Understanding Food Sovereignty:

**Improving Ways to Enhance Indigenous Traditional Food Access on State Managed Lands**

**BACKGROUND**

- Native people carefully managed and cultivated the land through indigenous practices like controlled burning, preserving it for thousands of years.
- Imposed development, including deforestation, mining, and drilling, pose obstacles to food sovereignty and overlook the historical cultivation of "natural" environments.
- Settler colonization undermines Indigenous peoples' politics and cultural sovereignty through forced removal and restricted access to ancestral lands and traditional sites.
- Western rejection of Indigenous worldviews perpetuates marginalization and erodes Indigenous peoples' politics and cultural sovereignty.

**WHAT IS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?**

- The ability of communities to determine the quantity and quality of the food that they consume by controlling how their food is produced and distributed.

*Figure 1: Servisbeberry (Amelanchier alnifolia) in ancient Indigenous forest garden in Olympia, WA*

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

- How do the Washington 29 Federally recognized tribes increase traditional food access within their own communities?
- What state agencies can do to contribute to engaging more productively and honestly in regards to traditional food sovereignty.

**INTERNSHIP**

I worked with the Washington Department of Natural Resources looking at ways state agencies can improve Indigenous traditional food access.

**METHODS**

- Literature review: Inequities of food sovereignty, current traditional food management practices, tribal advances towards food sovereignty.
- Data Collection: Food sovereignty advances by Washington 29 federally recognized tribes sourced from tribal and state websites.
- Interviews with policy, traditional food, archeologists, GIS experts to better understand the issue. Figure 1 shows Indigenous food garden during tour with Mo Major from WDFW.

**RESULTS**

Taking leadership from tribes and providing state agency staff with educational opportunities to understand food sovereignty and significance in traditional foods is critical for improved access on state lands. Figure 2 shows percentages of food sovereignty programs with the 29 federally recognized tribes that can be utilized.

**Education**

- Adopting Traditional Foods Program within state agencies, attending tribal food symposiums and donating to tribal food sovereignty movements.

**Restoration**

- Adopting tribal restoration initiatives and taking leadership from local tribes on restoration management practices.
- Figure 3 shows the different tribal restoration initiatives within the 29 federally recognized tribes.

**Tribal Resonation Initiatives**

- Tribal Food Sovereignty Restoration
- Restoration
- Shellfish Restoration
- Land Buyback

*Figure 2: Tribal Education initiatives*

*Figure 3: Tribal Restoration Initiatives*

**BROADER SIGNIFICANCE**

"Our people never claimed ownership, never, we didn't own this land, the Creator did. We didn't own this water, the Creator gave it to us for life. We didn't own the animals; they made their own decisions, and we have all the stories that tell it. And we the trees, everything, we used for our own, but we also gave thanks and prayer for everything that we took from Mother Earth. Everything has meaning, everything has very deep meaning. Our spiritual way of life."

- Lavana Wilkins - Yakama

**Cultural Values**

- Harvesting traditional foods is one of the main link that Indigenous people have to the land and is a main way to transfer skills and maintain cultural values.
- Figure 4 shows first salmon ceremony.

**Nutritional Values**

- Limited access to healthy, affordable foods is an issue in many rural areas. “Food deserts” can be found in rural areas where supermarkets or grocery stores are scarce, which directly contributes to food insecurity.

*Figure 4: Puyallup Tribe First Salmon Ceremony*

**TAKE-AWAYS**

- Non-Indigenous systems and institutions must yield authority, time and resources, and deconstruct their own colonial postures toward Tribal Nations.

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**Tribal Food Sovereignty Education**

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**Tribal Food Sovereignty Education**

- Traditional Food Classes
- Food Symposium/Report
- Language
- Community Garden

Figure 2: Tribal Education Initiatives

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<td>Traditional Food Classes</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Symposium/Report</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>13%</td>
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Support Local Tribes

https://youtu.be/q5cpfVYcTEE