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## "You can't just take a piece of land from the university and build a garden on it": A case study of the Indigenous food and medicine garden at Western University

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Geography

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## **Abstract**

Indigenization efforts at Canadian Universities are growing, yet the meanings and tensions associated with these spaces have not been well documented. This thesis draws from a case study of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada, to investigate its origins, uses and meanings. This thesis utilized an Indigenous-Guided research methodology to conduct in-depth interviews (n=17) of key stakeholders, including Garden founders and users. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and categorized using thematic analysis. Results indicated that a web of relations between all interviewees best represents the creation story of the Garden. Further, assertion of Indigenous control was the primary use of the space. However, broader institutional problems were indicated to inhibit the potential of this project. Overall, the findings of this thesis indicate that Indigenization efforts must be balanced with institutional ally-ship to produce meaningful spaces for reconciliation.

## **Keywords**

Indigenization, Self-Determination, Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Land Reclamation, Garden, University, Place

## **Dedication**

*To my late father, who inspired this journey,  
and who walked with me in spirit along the way.*

## **Acknowledgments**

This thesis could not have been produced without the enduring support, guidance, friendship, and effort from many different people here at Western University, as well as the many non-human and non-living helpers that reside in the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden and beyond. First and foremost, my heartfelt thanks go to my amazing supervisor, Chantelle Richmond, whose guidance and cheerleading remained steadfast throughout the turbulence of this journey. Her strength and dedication to change-making both academically and personally are beyond inspirational.

My sincerest thanks go to my Examination Committee for the time and thought they invested in reviewing this work. I must also extend my gratitude to the wonderful faculty, staff, and colleagues in the Department of Geography. Thank you to my professors – Peter Ashmore, Belinda Dodson, Jerry White, Katrina Moser, Dan Shrubsole, and Tony Weis – who made the transition into this discipline fulfilling, if not easy. Thank you to the amazing staff – particularly Lori, Lelanya and Maggie – whose patience and willingness to answer my questions did not go unappreciated. And thank you to my lab mates in the Indigenous Health Lab (Katie M., Katie B-C., Cindy, Elana, Vanessa, Chantal, and Veronica) for lending your ears, eyes, and thoughts to this work, and for distracting me from it as well.

Most importantly, my heartfelt appreciation goes to the students, staff and faculty that participated in this research, and to the support of the staff at Indigenous Services and those on the Garden Council. I cannot thank you enough for lending your voices and guiding this research in the hopes of transforming this institution to the best it can become.

Finally, thank you to my family – Kasper, Mom, Kat, and Gramma – for providing me with your love and care through the healing process we all embarked on simultaneous to this project. Dad: we miss you, we love you, we feel you every day, and the cardinals simply could not be ignored.

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released their Calls to Action, a document that outlined various tasks and processes across all sectors and domains of Canadian society that are necessary for reconciliatory efforts to succeed. Specific calls to post-secondary institutions encouraged the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies into curriculum and stressed the importance of efforts to confront the colonial realities and histories within education (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). This thesis examines the story of Western University's Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden; it is a case study that explores the perceptions of 17 key stakeholders who were integral to the project's creation and survival. Comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty, and staff, these stakeholders expressed the importance of Indigenous representation, acknowledgement, and ways of knowing at Western, and acknowledged the need for meaningful engagement with decolonization at the broader University level. Little research in Canada has highlighted Indigenous-focused learning spaces centered on traditional food production, particularly in the setting of a post-secondary institution. Through focus on the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden, this research will explore the social and institutional processes that can both support and constrain Indigenizing efforts.

## **1.1 Research Context**

Decolonization is a necessary step to cease on-going colonial processes that exist across bureaucracies and institutions. In her book, *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma, and Resistance in Post-secondary Education*, Sheila Cote-Meek (2014) outlines the difficult

experiences that Indigenous students and professors alike face in universities and colleges. She illustrates that postsecondary classrooms are not the safe spaces from racism that students wish them to be, and that colonial narratives are still prevalent in higher learning. Her call for change lies in the resistance to these actions and narratives, and she implores that engaging with Indigenous philosophies may assist us in thinking differently about postsecondary pedagogy (Cote-Meek, 2014).

The TRC's Calls to Action have spurred discussions of "Indigenization" of curriculum and educational spaces, such as universities and museums. These discussions have contributed to broader processes of decolonization, empowering Indigenous self-determination, and reconciling societal and systemic inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians (Pidgeon, 2016; Newhouse, 2016). In the context of the University system, Indigenization aims to "[empower] Aboriginal peoples' cultural integrity through respectful relationship through relevant policies, programs, and services" over time (Pidgeon, 2016), and universities across Canada have begun to take on the task of reconciliation through Indigenizing campuses in various ways, such as creating gardens that represent local Indigenous cultures (Simcoe et al., 2009; CBC News, 2017).

In 2012, Western's Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden was conceptualized by an Indigenous graduate student out of his desire for a campus space that would create a sense of belonging for Indigenous people at Western University. A Garden Council was formed to govern the space and continues to determine its needs to ensure its sustainability. Since its foundation, numerous users – including students, staff and faculty - have utilized the space for various purposes and gatherings.

## 1.2 Research Problem and Objectives

There is significant underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in postsecondary education in all roles, including students, professors, staff and administration (Western University Indigenous Strategic Plan, 2016). Indigenization efforts across Canadian university campuses are being applauded in the media, such as an Indigenous Garden at the University of PEI (CBC News, 2017). Yet, researchers have not made critical reflections on these projects, their meanings and their methods.

The aim of this thesis is to examine a local, post-secondary attempt at Indigenizing its educational space and to report on how it occurred. This case study aims to explore how the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden on the campus of Western University came to be, and the potential lessons its story can lend to similar Indigenization and Indigenous food sovereignty efforts in other places. Little research in Canada has highlighted Indigenous-focussed learning spaces that emphasize traditional food production, particularly in post-secondary institutional settings. Through focus on the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden, this research will explore the social and institutional process that can both support and constrain Indigenizing efforts.

The objectives of this research are:

- 1) To describe the foundation and development of the garden as a place from the perspectives of early founders.
- 2) To determine how the garden is used and for what purposes.
- 3) To examine how the uses and purposes of the garden are supported or constrained in the university context.

I draw from the IFMG to explore how universities can take steps to Indigenize the campus environment and how it is governed, and whether this place might yield benefits

for Indigenous people beyond the campus. As a means of setting the community context, a brief profile is next outlined.

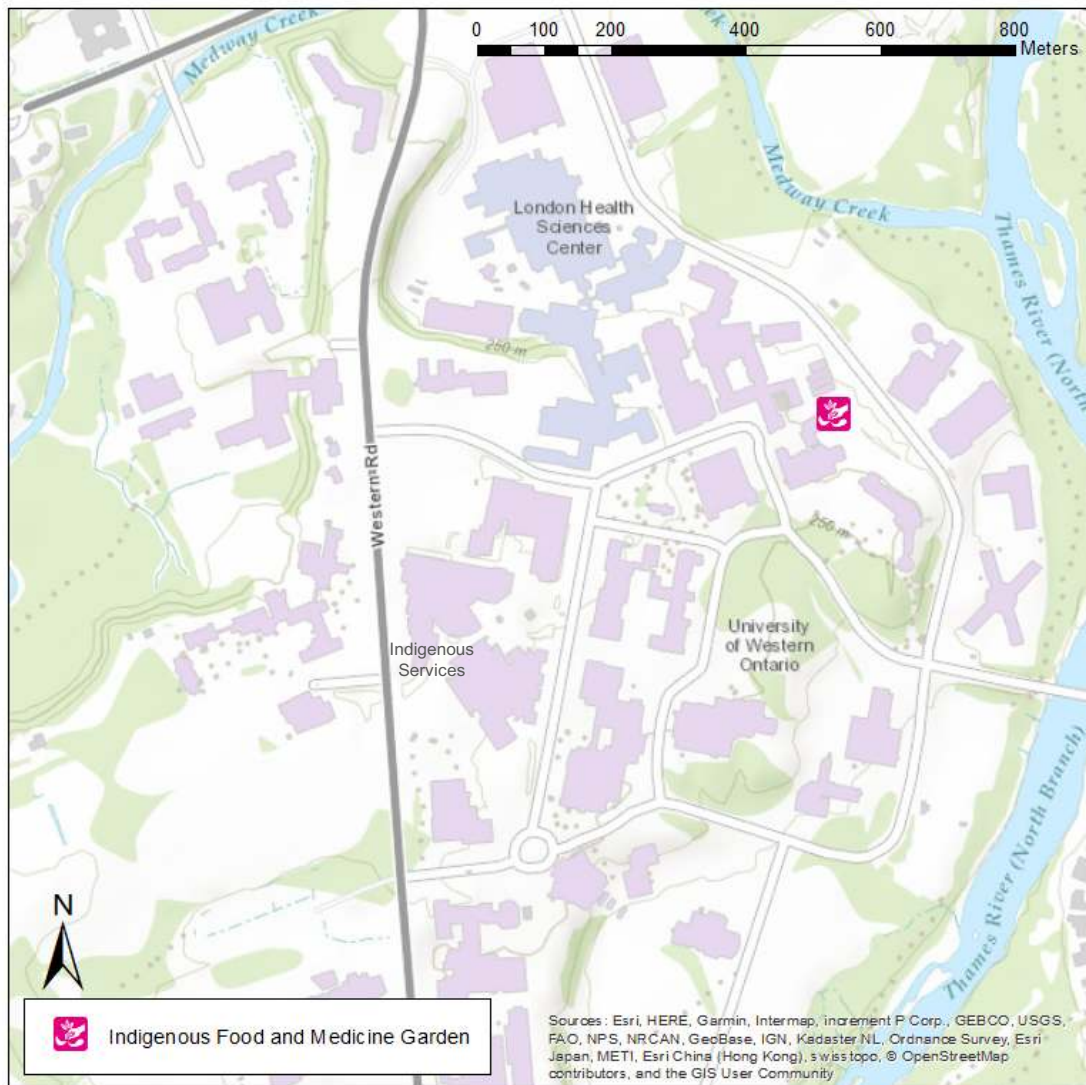
### **1.3 Community Profile**

The city of London, Ontario was first proposed as a potential provincial capital in 1793 but was not founded until 1826 (City of London, 2017). It sits on the traditional territories of the Attawonderon, the Anishnaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Lunaapeew peoples. Three reserve lands are located 40 km to the west of the city and are known as Oneida Nation of the Thames (part of the Haudenosaunee), Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (part of the Anishnaabe), and Munsee-Delaware Nation (part of the Lunaapeew). There is a growing Indigenous urban population and there are eleven First Nations communities in the region (Western University Indigenous Strategic Plan, 2016).

Western University has been a landmark of the city of London, Ontario, since 1878. It is comprised of 12 faculties and 3 affiliated university colleges that teach over 29,000 students in over 400 programs (Western University, 2017). First Nations Studies is earmarked to become its own department in the near future, offering a full degree, major, or minor degree designations to graduates (First Nations Studies, 2017). Western has seen an increase of Indigenous students in the last decade from local communities and from across Turtle Island (North America), a population that is now estimated to total around 450 First Nations, Metis, and Inuit students (Indigenous Services, 2017a). To support these students, Indigenous Services, a part of the Student Experience Administration (Western Student Experience, 2017), seeks to provide a culturally responsive space, advocacy, and services to inspire Indigenous students to realize their full potential (Indigenous Services, 2017b).

Western University has made a commitment to recognizing its Indigenous community members and improving their experience through two actions: 1) approving its first ever Indigenous Strategic Plan; 2) collaborating with the Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council (IPEC). The Indigenous Strategic Plan outlines a set of initiatives that aim to “elevate Indigenous voices and agency to engage all faculty, staff, students and communities in advancing excellence in Indigenous research, education, and campus life” (Western University Indigenous Strategic Plan, 2016). IPEC is an advisory Council to Western that consults with various aspects of the university’s long-term planning and governance, employment relations, student services and academic programming in relation with Indigenous peoples. Through each of these initiatives, Western University demonstrates its willingness to engage with the TRC’s Calls to Action at administrative levels.

As for the subject of this research, the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden has been a fixture on Western University’s campus since 2014, and was the brainchild of an Indigenous graduate student at the time. It resides behind the Biological and Geological Sciences Building, near the university greenhouses. Figure 1.1 presents a map to show the garden’s proximity to the broader campus. The distance between Indigenous Services (on the western side of campus) and the IFMG (on the north-east side of campus) is about 850 meters. The garden is approximately 165 square-metres in size, and has access to a water tap for watering needs and a nearby shed for tool storage.

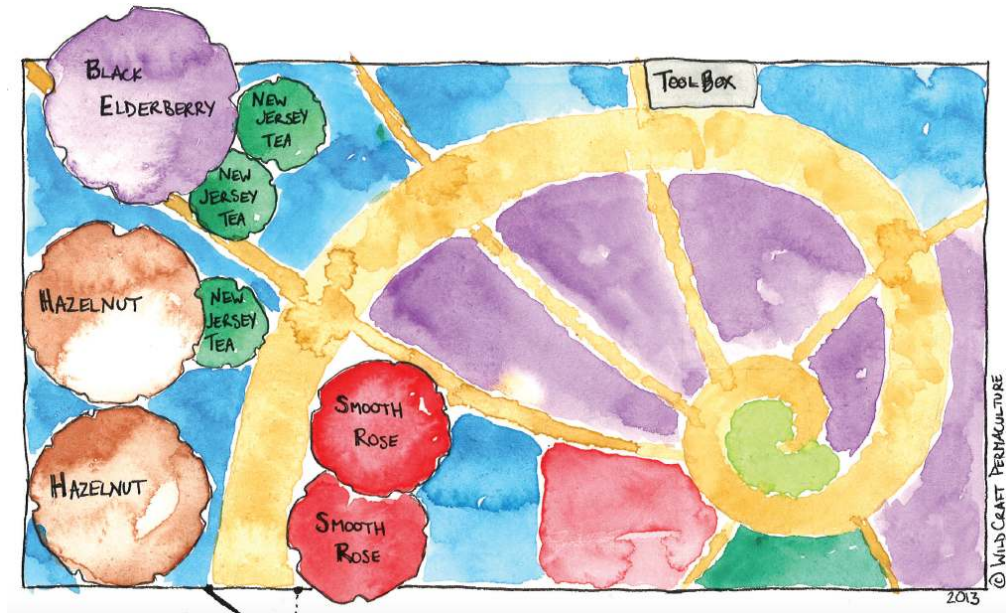


**Figure 1.1 Map of Garden on Western University Campus**

Discussions with the Garden Council revealed that the IFMG is typically active from late-May (usually after the Victoria Day long weekend) to late-August. The original layout of the garden, as presented in Figure 1.2 (Indigenous Services, 2017), is no longer maintained – although the depicted perennial plants are still in their respective locations. Due to an eventual change in leadership and the incoming perspective of difficulty to maintain this original design, the IFMG is now maintained in a grid-like pattern for ease.



Annual plants, such as tomatoes and carrots, are chosen each spring by students involved in the project and grown in different locations accordingly. Figure 1.3 depicts the early summer activity in 2017 (picture provided by the author).



**Figure 1.2 Original IFMG Layout**



**Figure 1.3 Volunteers in the IFMG 2017**

The amount of produce generated each year has never been tracked, but the Garden Council did note two informal measurements: 1) the amount of edible produce has only ever been enough to sufficiently provide for the first “Corn Soup Day” (i.e., a community meal hosted by Indigenous Services the first Wednesday of every month during the Fall and Winter terms) of the year; and, 2) the amount of tobacco grown was enough to stock the ‘Elder’s Closet’ (i.e., the storage space for gifts and offerings at Indigenous Services—available to all University members – used to present to visiting Indigenous Elders) for the year.

In sum, the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden has been a site of growing activity for the last four years on Western University’s campus. The following outline of this thesis reviews the chapter layout of this thesis and the main components each will explore to reveal the framework, methods, and findings of this case study.

## **1.4 Chapter Outlines**

This thesis is made up of five chapters. In **Chapter 2**, a literature review of the work relevant to this thesis will be provided. In this chapter, a brief overview of food geographies will be given, followed by an historical review of the ‘Indigenous foodscape’ in Canada – in the spirit of truth-telling – which aims to provide an understanding and overarching context to this study. Then, two distinct topics at which this case study finds itself at their intersection will be discussed. First, a way forward will be suggested through a review of the larger food sovereignty movement and what it can lend to efforts towards improving Indigenous food access. Second, decolonization and Indigenization will be explored as core concepts that are pertinent to shaping the framework of this research. This chapter will conclude with a review of the literature on the impacts of community gardens, and a

discussion of the increasing popularity of Indigenous gardens on Canadian University campuses.

The research methods are discussed in **Chapter 3** of this thesis. Through the case study of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden at Western University, this thesis examines the story of how this place came to be and why it is important. It used an Indigenous-guided methodology in order to conduct this research in a culturally safe manner, given my role as a Settler researcher. This chapter outlines the utility of in-depth interviews with 17 key stakeholders of the garden, the sampling strategies employed, and interviewee categorization. It will come to a close with an explanation of the thematic analysis conducted through NVivo Mac software.

The detailed results of the in-depth interviews will be provided in **Chapter 4**. The findings are structured around three overarching themes that were shaped by the objectives of this research. These themes are: 1) a web of relations exists between all respondents that represents the creation story of the garden, 2) the primary uses of the garden were grounded in actions of Indigenous control, and 3) present challenges facing the garden and suggested ways forward indicate broader institutional meanings.

To conclude, **Chapter 5** ties the thesis together with a discussion of the key findings through two distinct topics: Indigenous food sovereignty through self-determination, and Indigenization and decolonization. These discussions are portrayed in a single framework (Figure 2) which draws from the findings of this thesis to connects these concepts within a relational framework. This chapter concludes with a discussion of policy implications, research limitations and directions for future research.

## **2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Canada's Indigenous peoples are the most food insecure demographic in the country (Elliott et al., 2012), and experience the highest prevalence of food-related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and obesity (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011; Turner and Turner, 2008; Cote, 2016; Bharwa, Cook, Hanning, Wilk and Gonneville, 2015). An increasing dietary reliance of most Indigenous populations on market foods, coupled with lower than national average incomes (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2013) are the most obvious culprits for this disease prevalence, but there are underlying factors within the contemporary Indigenous foodscape that are not as easily seen. Traditional Indigenous diets were typically composed of a wide range of edible flora and fauna found or grown in the local environment through traditional hunting, gathering, and agriculture practices. They are known to be more nutritious than the Westernized diet (Damman, Eide, and Kuhnlein, 2008), which is characterized by a high consumption of refined sugars and vegetable oils, fatty domesticated meats, and salt (Cordain et al., 2005). However, while the restoration of traditional diets seems to be a resolution, it is one that is historically entrenched. That is, the necessary conditions (e.g., social, environmental) for these traditional ways of eating have been significantly incapacitated from colonial mechanisms, both past and on-going, since the arrival of Europeans.

A way forward is needed to enhance access to traditional foods and traditional or adapted ways of producing such foods within Canada's existing colonial environment. Such a way may exist through the framework of food sovereignty, which offers hope in the

spirit of cultural and environmental reclamation of Indigenous peoples. This chapter examines several bodies of literature that can provide a sufficient backdrop to the case study of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden at Western University. I begin with grounding this discussion within a geographic context. Then, in the spirit of truth-telling (Regan, 2010), I explore the history of the Indigenous foodscape transformation of traditional subsistence patterns under the mechanisms and effects of colonization, which is fundamental to understanding the contemporary food and land-related problems many Indigenous communities face. Following this, I critically analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the food sovereignty framework and discuss what it might offer contemporary Indigenous health and food problems.

Once I have unpacked the implications of Canada's colonial legacy and the contemporary food movement, I report how post-TRC efforts to decolonize and Indigenize the academy are taking place at Universities across the country. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how community garden projects with an Indigenous focus are appearing on a number of University campuses.

## **2.1 Geography and Food**

Geography is a broad discipline that considers the meanings, characteristics, uses, and relationalities of spatial environments. Two key spatial terms are employed throughout this thesis, and they are *space* and *place*. Space is an abstract concept that is understood as a social and physical landscape imbued with meaning that emerges through processes that operate over varying spatial and temporal scales (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). Conversely, place is socially constructed and operates through social interactions, institutionalized land uses, and economic and political decisions (Saar and Palang, 2009). More simply, space is

an abstract concept without fixed boundaries, whereas place is bound by socially-constructed meanings.

Food geography is a field of human geography which acknowledges the intersections of political, social, cultural, environmental, and economic geographies through the vehicle of food. It includes, but is not limited to, explorations of food consumption, accessibility, and justice, and how food engages with spatial politics, class, gender, race, culture, nature, and beyond. In many ways, this field is also about the geography of *power* because of the inequalities that exist within the production, distribution, control, and understanding of food (Essex, 2010).

A ‘food landscape’ is the terminology of scale at the community or macro level, which “considers foods within the sum of all elements in larger landscapes” (Sobal and Wansink, 2007, p.126). This term is usually shortened to ‘foodscape,’ despite attempts to contend this label (Sobal and Wansink, 2007). However, ‘food places’ or ‘foodspaces’ are more predominantly used by critical food geographers because these terms allow scholars to transcend essentialized categories (Goodman, 2015), which is particularly important when considering differing worldviews.

While the ambition of food geographers (and others in similar disciplines) is to work towards creating spaces (and places) of food security, a number of important considerations and ongoing debates are being made within the literature as to how such spaces should be produced. Despite the wide array of arguably relevant elements to this thesis, I believe two particular elements in contemporary food geography need to be explicitly discussed to expose the underpinnings of this thesis, which are neoliberalism and

race – or the influences of economic and social power distribution – in foodscapes, foodspaces and food places.

### ***2.1.1 Conventional Agriculture: The Economic Power of Food***

The implications of industrial agriculture as a result of the overarching neoliberal market economy have been well documented. Power inequities exist in both production and distribution of food worldwide, and have been created and reinforced by the market economy. Powerholders – particularly agricultural Trans-National Corporations (agro-TNCs) - have secured the most influence and control within the global food system. The use of agriculture production to provide for distant markets has been practiced since the rise of colonialism. This process has intensified in the last century (Clapp, 2015). The fundamental notions of this market are longstanding and have been expanded with little transformation. This has resulted in the reproduction of inequity

The very premise of the neoliberal market economy has been contested for some time. Specifically, as Polanyi (1944) outlined, labour, land, and money are essential elements of industry that are organized by markets, but these ‘items’ are sold through a commodity fiction:

“Labour is only another name for human activity which goes with life itself, which in its turn is not produced for sale but for entirely different reasons...land is only another name for nature, which is not produced by man; actual money, finally, is merely a token of purchasing power which, as a rule, is not produced at all, but comes into being through the mechanism of banking or state finance. None of them is produced for sale.” (p.75-76)

Bernstein (2010) expands this thought by detailing how four key questions of political economy – concerning ownership, productivity, accumulation, and distribution –

inspire consideration of the social relations that surround and reinforce these concepts, ultimately pointing to power as an essential factor and outcome.

The development of market organization within the 19<sup>th</sup> century created powerful institutions designed to check the action of the market relative to these fictitious commodities (Polanyi, 1944). Neoliberal economic policies of the 1980s and 1990s led to transnational corporate power concentration (Clapp, 2015), supported by the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture, which "set in place...multilateral rules that restricted the sovereignty of governments to establish their own agricultural policies" (Weis, 2007, p. 72). This effectively eased international food trade, which increased pressures for agricultural specialization, large-scale production, and mono-cropping, which all have directly impacted regional biodiversity and furthered environmental dispossession (Fuchs and Hoffman, 2013). From these policies, Agro-TNCs have had (and continue to have) dramatic impact on the food system with their decisions, such as the types of and methods by which food is produced, how it travels (method and distance), and how it is processed (Garnett, 2013).

As a result, this system has a number of social implications on the understandings of food production. Clapp (2015) notes a 'distancing' of agriculture, where food produced in this system is distanced from its impact on the landscape both mentally and physically. Further, it has enabled the commodification of the 'gene-scape' through biotechnology, (e.g. genetically modified organisms) and eroded the sovereignty of food producers over seeds (Kloppenborg, 2010), among other elements within the production process. But most profoundly, this neoliberal system advances an epistemic rift in the societal understanding



about how human organization is embedded in nature (Moore, 2017) by perpetuating the idea that nature is something to be controlled, owned, and used as a means to personal ends.

Alternatives to this system have been and continue to be theorized and experimented with, of which will be discussed in more detail later, but they provide hopeful postulations and examples of sites where food production is achieved in an economically-just way. While this thesis is not concerned specifically with food production, this backdrop serves to paint a broad picture of the predominant system that produces what we eat every day, and how this may implicitly shape our understandings of food and the ways it is grown. It also serves to provide further insight throughout the following section about the history of Indigenous foodscapes, and the epistemological underpinnings that contributed to environmental dispossession.

### ***2.1.2 Race in Foodspaces: The Social Power of Food***

Community foodspaces are sites that centre food, but are also spaces that facilitate and reflect networks of social relationships. Food geographers have been at the helm of recognizing the role of race – particularly whiteness – within spaces and discussions of alternative food systems. Whiteness is, “a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability is justified by their not being white” (Kivel, 1996, p. 19). Whiteness, in this sense, is a form of cultural imperialism that fuels racism.

Privilege, power and race emerge through community foodspaces and, depending on how the foodspace is produced, either reify existing inequalities or challenge them (Ramirez, 2015). In order to address cultural imperialism, *difference* must be contended with, because if it is not, the privilege of dominant groups is fortified by their ability to

establish their norms and standards (Guthman, 2014). So, in spaces that aim to serve racially-marginalized communities, such as black or indigenous people:

“local food actors must be wary of the assumption that people within the same community will necessarily have the same understandings and interests because they share the same geographic space or are involved in the same food system” (Allen, 2010, p. 301).

If actors within these spaces fail to recognize that there are alternative histories, geographies, and resulting traumas that can be experienced through food activities, power asymmetries will continue to be reproduced. As such, community food work and related literature must aim to centralize the alternative geographies of the marginalized in order to challenge the dominance of whiteness (Ramirez, 2015).

This is worthy of notice for the remainder of this thesis, as it acknowledges that the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden, as the centred food place, is one where different understandings of geography and food are expressed. The following section will detail the history of the Indigenous Foodscape in Canada, and how that context is a necessary backdrop to this case study.

## **2.2 Setting the Context: The History of the Indigenous Foodscape**

Precolonial subsistence patterns of Indigenous peoples bio-regionally varied, were self-determined and seasonally dependent, and were maintained through a rich knowledge of the environments they inhabited. The cultivation and gathering of food resources were practiced through ways of life centred around land stewardship (Turner and Turner, 2008). In general, Indigenous communities were successful in providing themselves with sufficient supplies of highly nutritious food through community food systems that varied

by geographic location, the specific flora and fauna of the environment, and specific cultural practices.

For instance, in what is now known as Southwestern Ontario the Ojibwa people lived and moved seasonally to semi-permanent dwellings along river drainages or shorelines (Ferris, 2009). Their diet was a successful mixture of hunter-gatherer and agrarian practices, with particular focus on planting corn in the summer and managing local sugar camps in the winter months (Ferris, 2009). The cultigens available to them, most of which had dispersed from other parts of the Americas over long periods of time, were adapted to local environments through generations of seed selection. This cultivation was an important aspect of their ability to generate a sufficient food supply, and their intimate knowledge of the flora and fauna was crucial to gathering and hunting success, and provided a dietary buffer to food shortages.

In contrast, Indigenous groups of the Canadian plains flourished through their practice of non-disruptive hunting of bison, which allowed them to maintain a sense of residential stability, despite a high degree of mobility, and provided them a highly nutritious diet (Daschuk, 2013). Environmental management practices that were used to ensure a reliable food supply included controlled burning of grasslands to eliminate prey and attract bison herds with new growth, as well as a seasonally variable hunting of beaver to avoid drought and ensure access to water (Daschuk, 2013).

Innovative management and subsistence practices such as these testify to the autonomy, sophistication, and ecological knowledge of pre-colonial Indigenous groups. Most importantly, traditional subsistence patterns embodied rich knowledge and understandings of the local environment and generated sufficient and nutritious food supplies. However,

these traditional ways of life were radically disrupted by European contact and colonization, as advancing European settlers moved from the east to west coasts of Canada and dispossessed Indigenous peoples of most of their traditional land bases.

The establishment of the fur trade brought the first great wave of transformation, as it began to integrate Indigenous peoples into the market economy, contributed to the devastating spread of disease, and began to transform traditional subsistence resources into commodities for sale. The fur trade can in many ways be understood as the manifestation of a European view of the so-called ‘New World’ as a land abundant with commodifiable resources, while ‘empty’ of claims to land (i.e., the lack of conceptions of private property helped legitimize dispossession). The idea of *terra nullis* (i.e., empty land) justified European assertion of sovereignty over land that was inhabited by Indigenous peoples. In this concept, lands used by non-Europeans were classified as empty in two general circumstances: 1) if the land was not utilized productively in European ways; and 2) if non-Europeans had migratory subsistence patterns (Reid, 2010). This European rationale performed as a legitimization of direct dispossession of Indigenous land, while other processes within the trade system operated in a similar, but lengthier, vein.

Exchanges were made between European and Indigenous groups through an abstract set of ostensibly shared values (Cronon, 1987). Furs were the mainstay of early European-Indigenous trade, occasionally accompanied by provisions, for which Europeans would exchange weapons and other goods. As Cronon (1987) asserts, “[the fur trade] revolutionized Indian economies less by its new technology than by its new commercialism, at once utilizing and subverting Indian trade patterns to extend European

mercantile ones” (p. 97). As the fur trade grew and became increasingly competitive, the spread of disease devastated Indigenous communities.

In the late seventeenth century, the slow pace of westward French settlement delayed the spread of Old World pathogens for a time, but the establishment of trading posts and trade relations, as well as increasing hostility and warfare between European colonists and Indigenous groups eventually contributed to the rapid advance of disease (Daschuk, 2013). Small pox was the deadliest of these ‘Old World’ illnesses carried to the Americas, and while Europeans introduced them, it was a combination of European and mixed-race middlemen and Indigenous traders who carried these diseases on their travels, and ultimately facilitated widespread epidemics among isolated and far flung Indigenous communities. As communities became weakened or annihilated, sometimes over the course of just a few years, sometimes over decades, and market relations deepened over time, trade rivalries began to intensify, contributing to new dynamics of intertribal violence in addition to warfare between Indigenous peoples and European traders and settlers. One important aspect of this was the decimation of the beaver in the east, which encouraged movement of both Canadian and Indigenous traders westwards and facilitated further cycles of disease and violence.

Intensifying competition both reflected and contributed to an ideological shift of key Indigenous participants in the fur trade. In many circumstances, Indigenous views of the natural resources from which they subsisted began to shift from an “as needed” basis to an accumulative one (Cronon, 1987), with trade participation motivated by the greater value being placed on certain goods (e.g. weapons, guns, certain tools). Consequently, disruptive hunting – that is, far beyond subsistence needs – proceeded to transform territories and

resource accessibility for many Indigenous groups, problems that were greatly intensified as European settlement, forest clearance for agriculture, and formal appropriations of land began to accelerate and the process of treaty agreements emerged.

At the close of the eighteenth century, European colonization commenced what can be seen as a second wave of transformation across Canada, radically altering the place and being of First Nations. Several treaties were developed in the east from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, but the majority of them were created from 1850 onwards and accelerating after Confederation in 1867 (Daschuk, 2013), especially for lands westward and northward of Ontario. Treaties were acknowledged, in reference to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, as agreements between sovereigns (i.e., the Crown and an Indigenous community) over the official transfer of land to the Crown in exchange for agricultural supplies and the promise of relief during famine or epidemic (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). However, once these treaties were made, the government began and continued to take leave of its obligations. In effect, treaties that were often enforced among Indigenous leaders, acted to formally dispossess the land from its Indigenous inhabitants. Simultaneous to this dispossession, First Peoples were relocated to semi-exclusive land holdings called reserves that were vastly smaller than their traditional lands, and were often of inferior land quality (Matties, 2016). The fact that treaty agreements were not made under full disclosure, nor made with considerable foresight, is now well-established, as many First Nations were deceived in their agreement – under the false impression that they were discussing a shared concept of land, like the Ojibwa of Southwestern Ontario (Fehr, 2008). In other treaties further west, the First Nations of the plains were promised inclusion in the Canadian social safety net: however, the dawning of

famine among these peoples were met with a lack of resources from the Crown, if not a lack of will (Daschuk, 2013).

The creation and enforcement of the 1876 Indian Act gave the federal government the legal capacity and right to intervene in all aspects of First Nations' lives, which forcefully transferred land and heightened the control over Indigenous behaviour (Frideres, Kalbach, and Kalbach, 2004). The reserve lands were not only much smaller than traditional territories, but tended to be of poor agricultural quality, with limited natural resources to be utilized, and isolated from main settlements, all of which effectively hindered the ability of First Nations peoples to sustain their traditional hunting and gathering practices (Frideres et al., 2004; Cronon, 1987). Dependence on the European colonial system eventually became overwhelming/near complete (and by 'dependence' I wish to assert its meaning as a very powerful *economic reliance*, but not a complete loss of all social and political autonomy) (Ferris, 2009). In the plains and elsewhere, this dependence manifested as reserve farming, which was enforced through government policies of foodway regulation (Carter, 1990). Yet, while First Nations were compelled into these dependent relations, discriminatory policy inhibited their participation in the greater, European-dominated agricultural economy – one in which some of their traditional skillsets would have been relevant – and segregated them, a division that only deepened as industrialization and modernization later unfolded across Canada (Frideres et al., 2004).

Another crucial and devastating aspect of this dependency was enforced cultural assimilation, which was pursued through various policy initiatives, most infamously a government-designed and endorsed education system. Residential schools began to emerge in the 1840s and existed for more than one hundred years after (Truth and Reconciliation

Commission of Canada, 2015b). It was a church-run, government-funded system that was designed to remove parental and community involvement of Indigenous children's education and development, and effectively "kill the Indian in the child" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b). This education system would reach every First Nations community of Canada, from instances where profound dispossession and dependency had already been established to cases where acculturation was only at its beginning stages.

Residential schools damaged the relationship between food and the students. Indigenous children were forced to eat foods that many had never eaten before, such as cheese, domesticated meats, wheat flour, and sugar. While some schools did serve traditional foods, they were not prepared properly or in a palatable manner (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). In some cases, students were forced to eat their own vomit if they could not stomach the food they were served. Across the country, the food supplied was reported by external health professionals time and again to be insufficient for students' nutritional requirements (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). There were many schools that also forced children to participate in physically hard agricultural labour to produce food they never ate themselves. These children were therefore fundamentally estranged from their own traditional and healthy diets (Cote, 2016), at the same time as Indigenous ways of life were being taught as being inferior and wrong (Turner and Turner, 2008).

Government-sanctioned nutrition experiments took place between 1942 and 1952 in these schools, conducted on the schools' malnourished students through methods of starvation and extreme rationing (Mosby, 2013). These experiments were based upon the



common misconception that poverty, social dysfunction, high mortality rates, and serious health issues were highly prevalent in the Indigenous population because of flawed traits in their inferior cultures (Cote, 2016). The researchers of these experiments identified that the levels of malnutrition among Indigenous peoples correlated to their increasing dependence on highly processed market foods. These were marked by an appalling contradiction: while the researchers knew that the foods in the traditional diets of their subjects were nutritionally superior to the market foods, the dietitians conducting these studies believed the solution to their malnutrition was through a healthy Western diet comprised of foods like fruit, milk and cheese (Mosby, 2013; Cote, 2016). Since the last school closed in 1996, countless forms and accounts of physical, mental, and emotional abuses have been reported, to an extent that residential schools should be understood as attempt at cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b.).

Ultimately, the gradual change over several hundred years from traditional ways of living to drastically reduced territories and well-entrenched dependence on the Canadian state has created the high levels of health and social problems found in Indigenous communities today. In sum, it is impossible to understand contemporary inequalities without an understanding of the historical legacy of colonialism, including the dynamics of the integration into the wage economy beginning with the fur trade, land dispossession through treaty agreements, and European views of their own racial superiority, paired with assimilation techniques.

The colonial legacy continues to have a direct impact on the livelihoods of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people through on-going environmental dispossession, which interferes with their access to land and the resources of their traditional environments

(Richmond and Ross, 2009). This dispossession has directly had an impact on the availability, safety, and access of traditional foods, and has eroded the relationships between Indigenous peoples and their local environments (Organ et al., 2014). This historical lens on contemporary problems begs the question: is there a way to effectively transform these unequal conditions and redeem Indigenous health and experiences in the face of such deeply-rooted problems? An emerging literature on traditional food systems and the broader Indigenous food movement is pointing to a promising way forward (Neufeld & Richmond, 2017).

### **2.3 A Potential Way Forward: Food Sovereignty**

While the origins of “food sovereignty” are contested (Edelman et al., 2014), it has become a pivotal concept in a growing global movement encapsulating diverse and locally-embedded missions, which ultimately seek to exert community-driven control over food production and distribution. As McMichael (2010, p. 173) summarizes, “[the movement] reframes the agrarian question: namely, under what conditions can food systems respect small producers, environmentalists, ecological knowledges and cuisines?”

Food sovereignty advocates champion the interests of marginalized land workers, small farmers, and Indigenous peoples through articulating the need to *view food as more than a commodity*, and demand that the political rights of the production and distribution of food be returned to consumers and producers (Cote, 2016; emphasis added). They also call for the need to place greater value on culture, biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and other elements that are central to building sustainable and equitable food systems, which are not measured in the dominant system (Fairburn, 2010).

Food sovereignty is a framework that is assumed to effectively function as an umbrella-like concept, over which it essentially applies to a number of different contexts, their meanings, and missions. While some are drawn to this optimism, some dilemmas and contradictions can arise when too many ways forward are advocated through food sovereignty, such as agroecology and land democracy, but the adoption of selective combinations of ways forward are seen more commonly than the use of them all (Borras and Franco, 2012). This leads to a differentiation in how movements around the world articulate food sovereignty demands. While Desmarais and Wittman (2014) accept this differentiation as an essential component of the broader movement, Edelman et al. (2014) are concerned that the acceptance of pluralism may be problematic down the road.

Patel (2009) identifies the struggle for food sovereignty as an example of “big tent” politics, where diverse groups agglomerate under one broad cause, with one broad oppositional target, and a sometimes aligning, sometimes diverging set of aspirations. And while he concurs with others who say this is a strength of the movement, he points to a number of inconsistencies in food sovereignty’s definitions. Although part of the politics of food sovereignty has been to avoid rigid definitions, and rigid prescriptions, Patel and others argue that a number of considerations need to be made moving forward to ensure that it is not merely a romantic vision too diverse and unrealistically inclusive that results in negating the missions of its frontline proponents.

In particular the complexities of social classes and inter-class tensions within various movements advocating food sovereignty is something that cannot be glossed over in the struggles to articulate and build alternatives. Power in numbers to dismantle a system is one hopeful part of this struggle, but what alternative system(s) will replace the fall of the

larger one? Ultimately, the fight for “sovereignty” over food systems is deserving of some more than others, and while it may have more meaning to certain struggles, there are particular groups that this cause could serve well, including Canada’s Indigenous peoples.

### ***2.3.1 Refining the Solution: Indigenous Food Sovereignty***

As indicated earlier, there are serious health disparities between Indigenous people and the Canadian population, and these have been well documented over the past few decades. Some key findings have been discovered in relation to Indigenous wellbeing: land access, traditional knowledge and skill revitalization, and self-determination have been identified as significant determinants of Indigenous health (Richmond and Ross, 2009), and colonial dispossession and government jurisdiction that have impaired or destroyed these determinants are at the root of these inequalities. Dispossession has continually been identified as a negative impact on Indigenous wellbeing. As King, Smith, and Gracey (2009) put it, “dispossessed Indigenous peoples have lost their primary reason for being.”

Indigenous peoples and their ways of life have been heavily researched globally. Yet, despite this extensive inquiry, it has not translated into sufficient economic, land use, and policy changes capable of significantly improving livelihoods (Bainbridge et al., 2015). Academics are beginning to point to the self-determination of Indigenous participants as the missing component of the research process, wherein Indigenous peoples develop their own solutions instead of those provided for or imposed on them (King et al., 2009; Louis, 2007). From this, the spirit of repossessing the environment in which Indigenous peoples are situated (Big-Canoe and Richmond, 2014), and decolonizing the components responsible for Indigenous oppression (Smith, 1999), have together been on the rise. In many ways, a food sovereignty framework offers the most guidance to Indigenous self-

determination and autonomy within dominating food systems, among the ideas for change put forward by food movements (Holt-Giménez and Wang, 2011). However, in order to fit an Indigenous context, two key aspects of the food sovereignty framework need to be reconceptualised.

The first component is the view of food. The meaning of food within Indigenous cosmologies is a broader, deeper, and complex one that would therefore distinguish the overall mission and actions defined by the framework. Indigenous cosmologies view landscapes and foodscapes as concepts that equally and simultaneously occupy spiritual, social, and physical geography. The relationships between Indigenous peoples and their homelands manifest as food, which is a central component of traditional thought (Grey and Patel, 2015). By enriching the view of food with traditional knowledge, the demands of actions for change are further refined and selective for their appropriateness. Indigenous contexts therefore require the local, traditional paradigm of food to enrich and/or transform the general framework of food sovereignty into one that meaningfully engages and represents the local context in a broader problem.

The second component is that of sovereignty. There has been debate among the greater food sovereignty movement about what this really means in an administrative context (Edelman et al., 2014): Who is sovereign, and how does that sovereignty fit in the alternative? This is an important question for all proponents of the framework to contemplate while evaluating the purpose of their local mission. Some contexts may not be able to take on the responsibility of sovereignty, and others may realize that sovereignty is not what is needed. In the case of many of Canada's Indigenous communities, this component has the potential to align with aspirations of self-determination and Indigenous

governance. But, as with food, traditional knowledge and Indigenous ways of governance will need to inform and reshape this concept.

Indigenous philosophies are grounded in the awareness that the environment and humans are intricately bound in relationships of respect, reciprocity and responsibility (Cote, 2016). Barker (2005) contends that it becomes problematic when Indigenous epistemologies about governance and law are translated into the Western-European view of sovereignty, which she views as discursive. However, Simpson (2010) asserts that ‘sovereignty’ has a universal understanding, and that there are some important gains to recognizing it as a concept within an Indigenous context due to its paradoxical precariousness and firmness. That is, to leave this term as one that is not firmly defined through an authoritative definition could allow for Indigenous communities to use it for the change they desire (Kirwan, 2015). Therefore, within the environment of academia, it may be beneficial to seize the concept of food sovereignty to describe a specific action and “indigenize” it.

A framework for Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS) has been suggested. In 2006, the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty outlined four critical components: 1) Sacred sovereignty: food is known to be a sacred gift from the Creator, and in this respect, food cannot be determined by colonial laws, policies, or institutions; 2) Participation: the framework is determined by the everyday action of nurturing healthy relationships with all that is in the environment; 3) Self-Determination: the ability of Indigenous peoples to respond to their own needs for culturally appropriate and healthy foods; 4) Policy: Indigenous food sovereignty aims to reconcile its values with colonial laws and economic

activities through policy reform in environmental, agriculture and social sectors (Morrison, 2011).

IFS has also been suggested as a concept able to identify the cultural, social and economic relationships that lie within inter-community food sharing and trading as a means to achieve Indigenous health and well-being (Desmarais and Wittman, 2014). It is described within a restorative context that works to nurture the health of individuals and communities by mending and promoting these healthy relationships (Cote, 2016). In sum, IFS extends the lens and meaning of food to realize its interconnectedness and relationality to the natural and spirit worlds, and to recognize food as a vehicle that promotes social and cultural revitalization and cohesion.

Despite the debate among Indigenous academics, some communities have adopted the concept to help articulate demands and advance their movements. One such project was documented as an academic case study: The *Ithinto Mechisowin* Program, which means ‘food from the land’ in Cree, was developed as a PhD project for the *O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation* in Northern Manitoba. Community members decided the program’s establishment and prioritized its support towards community members with the least access to cultural food. The project was created in 3 phases: first, the committee for the program was formed to discuss the needs of the program; second, the community focused on the local outreach and funding applications to support the program; and finally, a facility was set up for wild food and medicine storage. The program also had a strong educational component in its mission, which formed a partnership with the community’s school to teach and involve youth in the program. The community believed that teaching food knowledge through both traditional and Western teaching methods was an important form

of decolonization. Finally, for the purpose of defining the program's mission within an Indigenous food sovereignty framework, the community defined sovereignty to mean "a relationship with [natural] entities (land, water, and wildlife) that allows for the mutual benefit of all parties" (Kamal, Linklater, Thompson, Dipple, & Ithinto Mechisowin Committee, 2015, p. 571).

IFS, while still in its infancy, has been useful and meaningful to Indigenous communities that have practiced it. It orients the broader food sovereignty movement's aspirations of localized control over food production within traditional knowledge systems and worldviews, and theoretically aligns with Indigenous political struggles surrounding self-determination. However, discussions of land are lacking or absent from this discourse. In essence, it assumes that IFS is bound to traditional territories, if not reserve lands, when in fact it should be able to occur outside of these boundaries. More accounts and stories of Indigenous food sovereignty in praxis are needed and are lacking in order to inspire some and inform others in the manifestations of decolonizing and indigenizing projects.

#### **2.4 Post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Decolonization and Indigenization of the Academy**

Decolonization has been a pillar of Indigenous movements and academic thought for several decades. As "a process that engages with imperialism and colonialism on multiple levels," it manifests against these oppressive forces within existing bureaucracies, culture, languages, and psychologies (Smith, 1999, p. 20). It requires action that resists colonization and transforms personal and political histories, revalues Indigenous knowledge, and co-creates new possibilities through equitable interactions (Ritenburg et al., 2014). At a



personal level, Canadian citizens should work towards decolonizing their own assumptions, identities, histories, and worldviews as they relate to their understanding of nationhood in relation to indigenous peoples. At an institutional level, a number of disciplinary and institutional leaders have attempted to reflect upon and incorporate decolonization in their work and missions with the understanding that it is an essential part of a socially just way forward for Indigenous livelihoods.

Particularly within the academy, decolonization has been posited and exemplified in key areas of post-secondary institutions. As the research process is a central aspect of knowledge creation, it makes sense for decolonization to begin here. A primary aim of decolonization within Indigenous research in Canada, for example, is to recognize the importance and value of Indigenous ways of knowing while creating a space where Indigenous participants are involved in the research process (Bartlett et al., 2007).

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) and OCAP principles are examples of a decolonizing methodology. CBPR requires meaningful research partnerships between Indigenous communities and researchers who aspire to build non-hierarchical relationships between participants, with Indigenous communities at the centre and recognized as the driving influence of the research design (Bartlett et al., 2007; Big-Canoe and Richmond, 2014). Another important guideline for non-Indigenous researchers, which complements the Participatory Action Research approach, is to strive to share the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) of the research process with Indigenous participants (Schnarch, 2004).

More recently, university education departments have called for decolonization of education systems and curriculum. As Aquash (2013) states, “Because education was

central to the process of colonization, it makes sense that decolonization efforts naturally can also be addressed through education” (p. 131). To decolonize the academy, understanding and unpacking of Eurocentric and marginalizing assumptions need to happen through multilateral processes, while simultaneously centering Indigenous knowledge within the institution (Battiste et al., 2002). This goal has manifested as a movement of Indigenization, which calls for meaningful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge(s) at all levels of the academy while empowering Indigenous people’s cultural integrity (Pidgeon, 2016). It is a movement that aims to reclaim spaces of education and centralizes Indigenous academics and Indigenous community knowledge(s) (Fitz-Maurice, 2011).

Since the release of the TRC’s Calls to Action in 2015 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a), universities across Canada have responded, some more directly than others. Universities Canada, the umbrella group of the country’s 97 universities, released a set of principles to which the broader academy as a whole have adopted that aim “to create space for Indigenous knowledge and dissemination practices within their institutions” (Universities Canada, 2015). Over the few years since, numerous reports of existing and newly-begun post-secondary Indigenization efforts have been released. One of the most distinguished actions was that of Lakehead University and the University of Winnipeg in their implementation of a mandatory Indigenous Studies course for every program each institution offers (Macdonald, 2015). However, a simple search for reconciliation projects on any of Canada’s universities webpages will take you to a list of ongoing projects or plans to which the institution has committed (see University of British Columbia, 2017; Dalhousie University, 2017; University of Waterloo, 2017).

While these actions – and others - towards systemic change continue to be worthwhile, some Indigenous academics have identified an inextricable aspect of a truly decolonizing process that continues to go unaddressed: land (Alfred, 2005; Simpson, 2008). As Tuck and Yang (2012) boldly assert, while there is power in critical teaching and learning of settler colonialism, “until stolen land is relinquished, critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism” (p. 19). That is, in order for the Canadian consciousness to understand and enact decolonization, the control of traditional lands – particularly those that are contested through land claims – needs to be returned to Indigenous communities. If decolonization is about destroying racist assumptions and correcting historical imaginaries, how can Canada achieve this without surrendering possession of the most power-embedded resource in this country’s boundaries – particularly when the processes by which much of this land was secured was violent and unjust? (See Section 2.2 of this chapter)

However, the ‘relinquishing of stolen land’ does not always necessarily translate into transference of ownership. Reclaiming traditional territories can also mean utilizing traditional spaces to practice and revitalize cultural knowledge (Simpson, 2014; Powter, Doornbos, and Naeth, 2015). To expand on this, I turn to the concept of environmental repossession. Big-Canoe and Richmond (2014) describe environmental repossession as the political, social, and cultural processes by which Indigenous peoples reclaim their traditional lands and ways of life. While decolonization is also a process working towards the same goals, environmental repossession offers many pathways to achieving them that transcend place and can operate within spaces both physical and non-physical (e.g., cyberspace). An example of environmental repossession within a foodspace is community

food sharing among urban Indigenous women, who mitigate their limited access to traditional foods by enacting community food sharing of such food when it's acquired (Neufeld and Richmond, 2017).

Dispossession of land, and its resulting inaccessibility, is the core wound inflicted by colonization (Simpson, 2016); therefore, the academy needs to consider efforts grounded in decolonization that also work towards reclaiming traditional territories through appropriate forms of ownership or assisting in securing space where traditional livelihoods can be practiced freely. Moving towards land-based pedagogy (Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, and Coulthard, 2014) and evaluating the utilization of campus grounds as onsite outdoor classrooms may be a way forward to address the existing limits of decolonization and simultaneously achieve the goals of environmental repossession.

## **2.5 Community Gardens**

Community gardens have become a popular strategy for increasing community awareness, engagement, and local action in recent years. They are common fixtures in many neighbourhoods all over the world, driven by the needs and ambitions of local actors (Neo & Chau, 2017; Wozniak, Bellah, and Riley., 2016; Van Holstein, 2017), and are sites that ground grassroots networks into place and bring people together to build a healthy community (Lanier, Schumacher, and Calvert., 2015).

Community gardens are of particular relevance to geographic research because they are convenient sites to investigate the complex intersection of nature and society (Neo & Chau, 2017). Ghose and Pettygrove (2014) summarize that community garden stakeholders claim rights to space, transform space to meet their needs and interests, participate in decision-making activities, and express collective identities within community garden

sites. And as Walter (2013) revealed, while community garden spaces have a history of reproducing dominant state ideologies such as assimilation, their mission has since the 1970s changed to, “function as a pedagogical site to support the lifeworld against the colonizing efforts of the system” (p. 531).

Social organization is necessary for community gardens in order to allocate resources and labour in a means that leads to a successful, sustainable garden. In other words, they are sites that build social capital. Simply put, social capital is the umbrella term for social structures and interactions that facilitate or interfere with the pursuit of a specific goal, all of which are thematically and geographically significant (Parsons, 2015). Social capital investments are necessary to build healthy and sustainable communities (Lanier et al., 2015). How social capital is built through the organization of stakeholders and garden governance has implications for a garden’s ultimate success and sustainability. Ideally, the dynamics of the group facilitating the space should be cooperative in nature, as supported by the types and strengths of relationships between stakeholders.

Neo and Chau (2017) found that gardens are both inclusive and exclusive spaces in relation to the responsibilities of the gardeners, and the focus of those responsibilities (garden-centric vs. community-centric). They state that by asking how the responsibility of the garden is distributed, power relations reveal themselves within the responsabilization processes (i.e., processes that distribute responsibility among stakeholders) of the space. Their finding does not correlate inclusive/exclusive with positive/negative spaces or experiences within these spaces, but rather gives insight into how the responsibilities of stakeholders reflect social organization.

Within their sites, community gardens facilitate and root a number of beneficial social purposes, such as networks, relationships, and belonging. These sights have been demonstrated to create networks and friendships between diverse individuals who otherwise would not be connected, otherwise noting that the role of ‘place’ is relevant in generating social capital (Kingsley and Townsend, 2006). How the garden is envisioned and created is also a significant precursor to the types of relationships and social connections that are facilitated within it, as well as the kinds of experiences and mediations of meanings within them (Hurtz, 2001). That is, the perceptions of and experiences within a community garden depends on the mission at the outset of the place’s creation. Furthermore, community gardens can be ‘home-like’ places for marginalized populations that function as places of belonging, “where people seek to transform the physical surroundings in ways that they find agreeable, and that will support daily utilitarian purposes of social reproduction and restoration” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p.15).

The literature concerning the social contributions of community gardens is extensive, and this section has only briefly reviewed some of the benefits that these spaces – and places – can serve to the individuals that use them. The popularity of these sites continue to grow and transform, and one such environment in which they are emerging is Canadian Universities.

## **2.6 Indigenous Gardens as Academic Initiatives**

Community gardens are becoming increasingly popular on University campuses. More interestingly, a number of these gardens are taking an Indigenized identity and purpose. Indigenous gardens on university campuses are taken care of by various people and groups, but can be generally categorized under two broad scopes: 1) an authority within the

University operates some gardens; and 2) affiliated communities determine other gardens. In other words, these gardens are either operated by a group internal to the University, or are determined by an external community affiliated with the University.

The University of British Columbia's 'UBC Farm' houses three Indigenous initiatives: the Tu'wusht Garden, the Tal A'xin Maya Garden, and the xwcicusum: Indigenous Health Research & Education Garden. Each of these gardens functions distinctly according to who is responsible for the space and how it is used in relation to its cultural teachings. The first two are culturally focussed and are under the jurisdiction of a community-led group that is affiliated with the university, while the Faculty of Land and Food Systems operates the latter garden (University of British Columbia, 2017). While they all have an educational component to their individual programming, each garden has a different organizational model to manage it.

Several other Canadian universities have Indigenous gardens that a Faculty or administrative body is responsible for. The University of Prince Edward Island, for instance, has an Indigenous garden that is sustained as a collaborative project by four of their Faculties: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Education, and School of Nursing. The Sister's Teaching and Knowledge Garden aims to centre Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies in its space, while facilitating inclusive programming that supports its Indigenous students and increases Indigenous ways of learning across campus (University of Prince Edward Island, 2017). This is similar to the University of Alberta's Indigenous Teaching Gardens, run by their Faculty of Education. The purpose of the space is to feature native plant species, (re)connect students to outdoor learning, and create community within the faculty and within the broader university (Illuminate, 2012).

While there is a notable popularity of Indigenous or Indigenized garden spaces on campuses across Canada (Wilfred Laurier University, 2016; University of Toronto, 2017; University of New Brunswick, 2017), there is a lack of discussion on university websites and in academic literature that indicates the meaning of these spaces, the stories of how they came about, and what these gardens are contributing/transforming within the academy. This is an important area to consider to evaluate the merit of post-TRC initiatives in universities, to help shape future programs and policies as a result of such evaluations.

In summary, this thesis is unique in that it seeks to investigate these themes and reveal such findings. Given that the theoretical and practical expressions of Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Indigenization and decolonization all require the consideration of land, the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden provides an ideal site through which this literature gap can be remediated. This thesis is theoretically situated within food sovereignty and decolonization literature that inspires meaningful, self-determining change in local proximities by Indigenous peoples, which then shapes broader systemic meanings. A qualitative methodology further enhances the meaning of this research by seeking the stories and perceptions of those who are directly involved in creating and using such spaces through the method of interviews.



### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research utilized an Indigenous-guided methodology, framed by qualitative methods, to explore the story, uses and meanings of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed as the data collection method because of its both flexible and partially standardized design. This chapter discusses the methodological framework and methods used to achieve data collection and analysis. It is structured around five sections, which include the research design, participant selection and recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and plans for research dissemination to the interviewees and Indigenous Services.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research was designed with the mindset of conducting ethical and respectful research with Indigenous peoples, given the historic harm that the research process has inflicted upon them. Therefore, it is situated in an Indigenous-guided framework that aims to conduct this research in a culturally safe and appropriate manner within an Indigenous context. An exploration of my positionality as a researcher in this context engages transparency in my intentions and reasons for doing this work, and how my background contributes to this research.

##### *3.1.1 Research with Indigenous Peoples*

Research involving Indigenous peoples is in a time of profound revision and transformation. In response to the historic abuse and neglect that Indigenous communities across the world have experienced within Western ways of conducting research, a shift towards decolonized and Indigenous research methodologies has emerged. In her seminal

work, Smith (1999) outlines that decolonized research must focus on process as opposed to outcomes, and conduct research *by* and *with* Indigenous instead of *for* and *on* them. To conduct appropriate and meaningful research within Indigenous contexts, the research process must create space for Indigenous perspectives and interpretations without the imposition of non-culturally authoritative views (Bartlett, 2003; Louis 2007). The production of knowledge from an Indigenous perspective is viewed as a subjective and collaborative process through culturally significant means of sharing and relationship (Christensen, 2012).

The Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (2014) has established a set of ethical guidelines by which research should be conducted in order to protect Indigenous research participants. Canadian research must adhere to these guidelines in order to receive funding from any of the Agencies (i.e., CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC). The guidelines act as a comprehensive summary of numerous academic findings on appropriate research methods involving Indigenous participants, including collaborative research, mutual benefits in research, strengthening community research capacity, and ways of interpreting and disseminating results. It cites the OCAP principles (Schnarch, 2004) of Indigenous Ownership, Control, Access and Possession of the all aspects of the research process as fundamental groundwork for researchers of all disciplines.

While Indigenous paradigms and methodologies maintain distinct worldviews, qualitative methodologies can provide some positive and well-established ways of conducting research in Indigenous contexts (Kovach, 2009). Community-based participatory action research (PAR) is recognized as one such research method (Bartlett et al. 2007; Koster et al., 2012). PAR requires meaningful research partnerships between

Indigenous communities and researchers that aspire to build non-hierarchical relationships between those involved, and where Indigenous communities are the centre and driving influence of the research process (Bartlett et al., 2007; Big-Canoe and Richmond, 2014). In essence, it treats research as praxis (Kovach, 2009), directed at positive change (Minkler and Wallerstein, 2003). However, community-based research is inherently a long process (Menzies, 2004), whose benefits can be compromised if the process is rushed for immediate outcomes (Tobias, Richmond, Luginaah, 2013).

### *3.1.2 Case Study through Indigenous-Guided Research*

This qualitative research was employed through a case study structure. Guided by Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) definition of a 'case' as a unit of analysis used to explore a phenomenon within a bounded context, the IFMG fit within this construct.

This case study situated its design in a meaningful and respectful process. It drew from a PAR approach, particularly on aspects of permission, consultation, and transparency, but realized that the project timeline could not accommodate a "true" PAR method. With this in mind, this project adopted a framework that can be described as Indigenous-guided research (Bartlett et al., 2007), wherein participants were able to direct me and be involved within the research process – including guiding my participant selection – as much as they deemed necessary. Ethics approval was attained by the University's REB on July 28, 2017 and can be found in Appendix A.

### *3.1.3 Situating the Researcher*

While this case study aims to tell the story of the Garden, it is necessary in my role as the teller to situate myself in the context of inquiry. First and foremost, I identify as a White Settler and have spent most of my lifetime in Anishnaabe traditional territories,

particularly in Crown Treaty Number 29 (otherwise known as The Huron Tract Purchase) (County of Huron, 2017). I come from two professional working parents: my late-father, a coastal conservationist; and my mother, an elementary school principal. Each of their respective professions formed the foundation of my worldview: a profound reverence for the natural world, and an insatiable pursuit of learning.

My background education formally constitutes a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics from Brescia University College at the University of Western Ontario, and several post-secondary courses related to gardening and plant science through the University of Guelph's Continuing Education department. In the second year of my undergraduate degree, I found myself in an elective course centering contemporary Indigenous issues at the time that the Idle No More movement emerged in full force. It was in this year that I realized, first, the history of my country that I did not know, and a transformative effort of which I knew I wanted to be involved. Through the work of Dr. Harriet Kuhnlein (Kuhnlein & Turner, 1991) on the nutrition of traditional foods, I found a way to blend my passion for food and improving Indigenous health outcomes. However, upon the receipt of my undergraduate degree, I realized that as much as I knew about food and nutrition, I did not have the practical knowledge of growing food. I took a several-month long trip to Europe – my ancestral lands – to learn more about my personal history as well as immerse myself on the frontlines of small-scale food producers. In this time of working with and eating from the land, my mind and body learned the significant relationship between land and food, in that one's food is only as healthy as the land from which it comes.

Upon my enrolment in this master's program, I began speaking with my supervisor about what my background could contribute to this academic endeavour. To my surprise, I discovered that there was an Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden on campus for several years, and that it could be a potential site of inquiry. I immediately felt called to this idea and have since committed to turning it into a successful project.

I bring both an Insider and Outsider perspective to this case study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I am an Insider to the University of Western Ontario as a student of six years at this institution. I am an Outsider in that I am not Indigenous, am not an Indigenous student at Western University, nor have Indigenous understanding about the territory on which the University is located. My purpose of doing this research is manifold: I wish to celebrate the creative endeavour of the Garden project; to shine a light on the meaning of this particular garden space in an effort to further its success; and, to give a voice to those who have not been given a space to be heard. I realize the responsibility I have in representing those I have interviewed appropriately as well as properly composing the intricate story of the Garden that I have accumulated from speaking with these individuals.

### **3.2 Participants and Recruitment**

Upon the approval of my research proposal by my supervisor, a meeting was arranged with the Garden Council – the governing body of the IFMG – to formally propose my project and discuss potential outcomes. Before this meeting, I had spoken with several key members of this Council to get an idea of what the needs were and how this research could benefit the future of the Garden. In the meeting, we reviewed the purpose of the research, the methods to be used, and the draft Interview Guide, and each attendee was provided a

hard-copy summary for further review if needed. I proposed that I would be responsible for conducting the entirety of the project under the supervision of Dr. Chantelle Richmond, in respect of the personal roles and responsibilities of each Council member, and that I would provide informal updates about the project, as well as a formal dissemination of the findings. It is also worth mentioning that Dr. Richmond, as one of the few Indigenous scholars on campus for almost a decade, has established a strong rapport and respected reputation among many of the Indigenous members of the University, and was trusted to guide my research process in an appropriate manner. This proposal was met with full support, and also began my process of interviewee recruitment.

Ideal interviewees were considered to be those who were involved in the garden project in various forms and capacities. This aspiration formed two general (and partly overlapping) interviewee categories: Founders and Users. Founders were considered to be those persons who were involved at any point between the Garden's conception and its physical manifestation, and able to speak to the story of the Garden's creation, the process behind its creation, and its inspiration. Users of the Garden were considered as persons that were not involved in its creation but have used or are using the space for any purpose, including maintenance, education, and use of its produce. Both groups of participants sought community members of the University or members of other communities somehow involved in the Garden.

Upon meeting with the Garden Council, a snowball method was established to recruit interviewees. Several members of the Garden Council expressed an interest in arranging an interview at the meeting, and others referred me to individuals that fit the interviewee categories. Thus, the recruitment process was established. Interviewees would

send me the contact information, usually in the form of an email, of others they thought would want to participate and/or have experiences or knowledge worth sharing. Formal invitations, usually beginning with a personal message, would be emailed to potential interviewees accompanied with a Letter of Information detailing the purpose of the project and information pertinent to the interviewee.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

An interview guide was constructed as the data collection tool (See Appendix B). This guide provided a flexible and natural structure within which to conduct semi-structured interviews. Interview dates and times were arranged at the convenience of the interviewee. Table 1 presents the timeline and profiles of the respondents.

#### *3.3.1 Interview Guide*

A single, short qualitative interview guide was developed to elicit a wide understanding of the formation of the garden, its utilization, and perceptions of the space. It was designed to gather information about: 1) how the garden came to be; 2) the key players involved in creating and using the garden; 3) the key players who continue to manage it and the process of decision-making; 4) the significance of growing traditional foods and medicines; 5) the significance of growing traditional foods and medicines in a colonial environment; and 6) the importance of having Indigenous cultures represented on Western University's campus. I drafted the interview guide prior to meeting the Garden Council, who reviewed the document at our meeting and approved it.

Table 1 shows how a single interview guide was used to lead discussions with the two distinct interviewee groups. I assumed the Founders would be able to speak to the

Garden's developmental history, while the Users would be best suited to comment on its current uses. The focus of the discussion with Users centred on their experiential knowledge of the Garden's contemporary use.

**Table 3.1**  
*Interview Guide Distribution and Interviewee Relevance*

Portion of Guide Relevant to Interviewees		Thematic Sections	Lines of Anticipated Enquiry
Founders		IMFG Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiration/Origin of Idea</li> <li>• Persons involved and their roles</li> <li>• Processes needed to establish</li> <li>• Perceptions of processes (challenges; worthwhile; benefits)</li> </ul>
	Users	Garden Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garden produce utilization &amp; distribution</li> <li>• Educational uses</li> <li>• Other functions and events hosted/use</li> </ul>
		Perceptions of IMFG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance/purpose of land for Indigenous cultures</li> <li>• Indigenous learning &amp; representation on campus</li> <li>• Importance/purpose of traditional food and medicine plants</li> </ul>

The specific lines of inquiry can be found in Appendices B and C. This single interview guide, which aligns with Table 3.1, was separated into two interview guides for simplicity in data collection. That is, the User guide (Appendix C) was taken to interviews with respondents that fit the category, and the same was done with the Founder guide (Appendix B). However, the Founder guide directly aligns with the table above, and no differences exist between this table and the interview guides. This distinction of the interview guide was simply a control mechanism for me as the researcher to ensure I was not asking too many or too few questions in relation to the category of the respondent. In



sum, Appendix B reflects Table 3.1 directly, and Appendix C was created for ease within the data collection process.

### *3.3.2 In-Depth Interviews with Founders and Users*

In-depth interviews were used to collect the perspectives of all those involved in the Garden. This method was necessary to enhance the discussion of each interviewee's role in relation to the space, and to be able to elaborate on their experiences and opinions as such. These interviews were semi-structured to allow for improvisation and flexibility of discussion while at the same time ensuring some standardization of questions to ensure a focus of material for some cohesion in analysis (Gill et. al, 2008). Further, semi-structured interviews were used in an attempt to achieve a power balance between the interviewer and interviewee (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

Interviews were held between the end of July and the first week of September in 2017. Within this time period, 20 interview invitations were sent, and 17 interviews were conducted as three invitations were unanswered. Interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the interviewee, and held in a location convenient (also decided by the interviewee) which was most often on the University grounds in a quiet and private setting. Individual interviews lasted between 15 minutes and 1.5 hours, and often began with casual conversation over food or beverages. The Letter of Information was formally reviewed as a reminder that participation was voluntary, and to receive permission to record our discussion. Interviews were recorded using Panasonic IC Recorder (Model No. RR-US591), which allowed me to digitally upload audio files into my analysis software. At the conclusion of interviews, all interviewees were offered an honorarium in the form of a gift card.

Table 2 summarizes the interview dates to reflect the specific timeline of data collection and respondent profiles. The pseudonyms presented were either given to or chosen by interviewees. The classifications presented alongside these pseudonyms include gender and Indigenous/non-Indigenous identity in order to give an impression of the voices presented in Chapter 4. The University-specific roles of respondents are presented separately in Chapter 4 to preserve the anonymity of interviewees while attempting to provide a richer context of respondent backgrounds.

### **3.4 Interview Analysis**

Upon the conclusion of the data collection phase, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, either by myself or an agency, and then edited to remove the bulk of filler words (i.e., “um, like, you know”) while preserving the substantive integrity of what was communicated. Transcripts were subsequently sent to participants for their review of the conversation, and any requested edits were made. Overall, eight respondents requested minor edits or made clarifications within their transcripts.

Thematic analysis began the process of classifying the content into common themes using both inductive coding (themes emerging from participant’s discussion), and deductive coding (themes informed by the literature) (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) using NVivo Mac software. I began the coding process by coding the responses to my structured interview questions.

My interview guide had a parallel relationship with my research objectives through its three sections: 1) Foundation of the Garden; 2) Garden utilization; and 3) Perceptions of the Garden. In most cases, the questions asked elicited a focussed response, and it

seemed logical to begin the coding process there to confirm whether or not there were broader themes. For example, question 10 under “Garden Utilization” section asked, “What is grown in the garden, and what is it used for?” The responses were specific enough to elicit a compilation of plant types and to compare the responses of what the plants were used for. Similarly, in the “Perceptions” section, question 13 asked, “What is the importance of the Garden space on Western’s campus?” While the responses were widely open to opinion and interpretation, there remained an element of focus to the response, which confirmed my coding decision.

Once the questions and their responses were coded, I continued with an inductive process through open coding, by which I assigned codes to the text as they emerged (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Inductive coding distanced myself from preconceived categories as shaped by the literature and allowed me to identify themes within the testimonies of respondents that may have diverged from my expectations. This process allowed distinct categories to emerge, which were refined through creating overarching tree nodes. I coded deductively when I began to notice that some themes that had emerged did in fact align with concepts put forth in the literature. Overall, three thematic tiers presented the findings, summarized by overarching themes that complement the original objectives, and are as follows:

- 1) The foundation and development of the garden is reflected by a web between all respondents;
- 2) The garden was used for the purposes of practicing control and expressing Indigeneity; and,

- 3) present challenges that face the garden project and its potential ways forward point to deeper meanings and required discussions within the broader institution.

Beneath these overarching themes exist two tiers of subthemes, which will be detailed in Chapter 4.

### **3.5 Plans for Research Dissemination**

To honour the purpose and integrity of the OCAP principles (Schnarch, 2004), I must consider how this research will be shared with those who participated and the invested community in this project. Upon the completion of assembling the Results and Discussion chapters, which are Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively, I sent a summary of the key findings in a two-page document to all interviewees. After the successful completion of my master's work, I will organize a public presentation to which all participants, stakeholders, and broader interested persons will be invited to learn what this research has discovered. I will draft a document summarizing the findings of this thesis and provide recommendations to the Garden Council outlining the directions forward that may help to sustain or improve Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden. I will also offer to present this research to the Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council, and the committee of the Indigenous Strategic Plan to showcase the Garden project as a site that provides opportunities to cultivate meaningful reconciliation.

**Table 2**  
**Interview Respondents<sup>1</sup> (N=17)**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>INTERVIEW DATE</b>
<b>Founders</b>	<b>(N=11)</b>
Louis, Male, Non-Indigenous	August 8, 2017
Marie, Female, Indigenous	August 10, 2017
Ishkode, Male, Indigenous	August 10, 2017
Nitsitangekwe, Female, Indigenous	August 15, 2017
Shawn, Male, Non-Indigenous	August 17, 2017
Katerina, Female, Non-Indigenous	August 24, 2017
Enid, Female, Non-Indigenous	August 24, 2017
Santi, Male, Non-Indigenous	August 25, 2017
Don, Male, Non-Indigenous	September 6, 2017
Nick, Male, Non-Indigenous	September 8, 2017
Jennifer, Female, Indigenous	September 8, 2017
<b>Users</b>	<b>(N=6)</b>
Freddie, Male, Indigenous	July 18, 2017
Dolly, Female, Indigenous	July 20, 2017
Lisa, Female, Indigenous	August 10, 2017
Tionnhéhkwen, Female, Indigenous	August 15, 2017
Everly, Female, Indigenous	August 17, 2017
Justin, Male, Indigenous	August 23, 2017

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents have chosen or have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity. These pseudonyms are used consistently throughout the remainder of the thesis.

## **4. RESULTS**

This chapter presents the results of the in-depth interviews conducted with 17 key stakeholders, both past and present, of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden at Western University. These results address the three study objectives:

1. to describe the foundation and development of the Garden from Founder perspectives;
2. to determine how the Garden is used, and for what purposes; and,
3. to discover what meaning the Garden holds for its Users and Founders.

The results are organized by these objectives and are further subdivided by the main themes identified. Data tables show counts of major themes and sub-themes, which illustrate their relation to the broader picture, and direct quotations from interview transcripts are used to enrich the meaning of these findings.

### **4.1 Garden Foundation and Development: Revealing Relationality**

The fruition and actualization of the Garden was realized through the connectivity, or relationality, between early key players. A web of relations between all respondents – both Founders and Users – emerged from their accounts of how they became aware of the Garden. This picture of the whole supports three key themes or stages of how this web was realized and has developed, as described exclusively by Founders: 1) building the web of relations, 2) reinforcing the web, and 3) strains of the web.

#### 4.1.1 Realizing the Web of Relations between Respondents

Figure 1 illustrates what the web of relations looks like within which all respondents belong. This web was realized by how stakeholders became aware of the Garden project, as described by Table 3 below. Aside from the individual student who had the idea of the garden, respondents identified their involvement through a direct connection to the individual, through their role at the university, or through their employment specifically including garden responsibilities.

**Table 3**  
**Stakeholder Awareness of Garden**

Awareness of Garden	# of Mentions	# of Respondents Mentioning (n=17) (%)
Individual with Idea	1	1 (5)
Connection to Individual	7	7 (41)
Through University Role	5	5 (29)
Employment in IFMG	4	4 (25)

The web centres the idea of an individual. This individual was a Graduate student at Western University, and describes the inception of the idea accordingly:

*I was in a meeting with the Dean of Graduate Studies. I think she was the interim dean at the time – there’s a new one now – and she asked me if I was happy at the school. I said, “No, I’m not and here are the reasons why. The doors are closed and it’s not a welcoming environment. There’s no community here it seems or, if there is, it’s definitely not the kind of community that I wanted to be a part of.” Yeah, so she said, “Well, what would make you happy?” I thought about it for a second and I looked outside and I saw this courtyard that almost nobody visits and I said, “Well, wouldn’t it be amazing if that courtyard had a garden?” (Ishkode)*

Other respondents described their place in the web through their direct connection to this individual student, through consultation and invitation for further involvement:

*I knew, I went to school with [the student], we were students together and we stayed connected... It was through him. He had come to me; he knew I had worked in landscaping. I had my own property at that point, my own home garden, grew my own tobacco and stuff. He said, “I don’t know what I’m doing, can you help me?” (Marie)*

*I was approached by [the student], many, many years ago, and was told that he wanted to build the indigenous garden. (Don)*

Some respondents became involved with the project through their role within the university at the time:

*So, I became aware of the garden – So [my predecessor] kind of toured me around when I started and talked about the garden: It's existence and a little bit of the history, but not in a lot do detail. So, uh, that would be how I first became aware of the garden. (Nick)*

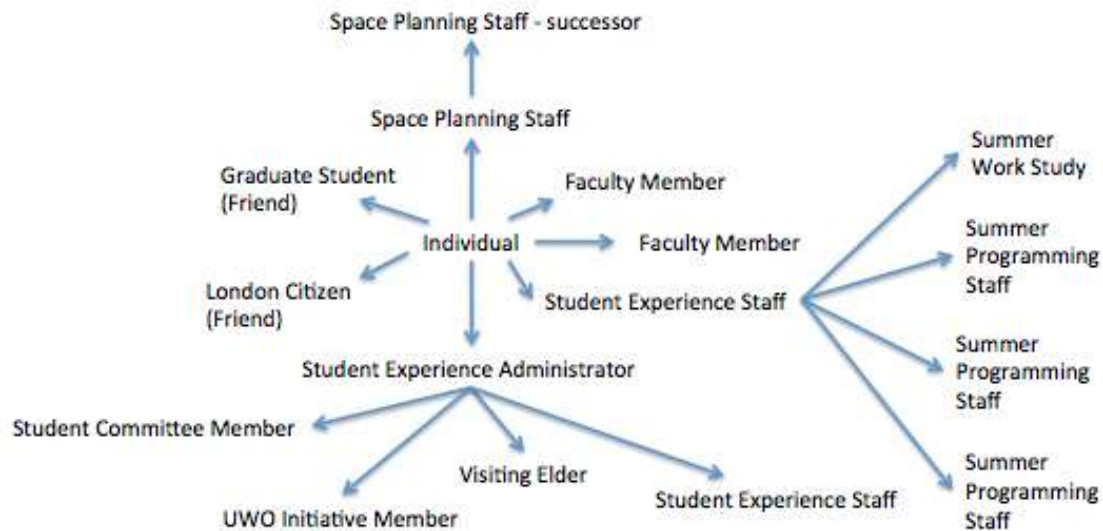
*When the garden first started in 2013, I actually was the president of the First Nation Student Association at the time. So [a founder] reached out to me to be on the Garden Council. So, I probably went to a few meetings and it was pre-garden, so the individual had found a space for it and everything like that. And then, yeah, that's how I first became aware of what they were trying to do in the garden and everything like that. (Tionnhékwen)*

Finally, the remaining respondents were linked in the web by summer employment:

*So then this year, working in summer outreach programming, another responsibility we had during our planning time was to take care of the garden, and that was sort of when I first got to actually get my hands dirty and work in it, so yeah. (Lisa)*

From this information the network diagram below was assembled, which illustrates the places within the university from which Founders and Users came and how they became linked by their affiliation with the Garden:





**Figure 4.1**  
**Web of Relations between Respondents**

This web of relations between both Founders and Users affirms how parallel processes of relationship formation and development drove the foundation and development of the Garden. The historic account of these formations comes exclusively from Founder perspectives. For clarity, the web centres the individual and shows the outward pathways of how other stakeholders became aware of the project. In order to preserve anonymity, the web cannot show all the possible ties between these stakeholders, nor identify which are Founders and Users, but the ties that are represented were reciprocal once awareness was established.

Founders were asked to identify the necessary stages and factors that allowed the Garden to be created. Throughout their historic accounts, three key themes or stages emerged, which represent the time period between the project's inception and present day: 1) building the web of relations, 2) reinforcing the web, and 3) strains of the web. Each of

these segments demonstrates the essential steps in the establishment, survival and sustainability of the project.

#### **4.1.2 Building the web**

The beginning of the Garden's history was described in terms of necessary elements that assembled the web. Relationships between these elements pointed to two broader categories that effectively summarized shared meaning, demonstrated in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**  
**Web Building Elements**

Supports that Built the Web	# of Mentions	# of Founders Mentioning (n=11) (%)
<b>Functional Supports</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9 (81)</b>
Character of Individual	13	7 (64)
Culture of Student Support	8	4 (36)
Resourcefulness of Founders	3	3 (27)
Pre-existing Processes	4	2 (18)
Pre-existing Relationships	6	3 (27)
<b>Structural Supports</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8 (73)</b>
Recruiting Key Founders	7	6 (55)
Evidence of Support	7	5 (45)

##### 4.1.2.1 Functional Supports

Functional supports refer to the elements or qualities that supported relationship development between Founders and ultimately provided the conditions necessary to the successful manifestation of the project. Functional supports were indicated to have more weight in the success of the idea's manifestation (33 mentions by 9 Founders) than structural supports. Founders perceived the successful manifestation of the Garden to be supported by elements such as the character of the individual student, the culture of student support at Western University, the resourcefulness of early Founders, and pre-existing processes and relationships at the university and with other people, respectively.

Founders attributed the character of the individual (i.e., the graduate student with the idea of the Garden) to being a major component of the Garden's successful fruition. Determination and the will of the student were identified as essential characteristics that supported the idea's success:

*He made it happen. Before I got involved he had already found – like negotiated for the space as a student. And he literally, singlehandedly, went out there and tilled the land and got the fence up. And he literally did that through volunteer work and his own sweat and I saw him do it. (Jennifer)*

*And [the individual] was a delightful young man – there's no such thing as a door, right? He's just like a whirlwind in action. He just went from place to place. And so, I was told that he had done most of the work of getting permission to start things. (Louis)*

Four Founders discussed how the culture of student support at the university contributed to the endorsement of the idea:

*I know [one Founder] was pretty open to it. He was a very nice man and very supportive of the idea. He had worked here for a long time, and I don't think it was very hard for the student to convince him of the importance of something like this. I don't think he had a huge struggle in that process. (Marie)*

*So, they were on board and said, "We'll support it." So, with that actual support of that organization, we put a mini-proposal together, proposed it to him. He was on board and said, "Yeah, this is a great idea. Keep pursuing it." (Ishkode)*

The resourcefulness (i.e., ability to secure tangible supports, such as money and time) of Founders was another core element that helped to build the network. Katerina described how donations from early Founder connections paired by her own connections provided plants and seeds for the first planting:

*I can't remember who donated them. I think it was just a connection of his. I don't think it was actually a nursery. I don't remember. Then I ordered from the native plant nurseries that I worked with. (Katerina)*

Jennifer further indicated how other Founders contributed whatever extra resources they could to assist with the project development:

*So in different capacities we've had support. I think there was even one time where she threw a little bit of money to pay for one of the summer positions. So we've been creative, you know, getting those partnerships. I think she threw like \$3,000.00 into the project and then Indigenous Services put in the other bit and then we were able to hire someone for the summer. (Jennifer)*

Important pre-existing processes were identified as providing the necessary and timely conditions that provided support for this project. Two Founders spoke to specific examples:

*The gardens at the museum predated. And no one hated the gardens in the way they are, but no one liked – said, “this is the model”. So, I think what happened is that the fact that it wasn't as able to fulfill the purpose, spurred secondary discussions and people took it by the horns and started to actually develop. So, I would say probably the early work done at the museum was one of the things that led to the garden. (Louis)*

*SAGE is a peer support program. It evolved in the Faculty of Education and it had no budget associated with it. It was basically a faculty member who wanted to mentor and provide space for Indigenous students to come together around their graduate research. And it was in that space that [the individual] began to engage and he saw – he wanted to do more. He wanted a garden. (Jennifer)*

Pre-existing relationships were also identified as important contributions to the success of garnering the support for the Garden proposal. Ishkode, the individual, discussed the power of his connections:

*I got an email very quickly after from her office and it was like, “You can't do this, not unless we have the approval of the school, like the Faculty of Education.” So, then I had to talk to ... Fortunately the president of their student association, the undergraduate association, was a close friend of mine who was on the track team with me. The power of relationships, right? (Ishkode)*

#### 4.1.2.2 Structural Supports

Structural supports refer to specific actions and proof within the process of relationship development, which worked towards establishing and strengthening the web.

Founders indicated recruiting key stakeholders and providing evidence of support were structural supports that allowed the project to secure a space and ultimately succeed.

Six Founders attributed the recruitment of key stakeholders, or early Founders, as a significant support in the Garden's development. Two founders discussed the beginning of this process after the individual's realization of his idea:

*I think that was one thing that he really recognized, that as a student he needed to do a lot of consultation. He was working with someone to secure the space, obviously, and reaching out to different people across campus for help. (Marie)*

*Well, you can't just go and take a piece of land from the university and build a garden on it, you can't. So over the years we had to develop a relationship with our facilities folks. (Jennifer)*

Katerina further indicated, through her invitation to work on the project, that she brought important skills and knowledge to lend to the project's success:

*Katerina: Well, [the individual] is a close friend and he – I think it was his initiative to start it, and I do edible garden designs and work with native plants and so he invited me to get involved with it.*

*Interviewer: So, you were involved in the actual design of it?*

*Katerina: Yeah. I did the design in consultation with him and other people who gave feedback and input in what kind of plants they would want and then I did the layout of what would go where and the shape and how things could be laid out.*

Founders also attributed evidence of support as an important tangible element. Ishkode relayed his memory of the necessity to provide this evidence:

*This is also something that [a Founder] needed. He wanted to see that there was support. So, I had SOGS, SAGE, the deans. Who else was on board then? Well, it wasn't – but there was a lot of support being generated... Okay, so with that fuel, I went back to [that Founder] – and this is probably February by this point – so we had some extraordinary support. So, I'm like, "Okay. We're doing this, right?" That's when we got approval from him. (Ishkode)*

Jennifer, an early Founder, discussed how the importance of this evidence legitimizes a project to potential key players:

*As the project evolved it began to have expenses associated with it. And then as you go to different units on campus they ask you, “well, who are you associated with?” And usually you have to identify yourself, like, “I am with the Faculty of Education or I’m a member of Indigenous Services” or whatever, but because it was just this ad hoc group you couldn’t really do that. (Jennifer)*

#### **4.1.3 Reinforcing the Web**

Once key stakeholders had become invested in the idea, the network needed to be reinforced. Reinforcing the network was achieved through two important actions: 1) establishing governance, and 2) recruiting peripheral stakeholders.

**Table 5**  
**Web Reinforcing Actions**

Actions that Reinforced the Web	# of Mentions	# of Founders Mentioning (n=11)(%)
<b>Establishing Governance</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8 (73)</b>
Formation of Garden Council	12	7 (64)
Place in University Hierarchy	4	4 (36)
<b>Recruiting Stakeholders</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6 (55)</b>
Volunteers	5	4 (36)
External Support or Consultation	3	4 (36)

##### 4.1.3.1 Establishing Governance

Eight Founders indicated a key action that helped to reinforce the network was establishing governance. This was further divided into two specific actions: 1) forming the Garden Council, and 2) finding a place within the university hierarchy that would house the project.

Forming the Garden Council was a key action to reinforce immediate governance of the project. Founders indicated that the Garden Council was centred on assembling student investment as well as engaging the wider university community:

*So when it came to the council we really had to – although we did research and found other models, we had to really think about okay, what will work here and*

*what's our – who are the players here? And First Nation Studies was naturally a great fit. And then SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Engagement) because of [the individual] and then as he migrated from SAGE to the SOGS (Society of Graduate Students) commissioner we then made that available, and then First Nations Student Association. So we wanted it to be really grassroots and connect to the students. And then we invited an Elder, of course, who has been extremely helpful in guiding us. (Jennifer)*

Ishkode, the individual, further attested to the need for this council's formation in order to secure buy-in from university power players:

*It was very positive because those were sort of my peers and colleagues and friends, but people with some pull in terms of university infrastructure, right? (Ishkode)*

Finding a place within the university hierarchy for the project to be housed was also indicated as an action that contributed to establishing governance. Louis spoke to his role in helping situate the Garden in the university infrastructure, and why the process is important:

*I talked to senior administrators and vice-president. Like, I went around and said we'd like to do this and, basically, there was no one opposed. They just wanted to make sure that it was run properly. That the budgets ran through legitimate – what they would consider – legitimate managers here. Which means, people who are responsible up the food-chain. So, IHWI (Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Initiative) wouldn't be a good manager, neither would SOGS, right? Because we each had our own budgets and our own controls, all we had to do was make sure we didn't commit fraud or something, right? Where Indigenous Services was part of the hierarchy. They had to put a budget in each year. They had to get it approved. They were audited. That's where it should stay. So, senior people across the university liked it where it was. (Louis)*

Indigenous Services was also seen as the ideal place for the Garden's control and development, as it naturally aligned with the purpose of the department:

*We've been around since 1995, we have established reputation, the units on campus know us, we have financial accounts, and we're embedded in the infrastructure. So it was just up to the leader, in my opinion, of a unit to see the connection. And there was no doubt in my mind when [the individual] came as a student wanting to have outdoor space and a garden that there's a connection to what we do in Indigenous Services. (Jennifer)*

#### 4.1.3.2 Recruiting Stakeholders

Just over half of the Founders discussed the search for support outside of the governance structure as a key action to reinforce the network. Recruiting peripheral stakeholders included gaining volunteer help and seeking external support or consultation to ensure the project's longevity.

Gaining volunteers provided the labour capital to physically create the garden, and help with the maintenance and its physical sustainability:

*I sent out a call out to have people participate. About eight or ten people showed up and different people over different times and we got to work and it was like it came together. We built the spiralling path. (Ishkode)*

*And finding people to have that time and being interested – I think that was the biggest thing is just the schedule of weeding it and watering it. But that was – again, it took networking. It took conversation. It took some awareness. It took, just gathering people together and constantly educating. And that's one thing that [early Founders] did lots. They did lots of networking with lots of people and lots of students. And that's what kept it going. (Nitsitangekwe)*

External support or consultation was also indicated to have reinforced the network through providing financial support and lending knowledge from preceding projects at other sites.

Enid explained her experience in retrieving this external input:

*I knew all these people through my old job. I knew who the big funding contacts were. So, I had a conversation with [one of these contacts] about it, and she was really excited about it. And I had conversations with the woman who coordinates the community garden at UBC - at least the Indigenous component of the community garden. And so, I had a conversation with her about how they run theirs, and how they apply for funding, and how they sustain it, and all that sort of thing. So, I was gonna take that information and kind of come back to the Council and say, this is what I've learned. (Enid)*

Jennifer also relayed her experience of seeking guidance from a project at a nearby university to bring back to informing this project's development:

*So Wilfred Laurier had a similar model in place so we did research. And so we pulled off their terms of reference on the website and we started there. And then we looked at their model and their garden – and we did trips out there. And so we*



*visited Wilfred Laurier and seen what they had in place for the potential of where this could go. (Jennifer)*

#### **4.1.4 Strains on the Web**

Strains on the web of relations between Founders were said to occur roughly two years after the individual received the idea of the project (which also translates into two successful Garden seasons). Two overarching strains were identified: 1) leadership change, and 2) Web sustainability challenges. Each of these, respectively, contributed to a weakened network and an effort of adaptation.

**Table 6**  
**Strains on the Web**

Factors that Strained the Web	# of Mentions	# of Founders Mentioning (n=11) (%)
<b>Leadership Change</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8 (73)</b>
Changing relationships	6	4 (36)
Founder Disconnection	5	4 (36)
<b>Web Sustainability Challenges</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6 (54)</b>
Founder Capacity Shortage	11	5 (45)
Maintaining Volunteers	7	5 (45)

##### 4.1.4.1 Leadership Change

Leadership change was the most mentioned network strain. This change was caused by the need of the individual student to disassociate with his responsibilities for personal reasons, and prepare for that transition as best he could:

*The abbreviated version was I quit everything... I mean I was devastated to leave the garden. I had to bring tobacco to many people to ask them to fulfill the roles that I was leaving because there's no one person that could do all of what I was doing and that's what I did and I made sure that there was in place when I left the people that could fulfill those roles and they did. It's evolved since and I have nothing to do with the evolution of it, but yeah like that was a devastating time for me. (Ishkode)*

Upon the individual's absence, the remaining network did its best to maintain and sustain what it could of the project. Some Founders spoke to their roles and contributions to adapting the project in response to this disruption:

*So I really oversaw it and tried to make sure that those council meetings happened, that staff understood their roles and responsibilities and making sure that the activities happened and that we hired somebody. And in the beginning we would hire a summer student and then as things moved along we assigned an actual staff member to it. And that became [a Founder] over the years. And it was basically just figuring it out as we go. (Jennifer)*

*When he was finished his Master's work here and he [left], it of course became my job, which I kind of saw would happen, right? It was like, let's put in the hands of the students and then let's let them dictate that. What is it you guys wanna grow? We can decide what the plan looks like. There were quite a few perennial plants planted so we tried not to move them, because it was still a very young garden, so we tried to not uproot things. There were a few things that we had to move around. (Marie)*

Changing leadership was accompanied by a change in the relationships, or ties, between remaining members of the networks. Freddie succinctly described an aspect of this result:

*When it started, [the individual] was partnered with a faculty member who had access to spaces in the greenhouse. So that's how that all started. But then it got passed over to [another Founder, and she] didn't have the same connections, so we kinda sought out another way of making capacity and structure for taking care of that space. (Freddie)*

Further indicating a change in relationships, four Founders noted their lack of involvement after the leadership change occurred. This was due to a change in leadership style:

*So, I think after [the individual] left, I don't know who took – I know they had designated somebody to take over but I never received an email from them or any kind of communication to just try and keep me involved or to ask for help or even to invite – I was, you know, never invited to events... I mean, I didn't take the initiative either but it just seemed like it was kind of, not very well organized after that. I don't know how much was going – like, how it was happening. (Katerina)*

*I don't know. Again, I feel like I was kind of involved, and we had all these conversations about expanding and funding and all these things, and then it just –*

*and then [a Founder] got hired, and she's a frickin' powerhouse. She's amazing. So, maybe that's part of the reason that the council kind of fell apart, is because they didn't really need that certain level of support, because she just makes things happen. But, yeah. So, I don't know. I feel really removed from it for the last couple years, so I guess that's something to take into consideration. A lot of stuff that I would talk about is maybe not even relevant anymore, so. (Enid)*

#### 4.1.4.2 Web Sustainability Challenges

Sustaining the web of relations, or being able to recruit and maintain stakeholders, was another factor that Founders indicated was difficult. The primary challenge to sustaining the web after the individual left was dividing responsibilities and work among the remaining Founders. With the transference of leadership to someone who was formally employed by the university, a capacity shortage was noted:

*And also under – we are extremely – we see a 10 percent growth rate in Indigenous students. Post-TRC we're seeing a huge demand on our time for – people want more with less. We're not getting more staff, but we're getting more work... So I feel like it's not – the conditions are challenging, like the actual environment, the climate that we're in. It can be challenging to make it what it could be. (Jennifer)*

*For me that's the biggest struggle is time, I have so many other commitments. (Marie)*

Santi also indicated that the nature of the university environment encourages this capacity shortage:

*But there was another thing, which is that in the university environment, like a lot of the students, and professors, and initiative people – they are pretty busy in the university mode. (Santi)*

While Founders were strained by their own capacities, a lack of volunteer recruitment also inhibited the sustainability of social capital. Two respondents explained from their past experiences in the Garden that a lack of volunteer guidance or knowledge was a reason for that:

*Even the first year there were, you know, we had a good volunteer interest at the beginning. I think there was a bit of – a lot of people that wanted to be involved, I*

*don't think had the knowledge to just go for an hour – I mean, other than to water, but to go and weed, I think they were a bit overwhelmed. I don't know if there was enough guidance for them to help them engage in the project and know what to do or how to do it. (Katerina)*

*Because I would send out these mass emails and social media page and inviting people and posting how to do the weeding. Most of the response that I got from people was they were afraid to be there without somebody else there. They were afraid to hurt the plants. They were afraid to do something wrong. So people wouldn't go in without me being there or without somebody in charge being there. So, I had a hard time getting volunteers in. (Dolly)*

This lack of recruiting and maintaining volunteers is reflective of limited capacity of the remaining Founders in the network. Without a designated coordinator or leader to train volunteers, outside interest could not be cultivated into constructive involvement, as outsiders feared doing something wrong or harmful to the space.

The assembly of key players with varying roles in the university provided the necessary support for the individual to champion his vision. However, his disassociation from the project was a disruption to the network through changing leadership. Ultimately, the strength of this web had a direct impact on the success of the project. Katerina clearly summarizes the importance of assembling dedicated and invested people from the beginning of a project's vision:

*I mean, every community project that I've worked with, I always try from the very beginning to be like we've got to get a really good base of people because that's always what kills projects, right? (Katerina)*

These web strains had a direct impact on the Garden and transformed the space accordingly. Yet, these strains did not “kill the project,” which is a significant indicator that the remaining web did succeed in sustaining the intention of the project and maintenance of the space. Two early Founders marvelled at the Garden's resiliency:

*Because nobody's kind of pulled away from it a bit, but you know, you are seeing all these new people taking over and it's going to happen. It was a very good experience. (Don)*

*It's kept going. And so, the permanency of it, I didn't know how long it would last. And then, [the individual] was away... And so, he was away for a long time and when he came back, you know, things were still moving, it was still preserved. So, the fact that it moved from a project of a small number of people, if not for a while one person's project, to collectively respected and owned. My perception is that that is an important lesson for all of us that those things can move in those directions. (Louis)*

In summary, actualization of the Garden could only have occurred through the realization of a web of relations. This web between all respondents – both Founders and Users – was formed through three key themes or stages: 1) building the web of relations, 2) reinforcing the web, and 3) strains of the web. Despite the hurdles resulting from a change of leadership and web sustainability challenges, the web adapted and allowed for the continuation of the project to the present day. How this space has continued to be used will be revealed in the following section.

## **4.2 Garden Uses and Purpose**

The Garden was revealed to be a site serving multiple functions and uses, both practical and personal. Respondents indicated two overarching themes that encompassed the array of utilization: 1) promoting and practicing Indigenous lifestyles within the university environment, and 2) practicing control through food production. A list of the plants grown in the Garden provides a tangible impression of the space and will work to inform the two key uses.

#### 4.2.1 Plants Grown in the Garden

Table 7 presents a list of plants that have grown in the Garden through one or more seasons, as mentioned by Founders and Users. The list does not distinguish food and medicine because respondents indicated a lot of layover between these two categories. The majority of the plants grown have some cultural significance and/or have been traditionally used by the Indigenous peoples of southwestern Ontario and vary between annual and perennial types.

**Table 7**  
**Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden Plants**

Beans ( <i>Phaseolus</i> )	Lamb's Ear ( <i>Stachys byzantia</i> )
Carrots ( <i>Daucus carota</i> )	Lavender ( <i>Lavendula</i> )
Catnip ( <i>Nepeta cataria</i> )	Mint ( <i>Mentha canadensis</i> )
Corn ( <i>Zea mays</i> )	Pepper ( <i>Capsicum annuum</i> )
Culinary Sage ( <i>Salvia officinalis</i> )	Strawberry ( <i>Fragaria virginiana</i> )
Elderberry ( <i>Sambucus nigra</i> )	Sweet Grass ( <i>Hierochloe odorata</i> )
Hazelnut ( <i>Corylus americana</i> )	Squash ( <i>Cucurbita</i> )
Jersey Tea ( <i>Ceaunothus americanus</i> )	Tobacco ( <i>Nicotiana rustica</i> )
Sun Choke ( <i>Helianthus tuberosus</i> )	Tomato ( <i>Solanum lycopersicum</i> )
Kale ( <i>Brassica oleracea</i> )	Watermelon ( <i>Citrillus lanatus</i> )

#### 4.2.2 Promoting and Practicing Indigenous Lifestyles within the University

The Garden was revealed to be a site where Indigenous ways of life were taught, practiced, and realized. Three overarching activities summarize the variety of uses that respondents reported: 1) engaging in Indigenous knowledge, 2) Representing Indigeneity, and 3) connecting to land.

**Table 8**  
**Ways of Promoting and Practicing Indigenous Lifestyles**

Ways of Promoting and Practicing Indigenous Lifestyles	# of Mentions	# of Founders and Users Mentioning (n=17) (%)
<b>Engaging Indigenous Knowledge</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>15 (88)</b>
Transferring Cultural Knowledge	28	10 (59)
Contrasting Western Knowledge	5	8 (47)
Conducting Ceremony	14	9 (53)
<b>Representing Indigeneity</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7 (41)</b>
Fostering Connection to Culture	10	4 (24)
Affirming Identity	6	4 (24)
<b>Connecting to Land</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11 (65)</b>
Acknowledging Traditional Territory	4	4 (24)
Improving Access to Land	3	3 (18)

#### 4.2.2.1 Engaging Indigenous Knowledge

Engaging Indigenous knowledge was described as encountering and applying Indigenous knowledge within the Garden space. The individual who founded the project described this as a fundamental intention in creating the project:

*All the Indigenous leaders that I had met and encountered, all the academic researchers that I had quoted and read all said, “You have to take action. You can talk about this stuff as much as we want, but unless we’re doing, we’re not actually engaging Indigenous knowledge. We’re just talking about Indigenous knowledge.” There’s a huge difference and that was what I wanted to do. (Ishkode)*

Almost all respondents, 15 of 17, indicated that engaging Indigenous knowledge was an inherent element of the Garden. More specifically, this action was achieved through three ways: the transference of cultural knowledge, using Indigenous knowledge to contrast Western knowledge, and conducting ceremony.

Transferring cultural knowledge was described as actively sharing or acquiring cultural knowledge as a result of being affiliated with the Garden. Dolly described her experience of learning and practicing traditional ways of growing from her time in the space:

*I didn't know much about gardening, but from the mistakes I made I now know more. So I would go in there and try to – because the Elders would say, sing to those plants, they really like it, and I'm like, okay. So I'd bring my hand drum in and I would sing to them and think good thoughts. (Dolly)*

Don, a non-Indigenous Founder, also learned Indigenous knowledge from his association with the founding student:

*Well, I think even myself when I talked to [the individual] and I didn't know much about – you know, he was talking about the Three Sisters in the squash, the corn, and all those things. So, I think it's a learning tool. (Don)*

Respondents also indicated that engaging with Indigenous knowledge occurred through contrasting it with Western ways of knowing and learning. They viewed the Garden on the university campus as a space that offered the space to recognize the value of Indigenous knowledge:

*I always ask my students, “Where is knowledge is located?” Because for a long time, in Eurocentric way of thinking, knowledge is only relayed with the information that we record, that we write, that we read, that we keep in computers, libraries. So, the food and medicine garden can be a strong message for the community, reminding them that knowledge is also in a garden, it's also in the sea, it's also in the conversation, it's also in the community. (Santi)*

*For me, the importance of the Garden is appreciating that Indigenous education isn't confined solely to a classroom and many of the traditional forms of Indigenous education occur in spaces where the various plants, any number of different plants, including newer varieties of plants as well, all have a function in regenerating both the land, animals, insects, and human communities. So, a garden space, such as the one at Western, offers the opportunity for that form of Indigenous education to occur in a space that isn't determined by the walls around you. (Shawn)*

More than half of respondents indicated that conducting ceremony was also an important action that applied Indigenous knowledge. Nitsitangekwe explained the role and reason for ceremony in relation to the Garden space:

*We do ceremonies. So, both Anishnaabek and Haudenosaunee, we will do ceremonies before we even plant. So, what we're doing is we're praying, and we're giving thanks for having that small piece of property, and that small piece of land. And we're asking our relatives to come, and to guide us, and direct us to how we*



*take care of that medicine. And so, we sing our songs, and we do our prayers, and we give acknowledgement to our relatives, and our ancestors to creation, and we give thanks to the earth because those are – that's important. (Nitsitangekwe)*

#### 4.2.2.2 Representing Indigeneity

Seven respondents discussed how the Garden is a space that represents Indigenous cultures, traditions, and knowledge, and reflected on how this representation personally had an impact on them. Four respondents spoke of how Indigenous representation fostered a connection to culture. Everly indicated this is something she has witnessed among her peers:

*A lot of times, people come to school and they find a lot of connections with their culture and stuff. So, it's a really good place for people to get that understanding that this is how we can grow things and this is what we can do to protect our plants and protect ourselves as a people and they can take it from school and then they can take it home to their communities or take it home to wherever they're going. (Everly)*

Lisa discussed her realization of the importance of learning traditional growing methods and working with Indigenous plants as it facilitated a connection to her ancestral lineage:

*I think why the traditional foods are so very important is because they're connected to our ancestors, basically. People who lived here ate these things way, way back in the day, and now we're still doing this. So, and like, it's also interesting too because you can think of the plants now. Those plants had ancestors in their plant lineage, right? Because it's a plant that creates a seed that creates a plant that creates another seed. And so, that same thing can be traced back to the same time that I can trace back my genealogy. So, that's just really – I guess that's why traditional plants from this area could be so important, is because that's what my ancestors used. (Lisa)*

Affirming identity was also mentioned by several respondents, and was described as the Garden being a space that supports one's connection to their Indigeneity:

*I grow food to eat, but more in a sense that I grow food so that I can know myself, know my culture, know my identity, know life a little better, because we're not exposed to that – well, I wasn't anyway, when I was a kid. (Freddie)*

*It just kind of changes your whole perspective when you work with these things that are traditional, and yeah. Because it brings you back to, like, I guess, who you are as a person, in a sense. (Lisa)*

#### 4.2.2.4 Connecting to Land

The Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden was indicated as a space that was used to connect to the land. Founders and Users mentioned two primary ways that this connection was established: through acknowledging traditional territory, and through improving one's access to land.

Acknowledging traditional territory was described as realizing the historical and cultural significance of the garden space itself, and the land upon which the broader university sits. The Garden, through growing traditional food and medicine plants, was described as a space that facilitated the reflection on the present space and what came before it:

*But you can also acknowledge and be connected to what it used to be. And in my opinion, that's why these traditional foods and practicing these traditional things is a positive thing, I think, for the Western campus to sort of acknowledge this wasn't always Western. And it's not always going to be. Someday, it's gonna be something different, right? We'll probably not see that, but that's just the way that this world works. (Lisa)*

Santi described the importance of realizing the story of the land through growing food and medicine plants:

*That acknowledgement is so powerful because it's not about reservations. It's not about even nation states. It's about the memory of the land, of these trees. So, for me, it's beautiful that the university is opening a space – any university – is opening a space for food and traditional medicine, for indigenous food and medicine, because I would say that the land feels grateful that that's happening. (Santi)*

The second method of connecting to land was achieved through improving access to it. Improving access to land was described as the ease of ability to be in physical contact with

the land. Nitsitangekwe indicated that land access is a prevalent need among urban Indigenous people, especially:

*There are so many of our people that are living in cities now. And because of colonization, we have lost our connection to medicine. We've lost our connection to all of creation. Again, living in an environment that's full of cement, we need to continue to give back to our original mother, the earth. (Nitsitangekwe)*

Everly furthered this point by speaking to her own experience with the Garden space, which functioned as a place where she could foster her personal connection with land because she could not have a garden space at her house:

*Personally, I really like it as a space to be connected to the earth, especially in the summertime because living in the city, I don't really have a place to plant a garden and my family was always really big into gardening and putting away food and that kind of stuff. So, having the garden around was a really good alternative to that. (Everly)*

Evidently, the Garden space was utilized for a number of ways that promoted and practiced Indigenous lifestyles on campus. Engaging Indigenous knowledge, increasing Indigenous representation on campus, and connecting to land were the three broad activities through which this use was facilitated. While respondents significantly mentioned this broader use, a second overarching use was also indicated as significant: asserting control through food production.

#### ***4.2.3 Asserting Control through Food and Medicine Production***

Food production was frequently spoken of throughout all interviews, which is unsurprising given the purpose of the Garden. However, a significant theme emerged from the ways which Founders and Users described the methods by which food production was achieved: this theme was asserting control through food production. Control was asserted

through two primary actions necessary in the food production process: determining resources, and determining personal livelihoods. Table 9 presents these findings in detail.

**Table 9**  
**Actions of Control through Food and Medicine Production**

Actions of Control through Food Production	# of Mentions	# of Founders and Users Mentioning (n=17) (%)
<b>Determining Resources</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>12 (71)</b>
Seed Source	19	10 (59)
Grow Traditional Plants on Campus	10	10 (59)
<b>Determining Personal Livelihoods</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11 (65)</b>
Food Security	6	4 (24)
Ensuring Wellbeing	12	8 (47)

#### 4.2.3.1 Determining Resources

Founders and Users often discussed the physical resources necessary to make the Garden grow and function. Within this discussion, an important theme emerged which described the ownership and control of retrieving and maintaining these inputs and outputs: determining resources. Respondents further indicated two important examples through which resources were determined, which were 1) locating the source of seeds, and 2) growing traditional plants on campus.

Sourcing seeds was mentioned by more than half of Founders and Users as an important element in maintaining the Garden. Most respondents mentioned that sourcing traditional seeds through seed sharing were a priority for planting, while purchasing conventional seeds was a last resort:

*Seeds have been all either gifted or traded - so connecting with community. I know [a Haudenosaunee man], he gave us a lot of different kinds of beans last year that were really old, old long house varieties. And just asking, telling people this is what we're doing, and we're trying to grow those old plants - which I'm not to grow hybridized plants. Obviously, tomatoes are always. Right? There are some things you can't get around. (Marie)*

*So, the seeds – again, some of them, we got from Elders and community members, and they were sort of heirloom seeds that were harvested from the plants that they grew, and then they put them in a plastic or a paper bag and gave them to us... And then obviously, some of them were store-bought. (Lisa)*

Local seed sharing was evident, as well as seed sharing across vast geographic areas. Two respondents furthered this point through their personal accounts of practicing seed sharing:

*So I had, when I did the seed stuff – the seed exchanges or seed sharing – I sent them as far up as Hurst. And I didn't just do corn, I did tobacco as well. Hurst, Kettle Point, Saugeen, Cape Croker, so I did all of Southern Ontario. And, uh... I love it, and the stuff I gave out was all stamped with "IS" and contact "IS" – they'll tell you how to grow the stuff. Got any questions or concerns, email us, we want to help. (Dolly)*

*So, those seeds that were producing in London started traveling. For example, I can say some of those tobacco seeds traveled to Colombia, yeah. And so, I exchanged with some friends in Bogotá and they have a food and medicine garden too, beside a sacred mountain called Majuy and they grew tobacco. And they didn't have this tobacco that we grew that is yellow flowered tobacco. (Santi)*

Seed sourcing occurred primarily through sharing, to both local and distant communities based on respondent connections and were rarely supplemented by purchasing conventional seeds. However, seed sourcing was not the only significant resource that was determined by Founders and Users.

Growing traditional plants on campus was also a way of determining resources, as it allowed individuals to assert control over the ways of growing and the use of produce.

Nitsitangekwe summarizes this point:

*So, we're trying to plant again. Trying to plant those seeds where people could harvest their own medicines. (Nitsitangekwe)*

The significance of this theme was made evident through several respondents' descriptions of growing traditional tobacco on the university grounds. Tionnhékwen described how the growing process of the plant is full of important lessons:

*I think tobacco is probably one of the most important things. I think they're all important, but it definitely is one of the most important things that we plant. And it's important from the process of seeding to drying it, because there's so much you learn from it. It's a very sensitive plant, and you need to say kind words to it, and that it takes a lot of care to grow in a garden. (Tionnhékwén)*

Lisa spoke of tobacco's cultural importance through her description of how the plant is used within the university:

*The tobacco that we grow, we usually keep it in the center, and they use it for smudging, or they give youth tobacco, and then we use tobacco ties in a little bundle to give to Elders and stuff like that. And so, especially the medicine part of it is really useful in weekly things that we do at Indigenous Services. So, that's really nice to know that it was grown right there, and we can use it here, and yeah. (Lisa)*

Marie furthered this point through her perspective of what locally grown tobacco lends to the university experience for Indigenous students:

*When I came here as a student my first year, there was no traditional tobacco in this center, there was only a bag of cigarette tobacco. For me to be able to say to our students, "this is tobacco that we grew here," and for me to know where that came from, that's very important. That's very important to their spiritual, their emotional and their physical wellbeing. It's just really, really important. (Marie)*

Determining resources through seed sourcing and actively growing traditional food and medicine plants were important ways of asserting control by Founders and Users. Determining these resources extended control over processes involving their allocation and use. This theme is directly linked to the one that follows, as the control of resource use and production lead to the determination of personal livelihoods.

#### 4.2.3.2 Determining Personal Livelihoods

Determining personal livelihoods was described as using the garden space and its produce towards benefiting individual lives and was spoken of through two themes: 1) food security, and 2) ensuring wellbeing.

Food security was specifically mentioned by four respondents as a way of contributing to a positive lifestyle. The Garden was indicated as a space that was cherished because of its ability to provide students – particularly those who may be struggling to attain enough food – with accessibility to healthy and safe food:

*They know that they could go [to the Garden] and be involved with that if they wanted to, for students who don't have access to green space. And I think it really speaks to something that's very important in Indigenous Services, is food security for students. And I think this is a really innovative way of looking at food security and how to combat that is having this garden, and being able to plant food and bring it back here for our students to have and students to use. So, I mean, I love the space. (Tionnhéhkwen)*

More significantly, eight Founders and Users more broadly indicated that the Garden was a place that allowed individuals to ensure their wellbeing. Wellbeing did not have a specific definition met with consensus, but Justin provided a useful description of its many elements:

*It's important because it's important to our health and wellbeing. But also, on to a spiritual side, too, because it builds that connection to the plant-life and also to Creation, to the sun and the moon and everything plays its role, like the rain and the water, because without any of those we wouldn't be able to have food. (Justin)*

Further to this point, respondents also spoke about their trust and understanding of where their food comes from, and how that has an impact on their health:

*So, growing our own food, it's – you don't have all the other stuff that's added to make it big and bright and all that kind of stuff and you just – you take more care when you're cooking. You're more mindful of what you're eating, what you're putting into your body and that's really important (Everly)*

*Well, we know that – because of what is happening today with modified seeds - genetically modified seeds, and pesticides, we don't want to eat certain things. For health, it's better to be informed about what we are eating. (Santi)*

Through determining resources and personal livelihoods, respondents were able to achieve control over core processes (e.g., seed sourcing and growing traditional plants) and outcomes (e.g., food security and individual wellbeing) of the Garden space.

In summary, Founders and Users classified the utilization of the Garden into two broad categories: 1) promoting and practicing Indigenous lifestyles within the university environment, and 2) practicing control through food production. The meaning of each of these uses has been revealed and supported by the testimonies of Founders and Users but is limited to the personal and network level – that is, the meaning and impact of the Garden space upon those who are directly involved with the project is entrenched in the exploration of these uses. The following section explores the meaning and impact of the Garden at a broader university level.

### **4.3 Institutional Supports and Constraints to the Garden**

While the previous section revealed personal meanings of the Garden as a result of direct involvement, this section explores the meaning and impact of the space at a broader institutional level. This insight is explored through two key themes that many respondents stressed: 1) the present challenges of the project, and 2) the potential that resides in the project.

#### ***4.3.1 Present Challenges of the Garden***

Founders and Users stressed the presence of several challenges that threaten the current state and ultimate longevity of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden. Table 10 provides the thematic summary of these testimonies, and points to four fundamental



challenges: 1) lack of supportive infrastructure, 2) lack of funding, 3) disconnect between key stakeholders, and 4) lack of university engagement.

**Table 10**  
**Challenges of the Garden**

Present Garden Challenges	# of Mentions	# of Founders and Users Mentioning (n=17) (%)
<b>Lack of Supportive Infrastructure</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7 (41)</b>
Space Volatility	6	5 (29)
Few Volunteers	4	3 (18)
<b>Lack of Funding</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9 (53)</b>
No Dedicated Person	12	6 (35)
<b>Disconnect Between Key Stakeholders</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10 (59)</b>
<b>Lack of University Engagement</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9 (53)</b>

#### 4.3.1.1 Lack of Supportive Infrastructure

A lack of supportive infrastructure was described the absence or limitation of fundamental elements necessary to the longevity and flourishing of the Garden. Space volatility was identified as the most important of these, and was described as the lack of permanency and guarantee of the current Garden space and location. Don described how this volatility has become more pervasive over the years:

*It'll be different now if you try to get a garden. I think it'd be a bit – not harder, but just the fact being that, you know, we may give you a year's notice that the garden would have to be moved if something happened and if a building was to be put up...And back when you first set these up, everybody's great intentions are being there and lasting forever, but [Space Planning] is putting buildings up in spots where I thought they'd never would, now. (Don)*

The volatility of the space was identified as a threat to other fundamental aspects of its success, such as its commitment level and longevity. Enid reflected on her memory of initial interest, and what the ramifications of this volatility can be:

*So, everybody seemed really interested in it, but then it was like, well, how do you take all that interest and put it into money and permanent space, right? And that's the thing, too. You don't want to invest in a garden that they're just gonna say, "well, we're gonna build something there in two years," right? (Enid)*

While space volatility is a notable threat to any community project requiring space, Jennifer discussed why this constraint has more weight in an Indigenous context:

*I guess they've identified that land as land that could be built on. So we've always been told, "we can't promise you this land forever." And this was told to [the individual] and to [Indigenous Services] on different occasions by different people. If the university decides to build, which it always is, we might need to – we'll have to talk about it. And I was like, "as long as we have space." But I know the sensitive – what happens when you move Indigenous people. Like I mean, that is – that's been our life because of colonization: land being slowly encroached upon and taken over and us being moved and pushed to the side. (Jennifer)*

In addition to the volatility of the garden space, respondents indicated that few volunteers contributed to the lack of supportive infrastructure. Justin relayed his desire for more help maintaining the Garden, but also noted the capacity limitation that community members within the university often experience:

*Well, in my opinion, the only things that could really be improved is more space and then I guess more people to help with the weeding and watering. Because when we go [into summer programming], like, for a while there, there's no one weeding and stuff. So, that kind of makes me sad in a way because I wish I could be there and continue to do that, or someone else pick that up when we're doing the program. Or somehow to work it into the program, but it's very difficult because we have a lot going on. (Justin)*

While space volatility and few volunteers contributed to an overall lack of supportive infrastructure, this challenge was identified as linked to a lack of funding.

#### 4.3.1.2 Lack of Funding

Half of Founders and Users mentioned that a lack of funding was a primary constraint on the Garden project. Jennifer succinctly indicated this point:

*I do know that Indigenous Services has a bigger vision for the garden that has been challenging to realize in the climate that we're in. And that is because of the lack of funding. (Jennifer)*

The process of funding attainment was described as complex and competitive. Enid recounts her memory of applying for financial support:

*I feel like the funding thing is huge. It was like you couldn't apply for funding for the garden without going through the big institution and checking with their funders and people and seeing, right? Because they had their massive plans. They might be applying to London Community Foundation or Trillium, and so you can't have competing grants. (Enid)*

The limitation in external funding led to seeking financial support elsewhere, which meant taking from the resources or budgets that were able to accommodate the small expense. Marie reflected on how the current budget constrains the amount of help in maintaining the Garden space throughout the year:

*I post work study positions, people don't typically apply to them because it is hard work and you don't get paid very much as work study. We don't really have the capacity to hire any other summer staff to do that... it's roughly about \$1,000 that [goes into the Garden] each year. (Marie)*

This lack of funding is inextricably tied to another challenge that respondents indicated, and that is the lack of a dedicated person to operate and maintain the Garden:

*So, if you don't have funding, then you don't have a dedicated staff person. And if you don't have a dedicated staff person, then you don't have somebody to follow up with the school boards and bring them in to follow up with SOAHAC and bring them, you know what I mean? So, yeah. I mean, volunteers are great, but they're unreliable, and it's a lot to ask. (Enid)*

A dedicated person to manage the space and its programming was mentioned as something that would improve the project as a whole, but funding that person was also identified as a necessity. Two Users explained why:

*It's a relationship with those spaces that could be improved by having somebody to – a dedicated person – to nurture those relationships – person to person, faculty to department, department to department, community, those kinds of things. And it makes so much sense when you put it out there, um, but it's justifying the funding dollars, right? We still have to pay somebody to do that work, which is really important because it's really important work, but we think administratively in the institution. (Freddie)*

*Maybe if there was one person that was super – had the responsibility, like a set-out roll. But that's kind of hard to put in place without having a wage for it, right? So, to make that an actual position to work for. But that might help it just to be more organized and more on time with things, because we were a little late with the seeds. Everyone was kind of busy at the beginning of the summer. (Lisa)*

Ultimately, a lack of funding to support the Garden was identified as a major challenge, which strongly contributed to the absence of a dedicated person to manage the Garden and coordinate involvement. This lack of funding is inextricably related to the following theme, which explores a core element of the Garden's present struggle.

#### 4.3.1.3 Disconnect Between Key Stakeholders

The most-mentioned challenge by respondents was disconnection between key stakeholders. This was both revealed as being a disaccord between memories of events and indicated as a difference in perceptions from varying positions. While this disconnect was indicated as likely not intentional, its existence was noted:

*I don't think that it's the unwillingness of [the institution] to get us the space because – or to support the space if we had money. But space is a huge issue with Indigenous people, land and space, it's the deal breaker... And if universities can't support the Indigenous community on campus with outdoor space and especially when those players are looking in that direction, you know, and are ready and want to, that's telling me that there's a little bit of a disconnect there. (Jennifer)*

Unfortunately, this disconnect was revealed to exist between two key parties involved with the Garden. Conflicting memories of what constituted their partnership, despite differing sentiments towards these memories, exemplified this challenge of difference:

*So, over the years we had to develop a relationship with our [Space Planning] folks. And they were not there in partnership. They barely came to the council meetings. And if [Indigenous Services] needed something, like for example manure for the garden, they would come and dump it but they would charge the unit \$500.00.*  
**(Jennifer)**

*It came through [Space Planning]. I don't know who their supplier is but they just showed up with the truck and dump it out there for you. Then they just charge it though speed code. That's very convenient not having to book it through someone else, show up for them to deliver it, pay it – [Indigenous Services] is spoiled that way, for sure. That comes from that initial relationship building with [them].*  
**(Marie)**

*[Space Planning] provided wood chips...things to clean up, [and] would just take care of it. [They] never charged for anything that went into the garden, because quite often the budgets are very low.* **(Don)**

This disconnect was also shown through several respondents' discussions of the present location of the space. Jennifer spoke of how, to properly align with the mission of Indigenous Services and to serve the needs of Indigenous people on campus, the present location is not ideal:

*The space is very far from Indigenous Services. Really, it should be right – we should have a space, in my mind, as the original people of this land we should have a space that's ground level and that has an outdoor space attached to it. We shouldn't have to walk our Elders, who have special needs, down cement stairs behind the parking lot to that space.* **(Jennifer)**

Marie shared similar thoughts on its proximity to Indigenous Services, but recognized that its location offers a number of practical benefits:

*Yeah. I think it would be great to have it closer [to Indigenous Services], but at the same time there are a lot of disadvantages because there is no water there. The*

*greenhouse is not there. The toolshed is not there. There are a lot of advantages and convenience where it is right now. (Marie)*

Nick testified to the Garden's current location as ideal, indicating that it suits the needs of the community as well as the requirements of the institution:

*The type of use in that area fits with that type of garden space. And like I said, with the Friends of the Garden and greenhouse, it's not a high-traffic area. It's not heavily traveled by anyone. There are a few pedestrians through there, but it's kind of a back of a building kind of thing, so it fits having that messier appearance. It works. (Nick)*

Clearly, a disconnection exists between key players of the Garden project. This disaccord between key stakeholder perceptions shares a similar thematic vein as the next theme, indicating a limitation in engagement.

#### 4.3.1.4 Lack of University Engagement

Nine respondents pointed to a lack of university engagement as a challenge to the Garden. Marie discussed her wishes for further involvement from other bodies within the institution for the betterment of the project:

*I just really would like a better network of responsibility. I think if Environmental Sciences, First Nations Studies, Geography, even Engineering, there's a lot of different departments that could have more of a role and take on a little more responsibility with that. Indigenous Services is great, can still be that kind of governing, to make sure that someone's not trying to take over that space. You do need the boss of the garden, and I think that Indigenous Services is the right place for that but it can't be us just telling everybody what to do. I need other people to take initiative and to say, "can we do this?" (Marie)*

Freddie furthered this sentiment towards the administrative level, and discussed how the cultural mindset at the top has a tendency to lose sight of grassroots projects such as the Garden:

*It's going to take more stakeholders, whether they're Indigenous or non-Indigenous stakeholders, at those levels. Like, having an Indigenous provost would be, like, we*

*wouldn't have to fight so hard for things we already know. Just like conversations like this, right? Provosts, it's their job to be in the University business, I get it. But, you forget sometimes that it's not about a business – it's about educating minds, it's about coming to a place of consciousness as a nation. As human beings, that is conducive to our life. That is conducive to our relationship with the land that we're on. (Freddie)*

Nitsitangekwe also discussed how the institutional culture fosters a mindset that loses sight of other ways of learning and viewing the world, which can result in not recognizing the importance of projects like the Garden:

*I think that's what lacking in institutions is they're not connected to their heart. They're not connected to their spirit. They're not even connected to their body. They're only living in their minds because somewhere somebody said, "That's all you need to do is go learn everything you can through your mind, through your mind, through your mind." But the body learns too. The heart learns and the spirit – it's all of our being – and I think that's the other difference. So, I think the Garden is more than just a physical place of being. It's more than that. It's about mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of the original people of this land. (Nitsitangekwe)*

Evidently, a lack of engagement from other parts of the institution is experienced as a challenge towards the maintenance and management of the Garden, which has been suggested to stem from an inherent difference of worldview.

In summary, Founders and Users indicated four fundamental challenges: 1) lack of supportive infrastructure, 2) lack of funding, 3) disconnect between key stakeholders, and 4) lack of university engagement. Each of these challenges are related to one another in various ways, and reveal a continuation of certain dilemmas experienced in the past, as outlined in Section 4.1. However, while these challenges exist, all respondents pointed to unrealized potential that the Garden maintains.

### 4.3.2 Garden Potential

Founders and Users discussed a number of ways forward that could sustain the Garden and help it to flourish, which gave them hope for the project's future. Two overarching themes emerged from these discussions: 1) structural potential, and 2) functional potential. Table 11 presents these findings with their respective sub-themes.

**Table 11**  
**Potential of the Garden**

Garden Potential	# of Mentions	# of Founders and Users Mentioning (n=17) (%)
<b>Structural Potential</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>13 (76)</b>
Attach More Programming	15	11 (65)
Expand Garden Size	9	7 (41)
Move to Central Location	7	6 (35)
<b>Functional Potential</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8 (47)</b>
Bridging Disconnection	8	5 (29)
Building Relationships	4	4 (23)

#### 4.3.2.1 Structural Potential

Structural potential was described as direct actions or steps that would contribute to the future physical wellbeing of the Garden project. Three key steps were identified: 1) attaching more programming to the Garden, 2) expanding the size of the Garden, and 3) moving the Garden to a more central location on campus.

#### **Attach More Programming**

Eleven respondents indicated that attaching more programming to the Garden would be a positive way forward. Jennifer discussed how the Garden easily allows further activity that is naturally compatible with the mission of the university:

*We could do so much more with this thing. We could have an outdoor classroom, we could have people engaged in learning activities, we could have community outreach where people are coming regularly and physically on – you know, we*



*could have counselling happening out there. I mean, the potential for this.*  
**(Jennifer)**

Programming was also discussed as a way to involve the Indigenous communities beyond the university. Enid spoke about this potential:

*It could be a network to the broader community, and to education and that kind of thing. Yeah, to teach more than just about the medicines, right? It's a tool in that bigger picture... How cool would that be, that Western becomes accessible to people outside of Western? Kind of breaks down the institutional barrier there...Just as a statement of how committed they could be to the Indigenous Strategic Plan and reconciliation.* **(Enid)**

Two Users also discussed how the Garden could fit into curriculum across the university, and how this action parallels other initiatives happening on campus:

*People – and just to – because I know in different disciplines, people are starting to incorporate more Indigenous teachings and stuff... so, I just kind of think that kind of discussion that could be had in that kind of area could be used to educate the rest of the population at Western.* **(Everly)**

*Something that I know that I've heard [whispers of] is having a course specifically linked with the garden. And I know that would be hard because that might be a summer course, because obviously, that would be the best time of year. But I think the garden is a great place, like I said, for learning. And I would like to see it included more in programming, if possible, or within a teaching aspect, within learning.* **(Tionnhékwén)**

### **Expand Garden Size**

Respondents also pointed to an expansion in Garden size as a way forward. Some indicated that this expansion would increase capacity and utilization of the space. Lisa light-heartedly spoke about what could result from a larger harvest:

*I mean, if it was a bigger garden, then we'd have a bigger harvest. Then we could have a big feast together, just saying. But that would be cool, to have a big dinner with lots of people around campus eating the food that we grew and stuff like that.*  
**(Lisa)**

Tionnhéhkwen mentioned her hope for an increase in size would help to foster better utility of the space:

*I mean I would also like to see it be bigger, as I kind of mentioned before. But yeah, I think right now, it's a little underutilized, and I think it could be a little bit better or more in the forefront. (Tionnhéhkwen)*

A desire for the project's impact to be bigger was clearly communicated. This sentiment was often mentioned in tandem with the following theme, which Enid summarized well:

*And I'd like to see it in a bigger space, somewhere closer to IS. I think that would be fantastic. (Enid)*

### **Move to Central Location**

Founders and Users also discussed that a more central location on the university grounds would be a more ideal place for the project. Ishkode spoke about this in relation to its present location:

*At the end of the day, it's situated on a space that it just can't sustain itself. So, absolutely it needs to be moved and I think it needs to grow. I think it needs to be huge and I think it needs to – like you say – reclaim a major place on campus. Somewhere where people can't ignore it and it has to be done right and it has to be taken ... the time has to be taken to prep the space and ensure that its longevity is permanent for as long as this campus exists. (Ishkode)*

Dolly furthered this point by speaking to its significance within an Indigenous context:

*You don't see us and I think that's an issue for Indigenous people. They wanna be seen; they wanna be part of the world. They don't wanna be stuck hiding in some dark corner. (Dolly)*

Moving the Garden to a more central location on the university grounds would increase the visibility of the project, as well as the events and cultural meanings locked within that space.

In summary, respondents pointed to three actions that revealed the Garden's structural potential: attach more programming to the space, expand its size, and move it to a more central and visible location. Structural potential was described as direct actions that could allow the project to flourish in a tangible way, but respondents also spoke of another type of potential with important meaning: functional potential.

#### 4.3.2.2 Functional Potential

Respondents described functional potential as positive outcomes that could result in the case of further interest and investment into the space. Two key functional potentials were discussed: 1) bridging the existing disconnection, and 2) building relationships.

#### **Bridging Disconnection**

Five respondents discussed that the Garden is a space that could potentially bridge the disconnection that exists between the broader institution and those invested in the space. Shawn discussed this point in terms of reconciliation as a means to inspire action:

*Perhaps by planting particular species of corn and other varieties of plants, they are participating in reconciliation by doing, and actively encouraging the revitalization of those particular crops that might be slipping from the cultural memory just as various other things have slipped from the cultural memory. So, I appreciate reconciliation by doing, not reconciliation by saying, and gardens are great spaces for doing. (Shawn)*

By treating the Garden as a site of practicing engagement with bridging the disconnection, a sharing spirit is cultivated. Lisa elaborated on the importance of sharing knowledge and experience:

*To be able to celebrate that and also share it with other people, I think it's just profoundly positive, because a lot of things were sort of taken away, and it's taken a lot of time to regain that knowledge or sort of cultivate it and share it within ourselves. So, then to be able to reach out and share that with other people and be*

*respected in that space and not have people telling us, “oh, you’re wrong,” or “no, you can’t do that.” It’s just positive for the relationship to grow there. (Lisa)*

Bridging the disconnection in the context of the Garden means to attain and share an understanding of the mission of the space, and how to operate within it. As Lisa concludes, bridging the disconnection fosters the building of relationships, which leads into the second theme.

### **Build Relationships**

Four respondents directly indicated that they hoped the future of the Garden would lead to building relationships with other university community members. Justin spoke of what this potential could lend to the whole of the university, under the condition that an understanding of traditional protocols is maintained:

*It can benefit people by building a community between indigenous and non-indigenous, if we share location. But I think it's important that we talk about important indigenous protocols around the medicines and the foods. So, I think that should be addressed if we want to share the space. But I do really – we should share the space because then it’s building a better Western community and also it would provide some workshops of learning how to can food or dry food. (Justin)*

Nick furthered this point by sharing his perspective on the importance of community-based projects, such as the Garden, to the whole of the university community:

*We're a community. We're a small city. So, you know, the things and trends that are happening in broader cities and towns and things like that, in terms of urban planning or urban renewal, I think it's important to have those kinds of things on campus as well. We can't live in isolation. We need to accept and kind of grow on the fact that we are like a small city and having these community-engaged projects really helps people connect with the physical campus. (Nick)*

In summary, the Garden was noted to be a potential site of building relationships between present stakeholders and the wider university community. These relationships are

desired by present stakeholders and were discussed as being beneficial to others within the institution.

The Garden was discussed as having both structural and functional potentials. The former was identified as direct actions or steps that would contribute to the future physical wellbeing of the Garden project, and the latter was described as positive outcomes that could result in the case of further interest and investment into the space. Ultimately, both of these respective and interrelated categories point to a desire for the future development of the Garden, and a hope for its overall betterment.

#### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the thematic results of the in-depth interviews with 17 Founders and Users, both past and present, of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden at Western University. These results addressed the study objectives and presented three key thematic findings:

1. The story of the Garden's foundation and development was revealed through an exploration of the web of relations between all respondents.
2. The Garden is used to promote and practice Indigenous lifestyles and assert actions of control through food production.
3. The meanings of the Garden lie in its present challenges and potential ways forward, as discussed by respondents.

While these key findings reveal important aspects in and of themselves, an exploration of how they relate to the literature and other broader discourses will add further meaning.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The final chapter of this thesis consists of six main components and is organized by the order they are mentioned. First, a reiteration of this case study's objectives will be stated, followed by a summary of the key findings. Second, the theoretical contributions of this research, as well as a conceptual framework, will be introduced. The third and fourth components will explore the methodological and policy contributions of this research, respectively. Fifth, the research limitations will be discussed. The final section will provide directions for future research, particularly in areas of food sovereignty, as well as Indigenization and decolonization efforts in the academy.

### **5.1 Summary of Key Findings**

Indigenization efforts at many Canadian universities are occurring, and the prevalence of Indigenous-themed gardens on campuses is increasing. However, the uses and meanings of these spaces are largely underreported. More broadly, food insecurity is an ongoing burden that a disproportionate number of Indigenous people experience. Indigenous Food Sovereignty offers a potentially effective framework to alleviate this problem through its use of core theoretical underpinnings for which Indigenous movements are advocating, such as self-determination and land reclamation. Concurrently, and seemingly unrelated, a country-wide discussion of how to work towards reconciliation has been happening since the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015. Public institutions of all kinds are proclaiming their commitments to reconciliatory actions, and Canadian universities are often leading the way with these

declarations. However, within the last year, a number of criticisms and protests to these efforts have emerged regarding the effectiveness of these actions (MacPherson, 2018; Hamilton, 2018).

With Indigenous garden sites becoming more popular on Canadian university campuses, this thesis sought to address the lack of research conducted on these spaces. Through a case study of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada, an Indigenous-Guided research methodology was employed to conduct in-depth interviews (n=17) of key stakeholders, which were thematically analyzed. The key findings of this case study were shaped by three research objectives:

- 1) To describe the foundation and development of the garden from the perspectives of early founders;
- 2) To determine how the garden is used and for what purposes; and,
- 3) To examine how the uses and purposes of the garden are supported or constrained in the university context.

These objectives ultimately led to three corresponding findings. First, the foundation and development of the garden was reflected by a web between all respondents. Second, the garden was used for asserting control of growing practices and expressing Indigeneity. Finally, both the present challenges that face the garden project and its potential ways forward point to deeper meanings and required discussions within the broader institution. A brief overview of each of these findings, as explored in the previous chapter, will set up the following discussion.

The foundation and development of the Garden corresponded to web between all respondents, revealing a network of relationships. This web was established through relationship development, a process strengthened by tangible actions or evidence, and

reinforced through establishing governance and recruiting other key stakeholders. Strains on this web, such as an eventual change in leadership within the web, challenged its sustainability. Yet, this web showed resilience to these strains through the Garden's present-day existence.

Both past and present stakeholders used the Garden to promote and practice Indigenous lifestyles within the university environment through engaging with Indigenous knowledge and connecting to land. Further, the space was used to practice control through food production by determining the inputs or resources that sustained the space, as well as ensured personal wellbeing and food security as a by-product of gardening.

In its current state, the Garden faces several challenges that threaten its sustainability. The volatility of the Garden's placement coupled with few volunteers to help maintain the space is indicative of a lack of essential supportive infrastructure. Another missing critical element is sustainable funding to support the project's expenses and capacity for growth, and a perceptible disconnection between key stakeholders, with diverse roles within the university. Despite these challenges, however, potential ways forward suggest how physical improvements to the garden project such as relocation can revitalize and transform the project into something better. Additionally, beneficial relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of Western's community could result from greater university buy-in.

In sum, the Garden was found to be an important site of action and meaning for those who were interviewed. These findings can lend critical insight and affirmation to the theoretical bodies explored in Chapter 2, which will be discussed in the following section.



## 5.2 Theoretical Contributions

Recall that Indigenous peoples within Canada are experiencing food insecurity at an alarmingly higher rate than the general Canadian population (Elliott et al., 2012). Reconciliation and decolonization efforts that fail to address the fundamental role of land reclamation in these actions are unlikely to succeed (Alfred, 2005; Simpson, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2012). While many Canadian universities are implementing processes of Indigenization in the post TRC era, the fact remains that these efforts have not been described or evaluated. In fact, many of these institutions have Indigenous themed gardens, (Wilfred Laurier University, 2016; University of Toronto, 2017; University of New Brunswick, 2017); however, there is a general lack of discussion about the meaning of these spaces. We know very little about how these Gardens came to be, nor do we know if or how these gardens are supporting the indigenizing missions within their respective institutions.

The Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden is a place that fits the profile of a community garden and shares many similarities with other community garden projects. Yet, there are important elements unique to this place that attribute more value to it – especially within the political climate of reconciliation. The results of this case study are bounded by their context of the IFMG at Western University. However, this does not limit the relevance of these results, or their ability to lend potential lessons, to other contexts. These findings provide insight into the existing knowledge gap through two primary discussion points:

- 1) Growing traditional foods and medicines on Western University's campus facilitates actions of self-determination, and contributes to land reclamation in a way that enhances Indigenous food sovereignty; and,
- 2) A process of Indigenous land reclamation on university campuses contributes to and aligns with processes of Indigenization and decolonization through relationships between diverse stakeholders.

### ***5.2.1 Self-Determination, Land Reclamation and Indigenous Food Sovereignty***

Self-determination has become a fundamental goal of Indigenous resistance and activism across the world. It is a conceptual beacon that signals the right to practice traditional forms of governance, revitalize cultural learning and expression, and reclaim traditional homelands, at both individual and community levels. In the IFMG, Indigenous self-determination was expressed through asserting control over growing processes and expressing Indigeneity. All aspects of growing were determined by Indigenous stakeholders, and cultural teachings were inextricably linked to growing practices. Further, personal meanings divulged participants' abilities to practice and inherit actions of self-determination through improving food security and ensuring personal wellbeing.

In a sense, self-determination is a living and growing component of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden. It began as a seed that came from the heart of a single Indigenous student; this student wanted to transform a space into one that reflected his identity, cultural teachings, and ways of doing. That seed was planted in that space, and it grew into a place where other Indigenous students could practice its related actions while sustaining and supporting its growth. Ultimately, this finding reflects a pillar of Indigenous Food Sovereignty, as outlined in Chapter 2. However, the concept of Indigenous Food

Sovereignty as proposed by previous literature exclusively references lands that are already under Indigenous control. This case study points to a need for expansion of the framework to include applicability to sites on traditional homelands, but not under Indigenous control. As self-determination is both figuratively and literally rooted in the land throughout this Garden, it has an inextricable action in this local context: land reclamation.

As several Indigenous activist-scholars have asserted, any remediation efforts toward contemporary Indigenous struggles must address land (Alfred, 2005; Simpson, 2008; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Land reclamation is a term often cited in the Indigenous rights discourse, but there is no consensus on an explicit definition. However, there is general agreement that the term indicates ability to – at the very least – use spaces within traditional homelands as a form of resistance to the Crown’s claim to and perceived ownership of them. Land reclamation encompasses, but is not limited to, an assertion of rights to land through physical occupation over contested sites (McCarthy, 2016), and, utilizing traditional spaces to practice and revitalize cultural knowledge (Simpson, 2014; Powter et al., 2015).

Fundamentally, the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden meet these criteria and can be understood as a place of land reclamation. Perhaps it even serves as a juxtaposition and disruption to the Canadian imaginary represented by the whole of the university’s appearance and demeanour. Respondents indicated that the Garden was a place – in a Western, if not colonial environment – where Indigenous ways of educating and being could safely be practiced. As such, Indigenous rights to land have, since the outset of the project, been asserted through enabling Indigenous control and determination over how the space is managed and what is grown within it. However, there are limitations to this control,

which will be explored later. Despite these restraints, the purpose of and activities within this place work toward Indigenous visibility, empowerment, and amplification in the Western environment.

### ***5.2.2 Indigenization and Decolonization at Western University***

Alongside the reclamation of land on Western University's campus, two other processes key to improving Indigenous livelihoods are taking place, which are Indigenization and decolonization. Each of these respective but interlinked processes are occurring through relationships between diverse stakeholders. This case demonstrated these concepts through a web of relations between respondents, and the barriers to the Garden. Relationship is a fundamental component of Indigenous worldviews, and the concept of relationality both in theoretical and methodological discourses have been highly cited in Indigenous research (Harris, 2004; Kuokkanen, 2007; Wilson, 2008; Castleden, Morgan and Lamb, 2012; Simpson, 2014). Further to this point, and in alignment with the finding of the interviewee web, the concept, "the web of relations," was discovered upon revisiting the literature. The web of relations was first put forth by philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) to describe the totality of human activity. Since the term was coined, the web of relations has been used in both geographic and Indigenous discourses.

Studdert and Walkerdine (2016) shaped this concept to fit a geographic lens, wherein the web of relations, "contains everything prior to the outcome of the immediate space of appearance but it is never still or fixed and it is continually altering, albeit in infinite ways" (p. 96). They further explain that a given web is only activated within a space of appearance and is only accessible through the common interests of the

participants. In sum, a space is the means by which particular collective action is seen in its generalized context.

The web of relations was also reframed in Chilisa's (2012) *Indigenous research methodologies* to explain a relational ontology. In her work, this systemic worldview explains that people are rooted in a web of relations or a system of interconnectedness that extends to non-living things. In order to understand this type of reality, one must participate in the "back and forth movement that connects to this web of relations" (2012, p. 196). Each of these views on the concept of the web of relations can lend their understandings to explain the phenomena of the garden as a place of activity.

In the case of this research, the Garden is the space of appearance that activated the web from its conception by the individual, as reflected by the outward trajectory of the web's linkages (Figure 4.1.1). Further to this, Chilisa's (2012) meaning is also fitting in the sense of both place and activity within the garden, especially as this space involves both non-human and non-living things. The building and reinforcing stages of this web enabled a diverse set of stakeholders, in both culture and power, to co-manage the space at varying degrees. The component of this process that most significantly contributes to a process of Indigenization and decolonization of this space is the assignment of governance. Recall that in the second stage of the web of relations, governance was established through the creation of a Garden Council – with representatives from various student groups and faculties – and the stage wherein Indigenous Services was assigned the administrative body responsible for the project. In essence, establishing governance of the space institutionally legitimized Indigenous stakeholder's claim to rights of the space, to transform it to meet

their needs and interests, to participate in decision-making activities and express their identities within this site (Ghose and Pettygrove, 2014).

The recruitment of more stakeholders was achieved by attaining volunteers and seeking external support or consultation with interested groups beyond the university. This could be construed as an investment in social capital to build a better community (Lanier et al., 2015) by involving those interested in the project and increasing the capacity for maintaining the physical space. More specifically, it is a reflection of community-centered responsabilization (Neo & Chau, 2017) as explored in Chapter 2, wherein the mission and purpose of the space is oriented toward creating community through activities such as sharing harvests and creating workshops. This finding is affirmed by the mission statement of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden, as found on its university webpage:

“The *Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden* is an outdoor space that fosters a welcoming and inclusive community on-campus and promotes Indigenous presence, Indigenous Knowledge exchanges, and community involvement while engaging peoples in growing Indigenous organic and sustainable foods and plants for future generations.” (Indigenous Services, 2014)

Establishing governance and recruiting more stakeholders, therefore, were community-centered responsibilities produced in the early stages of the garden project, which show that building a community contributed to a collective effort between various stakeholders towards Indigenization and decolonization of the project.

However, despite this positive revelation of what the space has contributed to processes of Indigenization and decolonization on the University’s campus, the present constraints on the whole of the garden project must be mitigated if its potential is to flourish. In a time where reconciliation has become a contested term due to its lack of transformational action (Manuel, 2017; Alfred, 2017), systems and power structures need

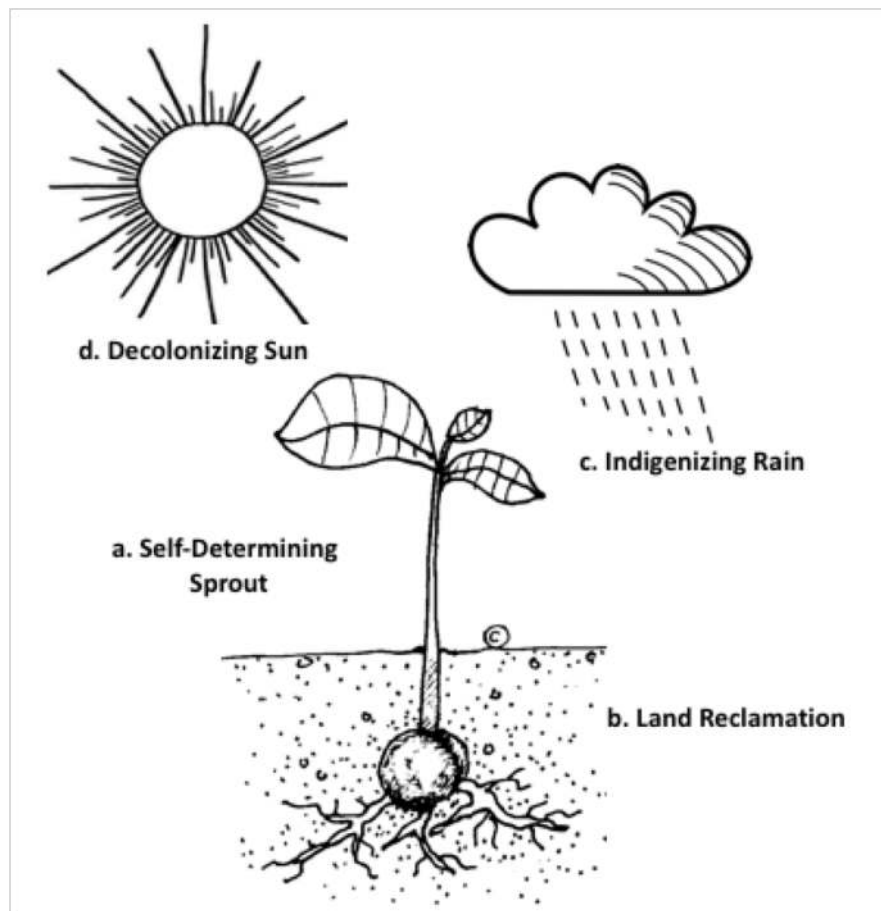
to be revamped by the individuals within them. Because of this, I propose “institutional ally-ship” is a necessary way forward. The ally-ship of institutions, which have been power structures culpable of the historic and often ongoing violence against Indigenous peoples within Canada, goes beyond a declaration or mission statement with the goal of reorienting the structure toward improving their demeanour. Rather, it should directly invest the top players of these establishments through supportive and committed gestures that meet the needs and requests of Indigenous members. In the context of the Garden, stable funding or a formal agreement over a larger space could be possible manifestations of this. In sum, the University must go beyond written and verbally proclaimed promises to institute lasting, positive change and engage in authentic reconciliation.

### ***5.2.3 Conceptual Framework***

The theoretical concepts previously discussed can be made into a single conceptual framework, designed to represent the context of this case study. Figure 5.1 depicts a scene of the components necessary to support a living plant, each labelled with a corresponding discussion point. These include the self-determining sprout, land reclamation, Indigenizing rain, and decolonizing sun.

The self-determining sprout is the focal point of the framework. It is the thing whose growth and survival depends on the supporting elements within the environment. As mentioned earlier, the self-determining sprout came from a seed planted by the individual and continues to grow through the actions of the present-day Users. In spaces that have been called to decolonize, indigenize, and so forth, the self-determining sprout relies on having a space – a piece of land - to be planted. Land reclamation offers this place for the sprout to establish roots, and to feed from earthbound nutrients. In effect, it fixates

itself within traditional territory and is strengthened by its familiar environment. More broadly, the sprout and the land represent the localized benefits for Indigenous peoples that their preceding actions, with the help of allies, work towards. In this case, the land represents the space secured by early founders where the Garden resides.



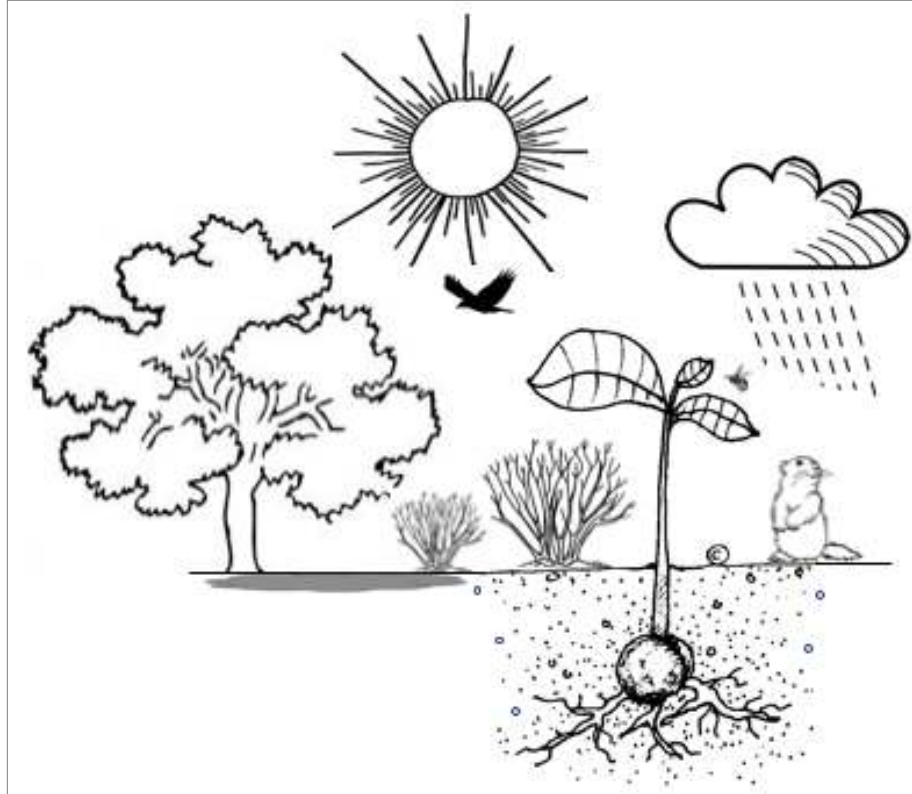
**Figure 5.1**  
**Garden Research Framework**

But the land is not enough to ensure the plant's longevity: other environmental elements, like water and light, are essential for its continued life. Indigenizing rain moisturizes the sprout with cultural teachings, understanding of its identity and role within the ecosystem, and bestows a fluid lens to view the world around it. Equally important,



decolonizing sun provides the energy for the plant to grow strong. It radiates respect for the sprout's autonomy and lends its power to diffuse obstacles that may block its light. Unwaveringly, it brightly shines as a beacon of hope and a goal to work towards. Again, in the broader context, the rain and sun represent the systemic changes or efforts within the university that help to support the localized actions within the Garden.

This framework implies a cyclical nature, as suggested by the orientation of the labels in Figure 5.1. As such, it is impossible to distinguish which component begins the cycle. Even within the story of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden, it is difficult to distinguish what component began the project because of the pre-existing elements that contributed to the idea. However, as it remains, it presents a limited and oversimplified representation of the environmental requirements for such a sprout to succeed in becoming a strong plant. A more accurate depiction should recognize the nuance and complexity of the “optimal growing environment” metaphor.



**Figure 5.2**  
**Expanded Garden Research Framework**

Figure 5.2 attempts to exhibit the many supports an ecosystem provides a growing sprout. Within an ecosystem, a reciprocal relationship – a web of relations – between all counterparts exists in order for the whole to function. A community of diverse wildlife – or stakeholders – participate and contribute in a way that sustains the sum. For real transformation to occur, all components are necessary – not necessarily in equal amounts, as some parts may require more contributions than others – but the collective inputs form a healthy cycle and environment. The scope of this research cannot account for these many parts, and perhaps some of them are undiscoverable. Yet, recognizing the true complexity of this research’s metaphoric representation suggests further contemplation

on what broad terms like “Indigenization” and “decolonization” encompass in their meaning, require for their achievement, and look like in their physical manifestations.

### **5.3 Methodological Contributions**

This research offers important contributions to methodological conversations of how non-Indigenous researchers should approach and conduct Indigenous research. In Chapter 3, I discussed my positionality as a non-Indigenous researcher and how my identity informs and contributes to this work. I explored how my background led me to working on this project, and what I wanted to offer in the position that I am. I also discussed my application of Bartlett and others (2007) “Indigenous-Guided” methodology as a way to apply core aspects of Community-Based Participatory Research while working within the short timeline of this master’s thesis.

Overall, this research demonstrates that there is a role for allied non-Indigenous researchers within an Indigenous research context. In the context of this research, I was situated as both an Insider and Outsider because of my student role at Western University for four years prior to this study, which prepared me with a familiarity of the environment in which this case study took place. However, my outsider status as a non-Indigenous researcher meant I had to be mindful of how I conducted myself within the research process in order to best serve the Indigenous members of this project, and best represent my Indigenous supervisor.

My role as an allied-researcher best suited this case study because I was investigating how Indigenous interests can be amplified and empowered in an otherwise non-Indigenous environment. Ally-ship in research is a term that encapsulates a set of

core practices, including positionality and reflexivity, in order to achieve its core principles of creating space for other ways of knowing and removing oppressive relationships and power structures between culturally and racially different counterparts (Barker, 2010). While definitions of what it constitutes may differ between Indigenous communities, being an ally generally entails working towards a collaborative goal through building and strengthening respectful relationships (Heaslip, 2014). The role of non-Indigenous researchers in an Indigenous research context is constantly questioned, but a number of voices have advocated for partnership between Indigenous/non-Indigenous counterparts (Aveling, 2013; Freeman & Christian, 2010; Graeme & Mandawe, 2017), so long as the practices and principles of ally-ship are at the centre of the relationship. That is, allied-researchers are always in partnership with Indigenous stakeholders.

However, this case study further exemplifies that allied-researchers can perhaps find a more appropriate fit within familiar contexts shared by the Canadian public to conduct similar-veined research. That is, these contexts can allow them to navigate familiar environments while contributing to the investigation of how to decolonize other facets of Canadian society. So long as the core practices and principles of ally-ship are upheld, allied-researchers can positively support Indigenous research interests.

This also aligns well with Indigenous-guided research, because it allows Indigenous people – who are often overburdened in their roles within this work – to direct the researcher through an appropriate research process but gives the researcher the workload while maintaining their accountability to their Indigenous guides. Given the violent and neglectful past of research *on* Indigenous peoples, and the resulting rise of

Indigenous people taking research into their own hands, allied researchers have a suitable role in focusing on their own familiar environments as sites for research on how decolonization is or can take place. In sum, this case study exemplifies how allied researchers can contribute to the overarching goal of reconciling Canada's violent past and decolonizing its longstanding institutions by focusing on familiar environments within Canadian society under the guidance of Indigenous people.

#### **5.4 Policy Contributions**

Falling out of this research are important directions for university policy surrounding Indigenization of Western's campus. The stakeholders of the IFMG pointed to the future potential that this place has for Indigenous members and the broader university community. How space is allocated and the stipulations for how that space is used need to be re-examined if these institutional policies hinder sites such as the IFMG from becoming all that they could be. This is not to discredit the procedures that are currently in place but is merely meant to spark further discussion – at a level that this research cannot speak to – on what the university can do to properly support these kinds of projects. However, as the literature has implored and as this research demonstrates, land is a fundamental element in addressing Indigenous inequities and moving towards authentic reconciliation.

This suggestion is inextricably linked to how funding or investments towards these sites can be made more accessible. The IFMG could merely be a stepping stone to a bigger and more sustainable project with a similar intention, but a primary complaint by Founders and Users was that a lack of funding inhibited its ability to flourish. As a place

that has a history of impactful and far-reaching programming that extended beyond the Western community, a lack of funding to sustain these types of activities is a missed opportunity to improve the whole of Western University.

## **5.5 Limitations of the Research**

There are two important limitations to this research that are worth noting. The first is that Indigenous involvement in this project was limited, particularly in comparison to the suggested methods of conducting community-based research. There are several reasons that explain this. Primarily, the university environment implies that its members have time-consuming responsibilities that span far beyond studying or teaching, including serving on committees, extracurricular activities, and outside employment. Many of my Indigenous guides were already stretched thin because of this, and so could not afford to be highly involved. However, their level of involvement was agreed at the outset of this project, and it did not interfere with protocols such as member-checking.

The second important limitation was that of the scope of my research. There is a limited understanding of the role and perspectives of the top players, of whom are called upon by the findings of this research. The nature of the hierarchical structure within the university is also not explicitly known, nor is how power dynamics and responsibilities play within them. Admittedly, this unknown may unfairly portray the university power players as apathetic towards the activities at the teaching and community level. However, this does not discredit the finding that there is a lack of communication – or a barrier in the communication pathway – between stakeholders of the project and the administration.

## 5.6 Directions for Future Research

This thesis points to key areas in which more research is necessary. First, and broadly speaking, what this research indicates is that Indigenous Food Sovereignty is not limited to on-reserve sites but can be practiced in other places within the far-reaching boundaries of traditional territories. In this case, urban community gardens that centre Indigenous foods and cultural practices can be places that facilitate Indigenous Food Sovereignty and challenge food insecurity among urbanized Indigenous people.

Second, and in the context of this case site, a more in-depth analysis of the hierarchical structure(s) at Western University could be considered, as well as hearing from administrative perspectives about related processes and ways of thinking. This exploration could critically analyze the responsabilization between and among the diverse stakeholders that operate this space. Additionally, related programming in relation to the Garden as well as other Indigenous-focused activities could be explored to evaluate their contributions to Indigenization and decolonization efforts of the University. These future directions inspire several potential research questions:

1) How is responsabilization distributed among stakeholders in the IFMG, and what does this reveal about power relations between them?

2) What other Indigenization efforts are occurring at Western that are both spatially fixed and non-spatial, and what does this contribute to environmental repossession?

3) How do institutional hierarchies impact both spatial and non-spatial Indigenization efforts at Western, and what are the perceptions of top players regarding this?

In terms of other contexts, this research indicates it worthwhile of other Canadian universities, and perhaps universities all over the world, to investigate their respective

Indigenous-themed gardens to explore and analyze their significance. Moreover, this case should inspire universities to investigate their respective Indigenization efforts generally, given that they will continue in various forms such as through curriculum development, but reflect on how their efforts are shaping spaces and places within their institutions to foster or support Indigenization. That said, institutions beyond universities – such as hospitals and public schools – may find similar or divergent findings that will at least reveal more insight about what their projects are contributing to their respective organization. As stated in Chapter 2, processes of Indigenization is not limited to the land. Environmental repossession lends a framework that guides both spatial and non-spatial transformation and reclamation for Indigenous people across the world to assert their presence, rights, and identities. So, while addressing the role and ownership of land has been called for by many Indigenous scholars, Indigenizing and decolonizing activities and spaces/places can be created in its absence. These efforts, whether they occur on the land or not, are meant to strengthen cultural identities and affirm Indigenous rights. Further, future research should explore and document Indigenization and decolonization efforts across institutions and in different facets of society so that Canada can move towards healing its past and a better future – in partnership – with Indigenous peoples.



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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval



**Western  
Research**

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board  
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Research Ethics

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Chantelle Richmond  
**Department & Institution:** Social Science/Geography, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 109288  
**Study Title:** Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Praxis at Western University

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** July 28, 2017  
**NMREB Expiry Date:** July 28, 2018

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received July 19, 2017.	
Recruitment Items	Email	2017/06/22
Instruments	Interview Guide. Received April 26, 2017.	
Letter of Information & Consent	Users	2017/06/22
Letter of Information & Consent	Founders	2017/06/22

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 0000941.

Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

EO: Erika Basile \_\_\_ Grace Kelly  Katelyn Harris \_\_\_ Nicola Morphet \_\_\_ Karen Gopaul \_\_\_ Patricia Sargeant \_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide – Founders**

### **1.0 Foundation of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden**

1. How did you become aware and involved in the Garden?
2. Tell me about where the idea of the Garden came from, and what you know of its inspiration.
3. How was the Garden Council formed?
4. What prompted the decision to have the Garden Council follow traditional Haudenosaunee forms of governance?
5. What were the necessary stages or steps to bring the Garden into physical form?
6. What were the biggest challenges to bring the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden to where it is today? Were these challenges worthwhile?
7. If the project were to start all over again, what would you do differently?

### **2.0 Garden Utilization**

8. What do you use the Garden for? Is this different from what you know others use or have used it for? Are there any events that are or have been hosted there? (e.g. educational resource for a class)
9. What is grown in the Garden, and what is it used for?
10. Where are the necessary resources for the Garden (e.g. seeds, water, compost, tools, etc.) sourced from?
11. Are there traditional protocols practiced in the Garden during its uses?

### **3.0 Perceptions of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden**

12. What is the importance of the Garden space on Western's campus?
13. What is the importance of growing traditional food and medicine plants? Should they be grown in Western's campus?
14. In your opinion, what is the Garden lacking?
15. What potential do you think the Garden has for future development and uses, and where do you hope it will go?
16. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the Garden space?

## **Appendix C: Interview Guide – Users**

### **1.0 Garden Utilization**

1. How did you become aware and involved in the Garden?
2. What do you use the Garden for? Is this different from what you know others use or have used it for?
3. Are there any events that you know are or have been hosted there? (e.g. educational resource for a class)
4. What is grown in the Garden, and what is it used for?
5. Where are the necessary resources for the Garden (e.g. seeds, water, compost, tools, etc.) sourced from?
6. Are there traditional protocols that should be practiced in the Garden during its uses? If so, why?

### **2.0 Perceptions of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden**

7. What is the importance of the Garden space on Western's campus?
8. What is the importance of growing traditional food and medicine plants? Should they be grown in Western's campus?
9. In your opinion, what is the Garden lacking?
10. What potential do you think the Garden has for future development and uses, and where do you hope it will go?
11. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the Garden space?

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Laura Peach

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** Western University  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2011- 2015 B.Sc. Nutrition and Dietetics (Hons)

**Honours and Awards:** Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)  
Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master’s (CGS-M)  
2017-2018

**Related Work Experience** Teaching Assistant  
Western University  
2016-2018

### **Presentations and Lectures:**

**American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting - Paper Presentation.** *“You can’t just take a piece of land from the university and build a garden on it”*: A Case Study of the Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden at Western University. In the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Session. Sheraton Hotel, New Orleans. (April 13, 2018)

**GEOG 2411/FNS 2601 - Indigenous Environments Lecture.** *Food Security, Traditional Food, and Food Sovereignty.* Western University. (February 26, 2018)