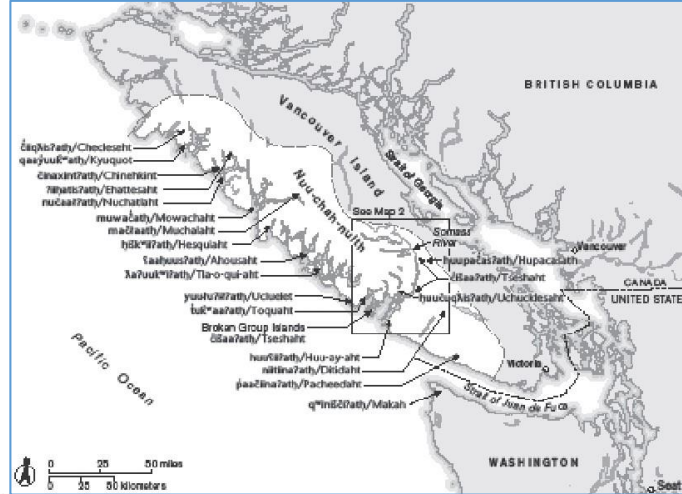
Charlotte Coté (Tseshaht/Nuu-chah-nulth)  
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University of Washington, Seattle, WA  
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# My Community ćišaaʔath (Tseshah)

[www.tseshaht.com/](http://www.tseshaht.com/)



# My Family, ʔuštaqimł

ʔuḥukwitaḥ nananiiqsu Grace ʔuuḥʔiiš  
Hughie Watts

ʔuḥukwitaḥ ʔumiiqsu Evelyn Georg

ʔuḥukwitaḥ ʔuʔwiiqsu Jack Georg



- We are one of the 14 linguistically and culturally related nations that comprise the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation.
- We were created at a place on *Ts'ishaa*, what is known today as Benson Island, one of the Broken Group Islands in Barkley Sound.
- Tseshah translates as “the people of *Ts'ishaa*.”
- *Ts'ishaa* – the place that reeks of whale remains.
- We now reside in what was our Winter village along the *ćuumaʔas*, Somass River, next to the city of Port Alberni.



# The Industrial Food System and the Rise of Global Food Insecurity

Something is broken when the food comes on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in slippery plastic, a carcass of a being whose only chance at life was a cramped cage. This is not a gift of life; it is a theft.

— ROBIN KIMMERER, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

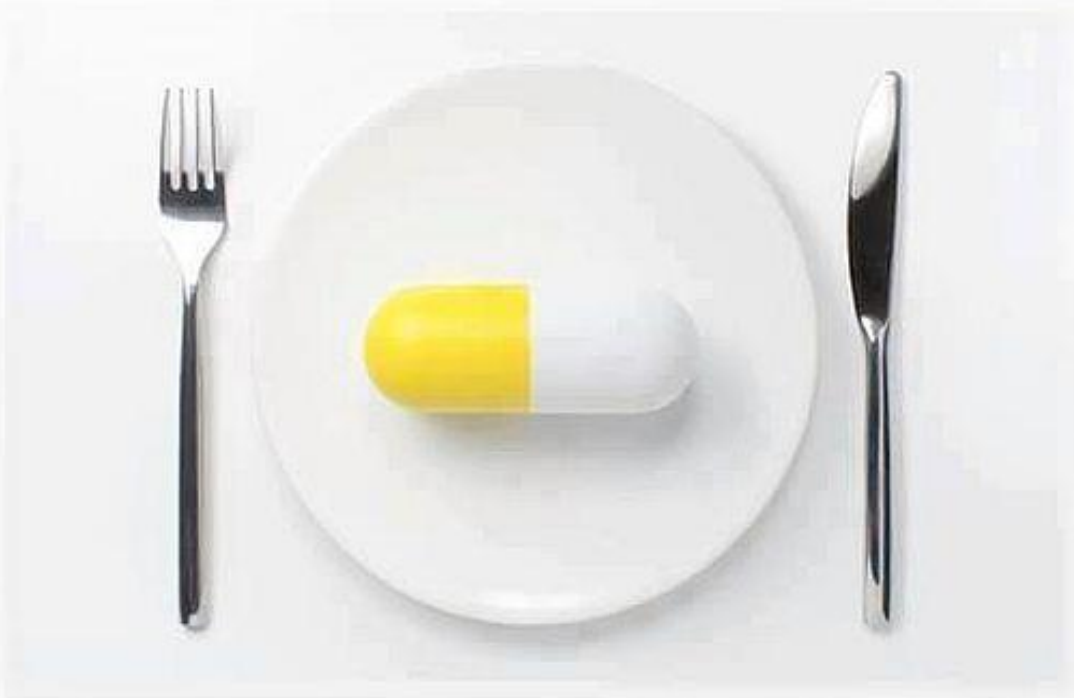


**Salt, Sugar, Fat!!!**

The industrialization of food production turned food into a commodity, supported by state neoliberal policies and globalization.



“People are fed by the Food Industry,  
which pays no attention to health,



and are treated by the Health Industry,  
which pays no attention to food.”

Wendell Berry

A 2019 study estimates that one in five deaths globally are associated with the Western diet high in salt, sugar, fat, and high levels of red and processed meats. According to the study, 11 million deaths were attributed to a poor diet, creating the highest risk factor, higher than any other

Worldwide there has been an increase in disease in the global population. The industrialization and commodification of foods globally has a direct correlation with the rise of disease, which is more specifically linked to the increase in highly processed foods and refined grains, and the use of chemicals to raise crops and



# Settler Colonialism and Food Insecurity

- The approximately 400 million Indigenous people worldwide face the most serious food insecurity because of the incessant impact of settler colonialism.
- Loss of homelands, urbanization (more than 50 percent of Indigenous people in Canada and the United States live in urban centers), a decline in traditional harvesting practices, environmental contamination, and more sedentary lifestyles caused major changes to our diets and health, resulting in food insecurity and the rise of disease.
- Changing environments, climate change, environmental contamination and degradation all impact Indigenous food security along with global market forces and colonization.





# Federal Indian Boarding Schools

Between 1867 and 1996 approx. 150,000 children attended 60 BS schools in Canada.

In Canada, it has been estimated that over 6,000 children died in these schools.

While many children died from the diseases they were exposed to, and which ran rampant in these schools, poor sanitation, overcrowding, and unhealthy and inadequate food all factored into these deaths.

Nuu-chah-nulth nation: over 5,000 children were removed from our communities and placed in eight schools throughout British Columbia.



Many of these children were put in the Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS), which opened in 1890.

# Boarding Schools and Collective Historical Trauma

Indigenous children were removed (often by force) from their families, their communities, their homelands, and their traditional foods.

“... Indigenous identity to a large extent is a collective identity, and so the experiences of the generations of children who attended these schools affected not only those students, but also resulted in collective trauma framed within a context of loss: loss of family, loss of community, loss of language, loss of culture, and most disturbing, the loss of innocence through the rampant physical, psychological, emotional, and sexual abuse that many children suffered in these institutions” (Coté, 92).

# Indigenous Food Insecurity



In these schools, Indigenous children were required to eat foods that many had never eaten before.

The children attending boarding schools faced food insecurity by being underfed and fed unhealthy foods.



# The Boarding School system's impact on Indigenous diets and health

“The children ...were fed cheap, poor-quality foods like porridge, powdered milk, hard tac biscuits, and the odd piece of fruit or glass of milk, barely enough food to stay nourished or healthy. My uncle Ben David worked in the AIRS kitchen and recalls how children would prepare good, healthy foods for the staff, but they themselves would get tasteless food or “garbage” as he called it” (Coté, 93).

The tragic legacy of the boarding system is how it had a disastrous impact on Indigenous peoples dietary as well as emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

It is not an overstatement to say that their bodies were being colonized from the inside out with Western foods supplanting their traditional foods.

There is a growing epidemic of lifestyle disease occurring among Indigenous peoples, such as type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, autoimmune disease, and obesity...while these diseases are increasing in the larger U.S. and Canadian populations, they are even more prevalent among Indigenous populations.



## Food Sovereignty definition

La Via Campesina

Nyéléni Declaration, 2007:

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.”

<http://nyeleni.org/>

<http://viacampesina.org/en/>





# Indigenous Food Sovereignty

“Indigenizing” the food sovereignty movement means moving it beyond the rights-based discourse to emphasize cultural responsibilities and relationships that Indigenous peoples have with their environment.

“Indigenous food sovereignty is defined within a restorative context to nurture individual and community health by repairing and fostering these healthy relationships” to lands, waters, plants and animals that sustain our communities and cultures” (Coté 9-10).

“The human eco-system relationship is characterized as one of reciprocity and respect where humans do not control nature but live in harmony with it” (Dawn Morrison, WGIFS).

Valerie Segrest and Elise Krohn, There is “a sense of vitality and belonging” that comes with eating the foods that provided our ancestors with optimum health and longevity (*Feeding the People, Feeding the Spirit*).

# Tseshah/Nuu-chah-nulth-aht Ecological Philosophy



ʔuʔaahuk, to take care of

ʔiisaak, to be respectful



ḥačatakma c'awaak (hišukʔiš c'awaak) everything is interconnected



# ʔuʔaakuk, to take care of

## The Tseshaht Garden Project

“Why did you want to create this garden,” I asked Gail. “We need to heal,” she answered. “The garden will help us heal” (Coté, 102).



“The following year when Gail took me for another tour, I asked her, “Do you think the land can feel pain? Do you think the land, trees, and plants saw what was happening to the children and as the children suffered, they too suffered? Gail leaned over and picked a leaf off of a huge head of kale and answered, “Yes. The land, the plants, the trees, they felt the pain too.””( Coté, 104).





?iisaak, to be respectful

- Teaching the Next Generation about Health and Wellness



ḥačatakma ćawaak (hišukʔiš ćawaak) everything is interconnected

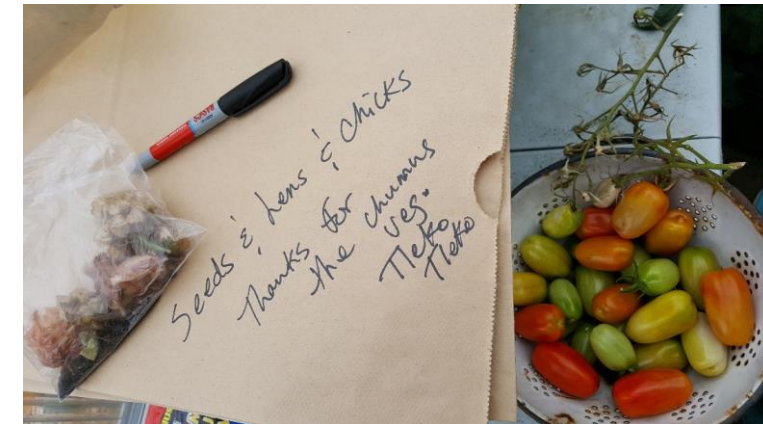
## Encouraging and Supporting Healthy Lifestyles & Community Engagement



“Food sovereignty means the right to eat, have access to, and produce your traditional foods but it also includes the right to healthy foods.

Vegetable and herb gardens may not be traditional Tseshaht food, but because of loss of or inability to access many of our traditional harvesting sites, Indigenous people have to find other ways to revitalize wellness in our communities and new ways to re-engage with and revive the relationship with our homelands.

Even though these gardens are not exclusively growing traditional foods, they are nonetheless central to decolonization. They help peel away the layers of colonialism that have shaped the Indigenous lived experience and they lead us to engage in decolonizing strategies that work toward restoring our individual and community health, which is fundamental to our self-determination efforts” (Coté, 89).



“The garden is making people work on their own personal health,” Gail says, “by tuukʷasiil, cultivating a space for community healing and wellness” (Coté, 14).



Teaching  
Nutrition  
and Family  
Food Skills



# ʔiisaak, to be respectful Family, Community, Reciprocity, Elder Knowledge Transfer

Indigenous peoples have a cultural concept of “**food as medicine**,” which promotes a holistic approach to maintaining and restoring the dietary, emotional, and spiritual health of our bodies. It also means maintaining the ecosystems that provide us with nutritious foods such as salmon.



Tseshaht Community Fish Day



Fishing and Processing  
Salmon with my Sister Gail



Smokin' Fish with aunty Marilyn

Smokin' Fish, 3:37

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T2G\\_VFpxP6KmBX1HVKpXg7PwJ7NNEAYm/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T2G_VFpxP6KmBX1HVKpXg7PwJ7NNEAYm/view)

Numerous studies now show how essential fatty acids derived from fish and sea mammal oils are important to reducing the risks of heart disease and type-2 diabetes.

Omega-3 fatty acids can also reduce inflammation, which can cause heart disease, stroke, autoimmune disorders, and certain types of cancer. Omega-3 fatty acids, along with Omega-6 fatty acids, are classified as polyunsaturated fats (PUFAs) and research has found that their consumption supports both our physical and mental health and reduces the risk of depression, dementia, psychosis, and ADHD.





Harvesting Cultural haʔumštup (foods)  
with Nitanis and Gail

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# “Health, Healing & Resilience”

## “Living Breath of wəłəbʔaltx<sup>w</sup>” Indigenous Foods Symposium

### University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

#### 11th Annual “Living Breath of wəłəbʔaltx<sup>w</sup>” Indigenous Foods Symposium

## May 5 - 6, 2023

at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington  
hosted by UW's AIS Department and Na'ah Illahee Fund

### “Health, Healing & Resilience”

This symposium brings people together to share knowledge on topics such as traditional foods, plants, and medicines; environmental and food justice; food sovereignty/security; health and wellness; and treaty rights. This event serves to foster dialogue and build collaborative networks as we, Native peoples, strive to sustain our cultural food practices and preserve our healthy relationships to the land, water, and all living things.

To register, please visit  
[tinyurl.com/LB2023Symposium](https://tinyurl.com/LB2023Symposium)  
OR scan the QR code with your camera!



Visit our website: <https://livingbreathfoodsymposium.org/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/UWLivingBreath>

## 2023 "Living Breath of wəłəbʔaltx<sup>w</sup>" Indigenous Foods Symposium

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Melissa Nelson**  
(Turtle Mountain Chippewa)

*“NOURISHING RESURGENCE: MENDING  
THE CIRCLE OF INDIGENOUS FOODS”*

Melissa K. Nelson, Ph.D. is an Indigenous ecologist and scholar-activist. She is a professor of Indigenous Sustainability at Arizona State University, and chair of the Cultural Conservancy, a Native-led indigenous rights organization she directed from 1993 to 2021. Her work is dedicated to indigenous rights and cultural revitalization, protecting biocultural heritage and Indigenous food systems, restoring land stewardship and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and renewing community health and cultural arts.



 FRIDAY, MAY 5TH, 2023

 <https://www.facebook.com/UWLivingBreath>

 Register for this event at  
[tinyurl.com/LB2023Symposium](https://tinyurl.com/LB2023Symposium)

Find more information at <https://livingbreathfoodsymposium.org/>  
or contact LB Coordinator, Tia Yazzie, at [tyazzie@uw.edu](mailto:tyazzie@uw.edu)

⋮  
λeekoo, thank you!

