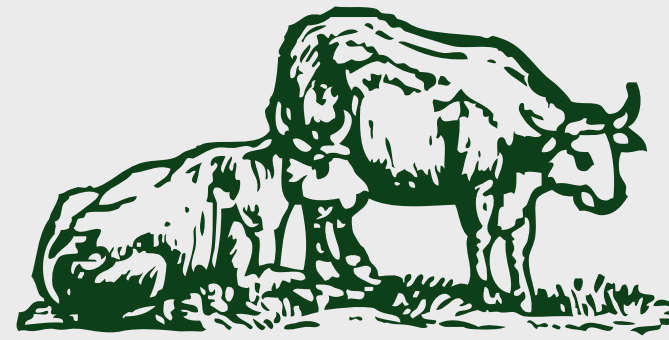




# INDIGENOUS AGRICULTURAL WISDOM

PRESENTATION BY ANDREA KOBETIC


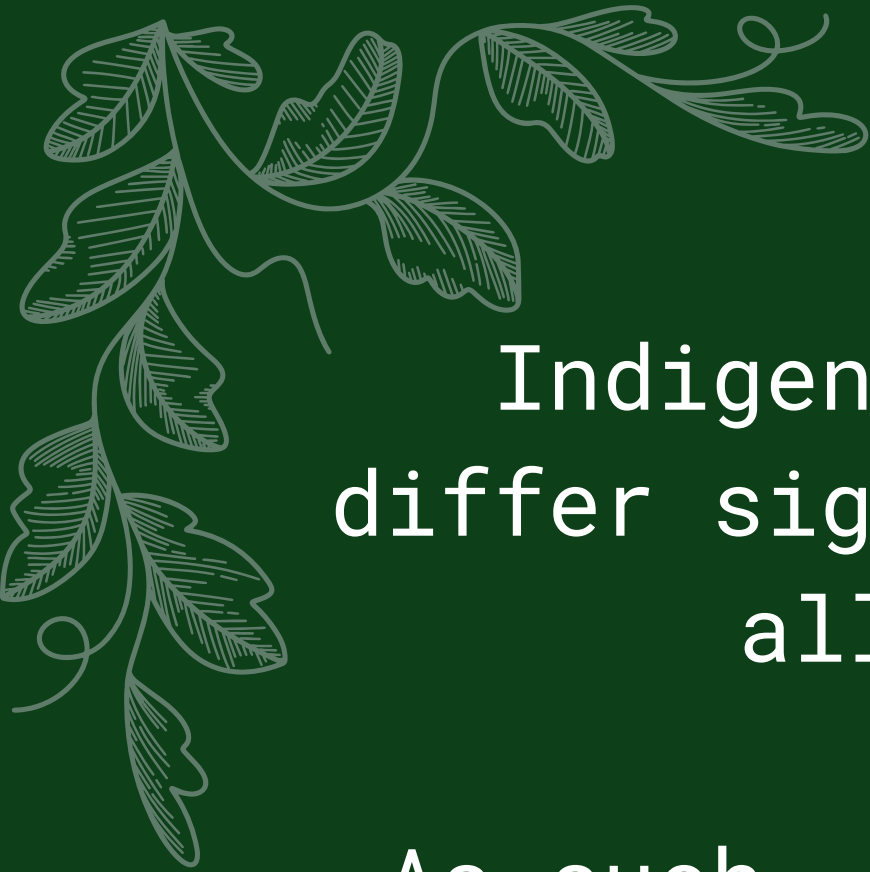




This module is intended to give you a broad understanding of Indigenous perspectives on Canadian food sovereignty and sustainability.

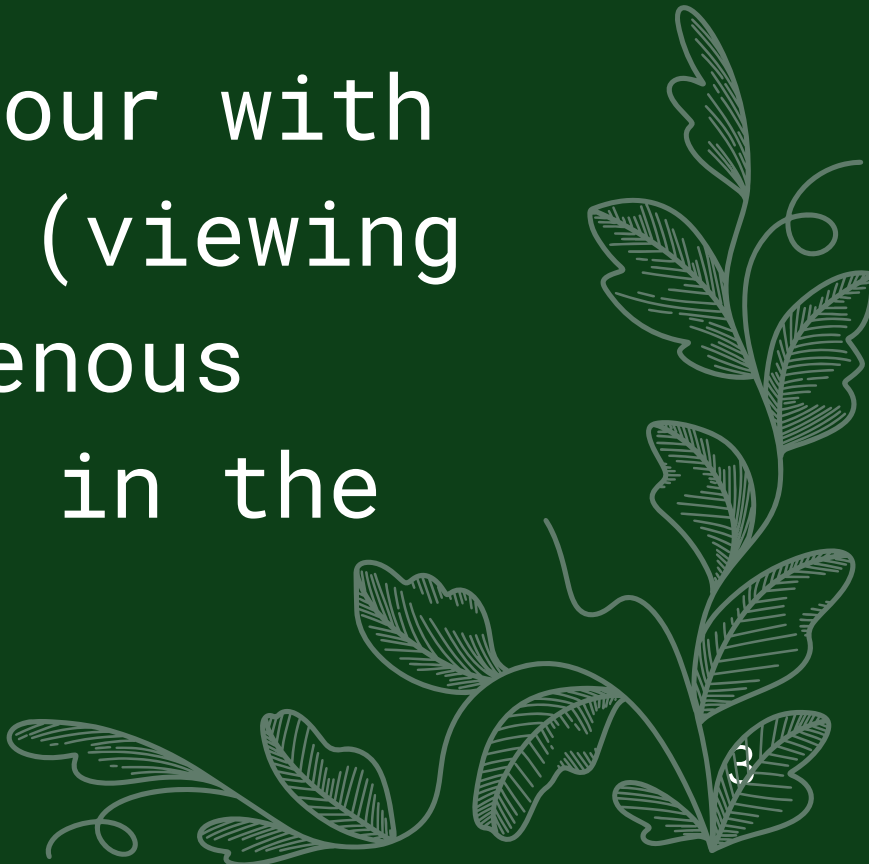

If any of the topics discussed pique your interest and you would like to explore them more thoroughly, you can refer to the number in the top right-hand corner that corresponds with a journal article cited in the final 'References' slide. There is a lot of interesting and useful information in these articles that is not presented here for the sake of concision.

Happy learning!

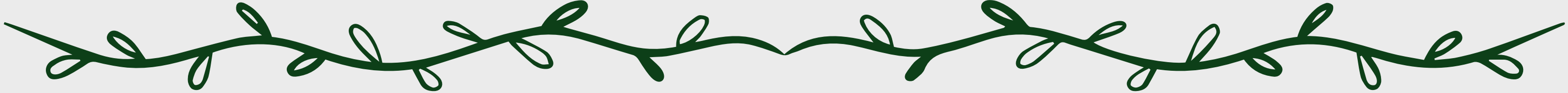


Indigenous perspectives on land use in agriculture differ significantly from the private property laws that allocate and regulate land use in Canada.

As such, Indigenous claims to land face numerous legal and political barriers.




For instance, the liberal idea of mixing labour with land to then be able to claim it as your own (viewing land as a resource) contrasts with Indigenous cosmovision (viewing the land as a co-equal in the relationship).



Kepkiewicz and Dale (2019) further argue that “efforts to advance ecologically sustainable farming practices in Canada need to confront private property ownership in terms of its contribution to both capitalist and colonial violence.”

Certainly, there are smaller changes that can be made in the meantime to benefit Indigenous groups; however, private property ownership is fundamentally opposed to Indigenous land relations and this must be advocated by all agricultural activists.







As uncomfortable as it may be to reckon with, it is paramount to recognise that the current system (as a whole) is still working against Indigenous farmers and people.





As Mobetty, Batal, Levacher, Sebai, and Mercille (2024) describe below, the impacts of the current food system are unequally affecting this group:


“Over the past centuries, colonisation has profoundly disrupted Indigenous food systems, resulting in significant changes brought about by the nutrition transition and the loss of traditional food environments such as increased dependence on grocery stores and increased consumption of ultra-processed foods, resulting in higher rates of household food insecurity and diet-related chronic diseases for Indigenous Peoples compared to non-Indigenous Canadians.”



As such, the independence and sovereignty of Indigenous people has been undermined.

As you well know, land is central to agriculture, but it is also central to Indigenous communities, livelihoods, traditions, and more.

It is not only a matter of having forced people into depending on the dominant food system, but also of attempting to destroy a sacred relationship (between the people and the land).





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Considering the information and perspectives shared in the previous slides, do you consider settler colonialism to be an event of the past, the present, or both?

How has your view on land ownership in Canada changed?



In general, food sovereignty refers to enabling producers to exert control over their means of production (e.g., land); to produce and eat a traditional, cultural diet; and often involves increasing support for sustainable, decentralized, local food systems.

This concept is strongly tied to food security, especially in formal discussion.

This is an enduring concept in Indigenous communities, although Indigenous food sovereignty (IFS) is distinct from all-encompassing definitions of food sovereignty.

**The four principles of Indigenous food sovereignty as listed by  
Kepkiewicz and Dale (2019) include**

- 1) “The necessity of maintaining Indigenous relationships with land;
- 2) The ongoing work of Indigenous peoples in shaping healthy and culturally appropriate food systems;
- 3) The daily maintenance of Indigenous food systems by Indigenous peoples;
- 4) And the need for Indigenous influence over policies at all jurisdictional levels.”





In contrast, Mobetty, Batal, Levacher, Sebaille, and Mercille (2024) argue that “Indigenous nations must define food sovereignty for themselves, or it must be described rather than defined.”



The Indigenous Food Systems Network is a leading organisation in this field in Canada. After reading through their homepage, please consult the 'Resource Keywords' box at the bottom of the homepage and explore at your leisure. Reflect on what you find.



PAUSE



Click on the icon above and to the right or copy-paste the URL below.

<https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/>





**The findings of Mobetty, Batal, Levacher, Sebai, and Mercille's (2024) research revealed there are 3 main facilitators to IFS:**

- 1) "Affirmation of the Indigenous identity"
- 2) "Local food practices and initiatives"
- 3) "Indigenous knowledge transmission"



## The barriers to IFS that these researchers found include:

- 1) “Indigenous traditional practices (progressive loss of traditional food practices & progressive loss of traditional knowledge)”
- 2) “Indigenous well-being (Indigenous health status & residential school trauma)”
- 3) “Urban infrastructure (urbanisation of Indigenous lands & its impact on the local food system; Indigenous individuals residing in urban areas; influence of Western culture)”
- 4) “Federal and provincial government restrictions”
- 5) “Impact of climate change and environmental degradation”



Take a moment to reflect on your own.

“

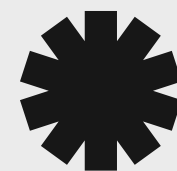
**HOW ARE THESE BARRIERS AND  
FACILITATORS AFFECTED BY  
POLICY?**


**IS IT POSSIBLE FOR  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO  
ACHIEVE IFS WITHOUT SUPPORT  
FROM THE FORMAL SYSTEM?**

**WHAT ROLE DO NON-INDIGENOUS  
FARMERS HAVE IN ALL OF THIS?**



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On the issue of sustainability and agroecology, while it is important in conceptions of food sovereignty and implicit in considerations of Indigenous food sovereignty (whose traditional food systems are sustainable), it is a bit of a separate issue in IFS in a Canadian context.

A primary reason being the use of settler agriculture in the colonial era whose methods are still relevant in contemporary agriculture, and which has been prioritised over other methods of food production used by Indigenous people (including hunting, fishing, and foraging).

While agroecology is not irrelevant to IFS, its innovative and technological lens also seem incompatible with IFS objectives.





Kepkiewicz and Dale (2019) further question whether the objectives of non-Indigenous food sovereignty supporters are problematic:

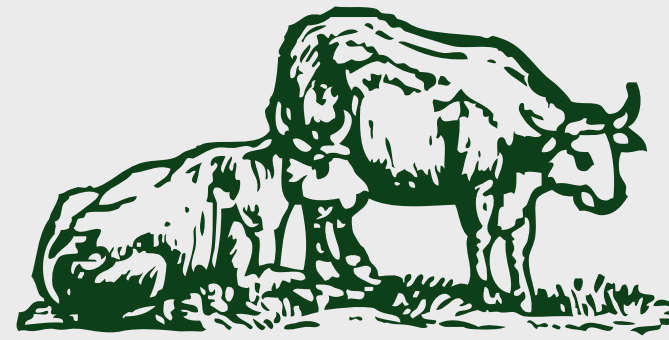
“Settler impulses to create equitable food systems by being stewards or ‘keepers’ of Indigenous lands are problematic in a context where settlers have violently appropriated land from Indigenous peoples and denigrated Indigenous cosmivisions and relationships to land.”

Clearly, land relations and food sovereignty in Canada are very complicated issues.

An important step that each of us can (and arguably should) take is to support Indigenous voices and to include Indigenous perspectives in our discussions.

Participation in food systems and community are important pillars in IFS, and it seems that producers can only benefit from these bonds as well.





**You've reached the end of Module 6!**

We will continue with our discussion by turning our attention to agricultural social movements in Module 7.

Please make sure to complete the Module 6 Quiz before moving forward in your learning.

Thank you!





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KEPKIEWICZ, L., & DALE, B. (2019). KEEPING 'OUR' LAND: PROPERTY, AGRICULTURE AND TENSIONS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND SETTLER VISIONS OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN CANADA. THE JOURNAL OF PEASANT STUDIES, 46(5), 983–1002. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1080/03066150.2018.1439929](https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2018.1439929)

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MOBETTY, F., BATAL, M., LEVACHER, V., SEBAI, I., & MERCILLÉ, G. (2024). EXPLORING INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND FOOD ENVIRONMENTS CHARACTERISTICS THROUGH FOOD INTERVENTIONS IN CANADA: A SCOPING REVIEW. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CIRCUMPOLAR HEALTH, 84(1). [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1080/22423982.2024.2438428](https://doi.org/10.1080/22423982.2024.2438428)

# REFERENCES