

**“Hungry all the time”:
Contemporary experiences of and perspectives on
traditional food access in Inuvik, NWT**

**by
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Abstract

This study seeks to understand traditional food sharing and selling networks in Inuvik, NWT amidst dramatic societal change and growing food (in)security concerns. Country (traditional) foods continue to have roles that are foundational to a sense of individual and community well-being for the local Indigenous peoples, many of whom describe feeling “hungry all the time” when they are unable to consume it. I argue that the high degree of transience and employment in wage labour, weakened social connections, limited buying options, and exclusive country food sharing arrangements have contributed to the large variability in access to this valued foodstuff. While some groups such as Elders and single-parents are prioritised for traditional food sharing, professional adults without the skills or time to hunt may experience what I refer to as ‘country food insecurity’. This study also explores perspectives on the commercialisation of country foods, one proposed solution to the issue of access.

Keywords: Arctic food insecurity; country food; Inuvik; food sharing; Indigenous food sovereignty;

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the residents of and visitors to Inuvik who were so generous with their time, knowledge, and friendship. Mahsi cho and Quyanainni.

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1. Introduction

Shawna

Three weeks into my fieldwork in Inuvik, I received an email from an Inuvialuit—Inuit from the Western Canadian Arctic—student responding to the Call for Participants poster I had pinned on the Aurora College notice board. The notice invited adults to participate in a short interview about traditional (or country) food in exchange for \$20. After settling down on the sofa in the participant's living room, I noticed a child's handprint Christmas tree artwork that took pride of place on her wall. She told me that she has one child in daycare and one in school, and it was just the three of them in the house. After moving from Paulatuk—a fly-in hamlet of fewer than 300 people—when she was eight years old, Shawna has no kin left in Inuvik. "The rest of my family split apart." She told me that her favourite country food is Arctic char because "it's really fresh, I guess. And the taste reminds me of Paulatuk." I gently inquired how often she is able to eat it in Inuvik, to which she replied, "not very often. There was a seafood guy that I bought Arctic char off of. I finally had it after so many years." Shawna's favourite country food, the food that reminds her of her childhood home, had generally been inaccessible to her for years! I was immediately struck by how different her country food situation was compared to the staff and volunteers I had been chatting with at Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre. People there seemed to consume country food at least 3-4 times a week, whereas Shawna had not had any in months.

Shawna was shy, and the interview lasted only 15 minutes—the previous three had been closer to 45 minutes each. However, the second I thanked her for her time and pressed stop on the recorder, she told me that the Arctic char she bought from the "seafood guy" cost her \$100 for 12, two-by-two inch pieces. She remarked that back in Paulatuk, she could get two whole fish for \$100. When I exclaimed, "Oh wow, that is expensive then?" Shawna shrugged and insisted, "I was just happy to have it." Arctic char are not found in Inuvik's waters, and therefore, acquiring it necessitates a contact in the smaller eastern hamlets, a purchase, or a gift from a social relation who does have access. Even though other community members had declared that "people share

country food with single-parents”, along with Elders and non-able-bodied residents, it appears that Shawna, a single-mother of two young children, going to college and working two days a week, does not have the time, the money, or the social networks to allow her to eat country food regularly.

Linda

After helping hand out caribou soup and bannock to 25 diners at the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre free lunch service, I went back into the kitchen to finish washing dishes. I had been volunteering there all week, and by now the entire staff knew I was in town to learn about traditional foods. Linda (a pseudonym), a middle-aged employee at the Centre, noticed me at the sink and practically skipped through the door with a huge grin on her face declaring, “My daughter got back from Old Crow, and asked me What am I gonna do with these two boxes mum? I said, “What boxes?” My daughter has these two huge boxes of caribou for me! And they put in pemmican [dried meat, fat, and berries] too, like always.” Linda, who is Inuvialuit, received the caribou and pemmican from her Gwich’in First Nation family in Old Crow, Yukon, a regular arrangement she tells me. However, this is not the only source of traditional foods for Linda’s household. While I was strolling towards the Friendship Centre on a chipper minus 35-degree February morning a few weeks after she had received the boxes, I saw Linda smoking a cigarette by the building’s entrance. When she caught sight of me, she exclaimed, ‘Good timing! My husband caught a moose this morning. He was with his cousin so they’re splitting it. He texted me to come and help, but I am at work and the blood is still draining anyway, so I’ll work on it tonight or tomorrow. Linda is referring to the practice of letting a moose hang before butchering so that the meat does not retain a metallic taste. To put the scope of this harvest into context, a local told me that a whole moose could sustain a family for months.

I start with these two stories because they partly capture the range of country food access experiences I observed in present-day Inuvik, Northwest Territories, Canada. Like Shawna, some Indigenous residents go without foods that are laden with pleasurable emotions and tastes of home for extended periods of time. For others like Linda, country food procurement, distribution, and consumption are quotidian practices

that nourish social connections and a sense of well-being. Even though traditional foods remain culturally and nutritionally significant elements of the overall food system in Inuvik, I wanted to illustrate that the extent to which they make up a household's sustenance varies greatly. This variation in access impacts the social, emotional, psychological, and physical wellness of its residents.

Food (in)security in the Canadian Arctic

Food security is a significant and growing problem for Indigenous peoples in Arctic Canada, stemming from reduced affordability and access to nutrient-rich commercial and country foods. Country foods are traditional northern Indigenous foods obtained by hunting, fishing, and gathering from the land and sea (Ford, Clark, and Naylor 2019; St-Germain, Galloway, and Tarasuk 2019). Crowded households (Ford et al. 2019), along with the very high cost and low nutritional quality of market foods, are also significant contributors to food insecurity. Not only does a diet dependent on nutrient-poor and calorie-dense processed foods cause substantial health problems (Myers et al. 2004), but market foods often do not satisfy Indigenous peoples' *hunger* for food that connects them to their cultures and homelands (Cassady 2008; Nuttall 1992; Yamin-Pasternak et al. 2014). The deprivation of such foods leaves many Northern residents feeling "hungry all the time" (DAA, February 2020). A number of economic, social, and political factors have decreased participation in subsistence hunting. These include the considerable cost of modern hunting equipment (Irwin 1989), changes in the interests and knowledge of younger generations (Ford et al. 2019), and the demands of modern workplaces that constrain time spent on the land to weekends and holidays (Condon et al. 1995). Furthermore, government programs to subsidize shipping costs for imported foods have not been passed onto Northern consumers (Galloway 2017; St-Germain et al. 2019).

One proposed solution to food insecurity in the Western Arctic is to create markets for country foods, either for local sale and consumption or for export to southern Canada. The latter has been tried several times with limited success. It is worth noting that such proposals have, for the most part, been non-Indigenous in origin. In the 1960s, government officials charged with developing cooperative economic activities for Inuit proposed canning seal meat to sell in southern Canada (Iglauer 1979). In the early

1980s, the Inuvialuit Development Corporation (IDC) established a country food outlet called Ulu Foods that processed and sold harvested muskox, fish, and other products locally and for southern markets (ITK 1983). At present, some small enterprises in Nunavut and Nunavik market fish, herbal teas, and other Arctic foodstuffs as luxury or gourmet items in southern Canada. While the export of country food may have financial benefits for the respective private or public businesses, it has not solved the problem of access that many Northerners face. And even when local sales are available, and thus appear to address the issue of access, they do not guarantee affordability for community members.

Much of the health and social science literature on the current nutritional conditions in Arctic communities examines the situation through a food insecurity lens. Indeed, the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey explicitly measured for it, finding that over half of Inuit households are food insecure (Wallace 2014). Attention grabbing though they may be, these statistics do not account for variations in access to the wild foods that community members *crave* and leave them feeling *health-full* (Power 2008). For instance, a number of Indigenous northerners I met in Inuvik who are financially secure wage earners—and thus, would most likely not be categorized as food insecure according to public health measurements—professed that eating country foods was a rare occurrence in their household. While they may not rely on the local food bank nor struggle to afford goods at the NorthMart grocery store, for various reasons, including lack of harvesting skills, employment scheduling demands, or limited social connections, they are often unable to acquire the traditional foods they desire the most. In other words, they are *country food insecure*. However, this is not a fixed designation and residents may fall along a spectrum of access at different times and places in their lives. By engaging the culturally-specific concept of *country food (in)security*, I hope to illuminate barriers that certain northern Indigenous residents encounter. I also hope to disrupt the non-contextual assessment of food security that does not adequately address the nuances of northern traditional food access, or lack thereof.

Inspired by Molly Lee's (2002) description of an urban-dwelling Yup'ik woman's maintenance of social networks via the harvesting and circulation of wild foods in between urban and rural Alaska, I hoped to understand the intricacies of traditional food sharing and selling networks in present-day Inuvik,

Northwest Territories. Lee's (2002) long-term study explicates the sheer motivation, time, and finances required to upkeep relationships that allow for the exchange of food over vast distances and in a time of myriad demands. Having established communication with the then manager of the Inuvialuit Community Economic Development Organization (ICEDO) in 2018, I originally planned my Master's study to examine local perceptions of the ICEDO's proposal to develop a country foods processing facility in Tuktoyaktuk. However, due to feedback from a local organization that Tuktoyaktuk residents had been asked to participate in too many food-related studies, I adapted my project to suit the food systems of Inuvik where I had already received permission to work. With a population of 3,243 Inuvialuit (Inuit), Gwich'in (Dene First Nations), Métis, and non-Indigenous residents, Inuvik is the largest Canadian town north of the Arctic Circle. It has more urban facilities—such as the Aurora College, Indigenous government headquarters, and the regional hospital—than the other communities in the Mackenzie-Beaufort Delta region, thus attracting students, job-seekers, and visitors in need of healthcare treatment. The ebb and flow of people make it a compelling locale to explore the contexts of country food procurement and circulation.

Inuvik, which is accessible by road year-round, has two large grocery stores (one of which is owned by the Inuvialuit Development Corporation) and a number of smaller convenience stores. At the time of my research, the only official business to sell country foods in town was the ICEDO Craft Shop, where customers could purchase a small number of country foods depending on the season—I observed whole frozen fish, dry-fish, berries, and muktuk (beluga whale). As far as I could see, the shop did not advertise the country food and kept it stored in an upright freezer at the back of the shop. Inuvik also has several community food programs to assist the most vulnerable residents—often categorized as the most 'food insecure' (Ford et al. 2013)—access healthy, affordable, or free foodstuffs. These include a Food Bank, soup kitchens (run only in the autumn and winter), and the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre. The Friendship Centre also runs programs for youth, Elders, and 'Mothers & Babies' and hosts community events and feasts. It is worth noting that the soup kitchen and Friendship Centre lunches that I volunteered at often served traditional foods such as caribou or moose soup and bannock, acting as a point of country food access for the attendees.

Indeed, one of my Gwich'in research participants attended soup kitchens with her daughter 3-4 days per week and said they enabled her to eat traditional foods weekly. I saw VC, another Gwich'in interlocutor who is not steadily employed, multiple times at three different soup kitchen locations. During our interview, VC revealed that he makes his own dry-meat with “fresh meat my mum got through cousins, through the [Native] Band.” Therefore, even though VC was unemployed at the time, he has strong butchering skills and social connections in Inuvik. What is of interest here is that a study by Ford et al. (2013) revealed that 70 percent of Community Food Program (CFP) users in Inuvik were chronically food insecure. The aforementioned residents' seemingly juxtaposed food situations showcase the complex nature of northern Indigenous food security. An individual may both utilize CFPs and have regular access to traditional foods. In contrast, a number of full-time wage-earners told me that they sometimes went months without wild food.

Food Sovereignty

Results from the Inuit Health Survey (IHS) conducted between 2007 to 2008 indicate that 43.3% of households in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) experience food insecurity (Rosol et al. 2016)—significantly higher than the 12.7% Canadian average (Tarasuk and Mitchell 2020). However, food security survey metrics conceptualized in non-Indigenous contexts tend to overlook access to traditional foods as part of their assessment (Power 2008; Ready 2016). In communities like Inuvik where traditional food systems are still culturally and nutritionally very important to the Indigenous residents, it seems a notable oversight that, for the most part, food security research has been limited to standard 'individual,' 'household,' and 'community' measurements. In many cases, survey questions address hunger and food affordability but do not specifically examine country food availability. An identification and exploration of *country food insecurity* as a distinct experience beyond market food access and financial constraints is one of my main research goals. Furthermore, the minimal options people have to acquire traditional food outside of harvesting and personal social networks suggest that the “right of all people to culturally appropriate food” (La Via Campesina 2007) has not been upheld in the Canadian North. Therefore, I consider this unique form of food insecurity to be an issue of food sovereignty.

I argue that framing the issue of Indigenous peoples' access to traditional foods as one of food sovereignty— defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (La Via Campesina 2007, para. 3)—allows for a more critical, community-specific analysis than a classic food security approach (Robin 2019). In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) and Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA), food sovereignty is threatened by various social, political, economic, and health factors, including the transition from a harvested to predominantly store-bought diet, the high cost of living, employment in wage-labour, contaminated country foods (O'Neil et al. 1997), and unhealthy store-bought foods (Cassady 2008; Fillion et al. 2014; Kenny et al. 2018). The creation of a commercial trade in country foods that could provide workers with processing skills, support the self-sufficiency of the regional food market, and increase access to quality nutrition for communities is one proposed strategy to promote healthy local food systems. However, this is a contextually complex initiative as country foods in Arctic Canada have traditionally been understood as something Indigenous peoples share, not sell to each other (Gombay 2005, 2010; Harder & Wenzel 2012; Searles 2002, 2016). That being said, there is a long history of northern Indigenous peoples selling subsistence products to whalers, miners, and traders during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Kofinas 1998; Nuligak 1966). Country food distribution and consumption also play a host of roles that are foundational to a sense of kinship, community, well-being, and identity (Condon et al. 1995; Stern 2005; Lambden et al. 2007). While several studies have analyzed community responses to the actual or proposed commercialization of country food in eastern Canadian Arctic communities (Gombay 2009; Harder and Wenzel 2012; Ford et al. 2016; Searles 2016), to my knowledge, there have been no anthropological studies in the Mackenzie Delta region of the Western Arctic. Community-centred and informed initiatives are fundamental to a food sovereignty paradigm (Robin 2019). Consequently, a part of my ethnographic research seeks to illuminate local experiences of and perspectives on selling traditional foods in present-day Inuvik.

By engaging the concept of Indigenous food sovereignty (IFS), I hope to spotlight the complexity of peoples' market and traditional food experiences, an

approach that a food security model does not effectively address (Huambachano 2018). Indeed, Robin (2019) asserts that “Indigenous food sovereignty requires that we move beyond access to food, and critically interrogate Indigenous relationships to food” (p. 85). This involves understanding the interconnectedness of Indigenous peoples, land, knowledge, culture, well-being, and food in order to promote healthy and self-determined food systems (ibid). In Inuvik, this means examining country food production, distribution, and consumption as experienced by all community members. IFS also identifies the injustices and structural inequalities members of Indigenous communities face in a colonized nation-state (Rudolph & McLachlan 2013; Martens et al. 2016; Robin 2019). I posit that one such inequality in Inuvik is that traditional foods have become largely inaccessible for some Indigenous residents without the social connections, abilities, or time to harvest for themselves. The inability that these *country food insecure* individuals, as well as the community at large, have to develop their own solutions to acquire culturally important foodstuffs can therefore be understood as an issue of food sovereignty. Imagined solutions to their problem of access take different forms, with a number of my participants expressing a desire to ‘buy country foods at the store like they buy pork chops’ while others would prefer to be included in community hunt distributions. Though assessing the viability of proposed solutions is beyond the scope of this thesis, I recognize that commercializing wild foods to increase access in the name of food sovereignty may, in fact, undermine the sustainability and cultural values of local food systems, a key component of food sovereignty. The balance of making access to country foods more widespread while maintaining healthy foodscapes requires further investigation.

A food sovereignty approach also accounts for and promotes a right to the collective well-being of the environment, (re)enlivening notions of respectful and reciprocal relationships with the land (Huambachano 2018). The traditional worldviews of both Inuvialuit and Gwich’in peoples encompass an ontology that animals are sentient, agentive beings that make themselves available to honourable harvesters (Arnold, Stephenson, Simpson, and Ho, 2011; Wray and Parlee 2012). Consequently, showing respect towards nature and all of its non-human inhabitants by following ‘rules’—“social norms, customary laws, guides, directions, taboos, and limits” (Wray and Parlee 2012, 70)—is foundational to ensuring the salubrity of the community. Examples of ‘rules’

about how to behave “properly” (as my participants would often say) include ‘taking only what you need,’ ‘not being wasteful,’ and ‘sharing with those in need.’ Throughout my three-month fieldwork, I spoke with both Inuvialuit and Gwich’in residents who continue to articulate these traditional ‘rules’ of respect for the land. For instance, when Julia, a 51-year-old Inuvialuit woman originally from Ulukhaktok, told me that seal was the food that she enjoyed the most, she added that “every bit of the seal is used or ate. You never waste nothing. Everything is used...still today.” While such categorical statements may reflect idealized behaviour for the benefit of a southern researcher rather than the realities of quotidian harvesting, it seemed essential to Julia that I record that Inuvialuit were continuing to uphold traditional values of respecting animals by utilizing their entire remains (see Wray and Parlee 2013). Recognizing and prioritizing culturally accepted methods of food production, distribution, and consumption is foundational to an Indigenous food sovereignty approach.

Country Foods in the Market Economy

Much of the literature concerned with commodification of traditional Arctic foods references Greenland's long-established markets for country foods (Ford, Smit, and Wandel 2006; Marquardt and Caulfield 1996; Nuttall 1992; Rasmussen 2002), in part, because these provide a potential model for other Arctic regions. In Greenland, country food sales occur via commercial fisheries, shops, supermarkets, and country food markets (Pars et al. 2001). In Canada, traditional foods are exchanged for cash through private and collectively owned businesses, hunter support programs (long-running and ad hoc), and informal grey market sales between individuals and local businesses. For instance, the Nunavut Development Corporation currently has several small food-processing businesses, including Kivalliq Arctic Foods in Rankin Inlet and Kitikmeot Foods in Cambridge Bay. Kitikmeot Foods has been running since 1990 as an Arctic char and muskox processing facility and retailer, employing up to 50 seasonal hunters and fishermen (“Kitikmeot Foods” n.d.). Kivalliq Arctic Foods offers a “Country Food Pak” to Nunavummiut (Inuit in Nunavut) across the territory, increasing accessibility of a variety of country food items (char, caribou, muskox, and muktuk) (“Kivalliq Arctic Foods” n.d.).

The Hunter Support Program in Nunavik (northern Quebec) subsidizes Inuit hunters who contribute meat and fish to community food banks (Gombay 2005; Kishigami 2000). This program introduces the concept of pay for harvesting traditional foods, and thus helps financially support culturally valued, but otherwise unaffordable, high-quality foodstuffs. The program appears to negotiate the moral concerns that many Nunavimmiut (Inuit in Nunavik) have with the sale of country foods for economic gain by mirroring the traditional practices of giving foodstuff away (Gombay 2005). Not only are social relationships based on kinship, neighbourhood, and collective hunting associations fostered, but a broader sense of community identity is also strengthened (Kishigami 2000). Additionally, it looks as if the HSP acts as a moral buffer between Inuit hunters and consumers because communities conceptualize the program as selling country food to an institution rather than to fellow Inuit (Gombay 2005). However, another researcher studying the HSP reported that participants occasionally complained the quality of meat available was not very high (Chabot cited in Gombay 2005, 122). 'Community hunts' in Inuvik and other Inuvialuit communities are a related initiative, compensating hunters for providing Indigenous organizations (such as the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC), Inuvik Native Band, Nihtat Gwich'in Council) with wild foods to pass on to Members 'in need'. The fact that hunters are indeed paid for their catch did not seem to bother any residents. In fact, the only slightly negative feedback I heard was from a few country food insecure individuals who remarked on how the hunts provided access mostly for Elders and single-parents.

Recently, the ICEDO has proposed to deploy a mobile processing facility to allow residents in the six Inuvialuit communities to learn how to process country foods for commercial sale. The initiative aims to teach Inuvialuit Regional Corporation beneficiaries the processing and business skills associated with transforming country foods into value-added commercial products (Government of Canada 2016). The ICEDO envisions country food processing facilities and stores in each of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) communities; however, as of yet, there has been no research on how this initiative would fit into Inuvialuit food practices, beliefs, and desires. There is an informal market for country foods in some Inuvialuit and Gwich'in communities, including Inuvik. Andrachuk (2008) observed that harvesters in Tuktoyaktuk sell traditional foods to other community members but the author did not investigate the

specific exchange networks. It is perhaps worth noting that the absence of data on country food sales does not necessarily mean that it is a rare phenomenon but may instead reflect locals' hesitancy to discuss the legally ambiguous informal sales with researchers. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (2005), for instance, stipulates that "Inuvialuit may sell, trade and barter among Inuvialuit" (43); however, a commercial tag issued by the local Hunters and Trappers Committee is required if the hunter intends to sell the meat with others.

While a desire to be able to purchase country food has been documented in various Arctic communities (Lardeau 2011; Todd 2011;), the limited options means that it is difficult or not feasible for many families to do so on more than an occasional basis. Indeed, a number of my participants cited the high cost as a factor limiting their purchase of traditional foods. Shawna, for example, said that she purchases it only "when I have the money for it." And according to Raven, "it's kind of expensive, which is also why I don't buy it." Other participants also voiced concerns about lacking the butchering skills necessary to break down an entire animal if acquiring one was possible. For instance, Margaret explained that she used to buy many types of country foods from Ulu Foods in the 1980's "because everything's cut up so you'd be ready to cook," whereas she seldom purchases it nowadays. Therefore, I attempted to discover what Indigenous residents would want country food sales to look like in the future, if they want them all.

However, even if a desire to commercialize wild foods exists and the distribution model was both feasible and culturally appropriate, it must be acknowledged that climate change and industrial contaminant presence means the proposal may not be sustainable. While survey data from the 1990s indicates that the combination of subsistence and local commercial harvesting in the ISR did not put species at risk (Usher 2002), the effects of climate change on ecosystems were not as dramatic as they were today. A study by Tyson, Lantz, and Ban (2016) predicts that natural and human-related environmental disturbances in the Mackenzie Beaufort Region will increase in intensity and thus make the landscape more vulnerable and limit conservation potential. The adverse effects of global warming have and continue to impact traditional food access in the region as well. My field notes are replete with examples of climate change discourse, including the presence of invasive species, changing migratory

routes, pollution, reduced population numbers, change in vegetation that animals rely on due to changing soil conditions, and variable weather patterns. For instance, locals told me that salmon are taking over native fish habitats because of warming water temperatures and that they fear Orcas will disrupt beluga whale calving grounds. Others blamed climate change for the increase in otter and beaver populations who they say are driving out the muskrat, an animal that many still trap for their fur and for consumption.

Country food toxicity in the Arctic is also of serious concern given that persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and heavy metals bioaccumulate in sea and terrestrial animals that Northerners harvest for consumption (Donaldson et al. 2010). In fact, the 2009 Northern Contaminants Program reported that Inuit populations have the highest levels of exposure to these contaminants in Canada. Residents of Inuvik expressed their concern with wild food toxicity in experientially grounded stories about catching a beluga whale that was “full of puss” or harvesting berries that were ‘covered in exhaust fumes from all the road traffic.’ It would therefore seem likely that climate change and toxicity factors decrease the prospect of commercializing wild foods sustainably, at least beyond a local scale.

Northern Indigenous Food Systems

The procurement, distribution, and consumption practices associated with country food have been “linked to larger cosmological notions about the nature of existence” (Gombay 2010, 10). For Inuit and Dene, traditional country foods are those hunted, fished, and gathered from the land and sea—primarily wild game, sea mammals, fish, and berries (McGrath-Hanna et al. 2003). The country foods that people in Inuvik most commonly harvest include caribou (Blue-nose and Porcupine), moose, beluga whale, ducks, geese, arctic hare, whitefish, coney, arctic char, and berries. Not only are country foods nutritionally significant for Indigenous well-being, but they also have social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and political roles that are foundational to a sense of community and sovereignty (Nuttall 1992; Gombay 2010). Indigenous food sharing practices and ideology constitute an “institution of sharing,” a principle of reciprocity that continues to permeate northern communities (Collings et al.

2015; Levesque et al. 2002; Searles 2002; Stern 2005; Wray and Parlee 2013). The heart of this institution is kinship relations, with social networks determining who has access to harvested foodstuff (Nuttall 1992; Levesque et al. 2002; Stern 2005). The distribution between households, traditionally organized by the hunter's wife, acts as both a method of social cohesion and fulfilment of the moral obligation to give (Nuttall 1992; Wray and Parlee 2013).

Similarly, Rasmussen (2002) affirms that food distribution systems, such as communal freezers and family networks, are linked to a collective sense of solidarity. However, it is vital to note that modern Arctic sharing practices are not limited to subsistence goods, as many individuals distribute gifts such as cash and material products within networks of reciprocity (Nuttall 1992; Stern 2005). Moreover, in discussing modern Inuit societies, Searles (2002) proposes that country food and its consumption have taken on a political and symbolic meaning. He asserts that practices associated with country foods have become a way for Inuit to differentiate themselves from White people. The cultural critique of White lifeways as individualistic and capitalistic (Searles 2002) may, therefore, pose a potential predicament when suggesting the commercialization of traditional foods as a way to promote Indigenous food sovereignty.

In their paper exploring adaptation strategies used in subsistence hunting by Inuit peoples in the face of anthropogenic climate change, Tristan Pearce and his colleagues (Pearce et al. 2015) state that through the flexibility of hunting seasons, methods/technologies, animal species, hazard avoidance, and emergency preparedness, Inuit have continuously adapted to dramatic changes in conditions (237). Drawing from fieldwork in Ulukhaktok, NWT, the authors (ibid) illuminate some of these Traditional Ecological Knowledge-informed adaptive capacities, such as when Ulukhaktokmiut (people from Ulukhaktok) transitioned to hunting muskox after the Peary caribou population significantly declined in the late 1970s. Or how they adapted to changing sea-ice conditions by taking advantage of a prolonged duck hunting season using modern boats and rifles. This outline of harvesting modifications reaffirms how important it is to locate the potential sales of wild foods in a historical context in order to demonstrate that the proposal to sell country food would represent just one of myriad adaptations that Indigenous peoples have made—not a sudden break from 'tradition.'

Indeed, when discussing his participation in subsistence activities, a 21-year-old Gwich'in man told me that “some people say only the old way is right, but we live in modern times, so me and my friends adapt.”

In this thesis, I draw on three months of field research conducted from January to March 2020 to examine how the high degree of transience and employment in wage labour, lack of “a social network capable of confronting poverty and avoiding social vulnerability” (Natcher 2015, 230), and informal and formal traditional food sharing arrangements have contributed to the large variability in access to wild foods. I also investigate how categories of people are prioritized for and imagined to be in need of country food sharing by both Indigenous organizations and individual members of the public alike. Drawing on previous research that shows some Indigenous Northerners find the idea of selling wild food unacceptable (Gombay 2005; Kishigami 2000), I further explore how the experience of consuming foodstuffs regularly or occasionally influences their perspectives on the sale of country food.

Additionally, I delve into narratives about country food sharing and eating rich with the emotional states of nostalgia. I was witness to moments of revelry in the continuities of sociality and bodily satisfaction that eating country foods entails, succinctly captured by one participant as she ate cubes of muktuk (whale skin and blubber) with a group of friends—“It tastes better when we eat together.” However, some participants also expressed mourning and craving for an imagined time when ‘everyone shared.’ I draw on literature that examines food-centered nostalgia as a type of hunger for the meanings and memories attached to foodways along with a hunger for the physical foods themselves.

Terminology

Throughout this paper, I will apply the terms traditional foods, country foods, land foods, and wild foods interchangeably to describe Indigenous foodstuffs harvested from the land and waters. After a few weeks in Inuvik, I discovered that ‘country food’ is more common, though not exclusive, in the Inuvialuit (Inuit) lexicon. Therefore, I attempted to employ the more inclusive term ‘traditional foods’ when conversing

with Gwich'in and Metis participants, though the culturally-plural composition of Inuvik means that non-Inuvialuit participants understood the term country food and Inuvialuit understood other terminology. A number of Inuvik residents also use the term 'Native food,' one that I do not utilize but may show up in the speech of interlocutors in this thesis. Additionally—and as a notable reflection of collective identity performance—participants would often simply say 'our food' to demarcate traditional food from 'White,' southern, or store-bought fare. Though not considered country foods, certain fare such as bannock, 'donuts' (fried bread), and other items such as tinned meat (Klik or Spam) and rice pudding have become incorporated into 'traditional cuisines'.

Research Questions

In order to understand contemporary sharing of traditional foods in Inuvik, my research was guided by the following question: between whom, involving the transfer of which resources (food, money, gifts, services), and under what circumstances are country foods currently exchanged? Additional questions included: (2) how often are residents consuming wild foods and how do they express their desires for it?; (3) what emotions are entangled in the sharing and consumption of country foods?; (4) what are the local concerns towards and desires for commercializing country food from male, female, youth, and Elder perspectives? (5) are those employed full-time in the market economy likely to support markets for country foods?

Study Site

Even though Indigenous peoples have used the land surrounding Inuvik for thousands of years, the present-day town was not constructed until 1958 when the federal government decided that the nearby town of Aklavik was no longer suitable as a regional centre due to its tendency to flood (IRC 2020). From its very conception in 1954, the government was more concerned with establishing a town that catered to the needs and comforts of non-Indigenous employees than it was with supporting an equitable, culturally-diverse community (Honigmann & Honigmann 1970; Sheppard & White 2017). Lacking adequate consultation, the town was divided into two neighbourhoods. The East End, designated for transient non-Indigenous workers,

had fully-serviced homes with modern amenities; the West End had substandard welfare homes without basic amenities like running water and flow sewage meant to be 'affordable' for Indigenous residents (Honigmann & Honigmann 1970). Though the power dynamics have shifted and the ethnic division is no longer enforced, the remnants of this early partition are literally still visible from the streets.

Inuvik is the Mackenzie Delta's hub for post-secondary education, business, healthcare, and governmental services. The community is part of both the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), one of five Inuit regions in Canada³, and the Gwich'in Settlement Region (GSR). The ISR was established via the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) between the federal government and Inuvialuit peoples in 1984, institutionalizing their traditional and constitutionally-protected Indigenous rights. The IFA was the first comprehensive land claim settled in the NWT (IFA 2005). The 3,110 Inuvialuit beneficiaries (StatsCan 2018) are descendants of a group of Inuit known as *Siglit* (Coastal People) as well as Iñupiat from Alaska and Innuinait (previously called Copper Inuit), who settled in the territory approximately 800 years ago (IRC 2020). Approximately 37 percent of Inuvik's current population identify as Inuvialuit (Gwich'in Tribal Council n.d.). Since 1984, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) has represented Inuvialuit peoples' interests, from administrative support to financial dealings with public and private sector actors (IRC 2020). The ISR includes the six communities that are party to the 1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement: Inuvik, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, Ulukhaktok, Paulatuk, and Sachs Harbour. The Inuvialuit are currently engaged in self-government negotiations with the federal and territorial governments, with an agreement-in-principle achieved in 2015 (IRC 2020).

Both Inuvik and Aklavik also fall within the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA), along with the towns of Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic. The Gwich'in are Dene people who have managed and occupied territories in the Western Arctic for thousands of years (Kenny et al. 2018). There are approximately 7,000-9,000 Gwich'in currently living in Alaska, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories, 3,400 of whom reside in the latter territory (Clark 2007). Approximately 14 percent of Inuvik's current population identifies as Gwich'in (Gwich'in Tribal Council n.d.). Unlike the Inuvialuit who did not have treaty relationships with the government prior to 1984, Gwich'in who resided within Canadian

borders were party to Treaty 11 signed in 1921. However, due to the limited scope and poor implementation of Treaty 11, Gwich'in living in the Yukon and Northwest Territories were able to pursue a modern, comprehensive treaty, the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (GCLCA), which they established with the federal government in 1992 (Clark 2007). Similar to the IRC, the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) was created to represent the rights and manage the benefits of GCLCA participants, including protecting, preserving, and promoting their rights to use natural resources, maintenance of traditional and cultural customs, developing programs, and managing the financial assets of the GCLCA (Gwich'in Tribal Council n.d.).

In his book *Breaking the Ice: From land claims to tribal sovereignty in the Arctic*, Barry Zellen (2008) outlines the conditions that led to Arctic peoples' transnational push for sovereignty. For instance, the militarization of the North during the Cold War put Indigenous peoples in permanent contact with American and Canadian military forces, a foreign presence that was subsequently replaced by the oil and gas industry. Industrialization was simultaneously perceived as both a threat to Northern security as well as an economic development opportunity. The dramatically changing social and economic landscape mobilized the Alaskan Iñupiat, Canadian Inuvialuit, and regional First Nations and Metis nations to pursue land claims agreements. However, the governance models that the various Indigenous groups have and continue to negotiate, as outlined in their respective land claims agreements, have resulted in different sets of rights and responsibilities. For instance, the Inuvialuit have authority to co-manage the wildlife and land use and have rights to subsistence hunting, while the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement included a provision for future self-government negotiation. However, Inuit in Nunatsiavut (Nunatsiavutmiut) in Labrador, whose land claims agreement was 27 years in the making, attained self-government.

It is important to note that even though Indigenous residents are allowed to benefit from only one of the Land Claims agreements, Inuvik's population is very blended. In this thesis, I often distinguish a participant by the beneficiary status they name in our interview; however, their lived realities do not exist in binary cultures. The following statement by an Inuvialuit beneficiary illustrates the blended nature of formal and informal identities in Inuvik, "I come from two cultures: my father is an Inupiaq

descendant from Alaska and my mother is Vuntut Gwich'in from Old Crow." I spoke with many locals who had the choice to register with either the IRC or the GCLCA, or who were contemplating which organization to register their children with. The motivation for enrolment seemed to be influenced by the different benefits offered—Harvester's Assistance, youth initiatives, educational scholarships, to name a few—as well as the cultural and familial connection to a particular group. Adoption is also a common practice in the region, and thus, the formal status of a beneficiary may not represent the sole culture in which they were raised.

Regional Colonization

I believe that it is necessary to situate my study of contemporary Indigenous food systems within the history of settler colonialism in order to recognize the forces that have and continue to shape lives and livelihoods in the region. That being said, the following section is only a brief outline of major colonial events and is not meant to serve as an exhaustive account. The first (documented) regional Euro-Indigenous interactions occurred between Alexander Mackenzie and the Gwich'in, who guided his crew through the Mackenzie Delta territory in 1789 (Arnold et al. 2011). The Inuvialuit encountered John Franklin's second expedition on its exploration of the Mackenzie River out to the Beaufort Sea between 1825-1827 (ibid). Even though regular, ongoing contact was not established with non-Indigenous people until the 1880s when American whaling boats began wintering over on the arctic coast, the Hudson's Bay Company post at present-day Fort McPherson and seasonal trade with whalers on the coast started disrupting traditional trading routes that had stretched across the entire circumpolar region in the 1840s (ibid). Indigenous peoples traded furs and wild foods for imported manufactured items such as firearms, steel, and staples such as tea, sugar, and flour (Bonesteel 2006; Arnold et al. 2011). Sugar, flour, and alcohol became an integral part of Arctic food systems (Bonesteel 2006). Fur trapping was a very lucrative trade for many Indigenous peoples, allowing some Inuvialuit to purchase their own schooners for trade journeys as far south as San Francisco (Nuligak 1966). Iñupiat from the North Slope of Alaska moved into the Mackenzie Delta during and immediately after the whaling period, settling in the local Inuit's (*Siglit*) hunting grounds (ibid). Traders and whalers also brought with them infectious diseases —namely measles, influenza, and

tuberculosis—to which Indigenous peoples had no immunity with devastating consequences for local peoples (Bonesteel 2006; Arnold et al. 2011).

As previously mentioned, military presence in the North during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s brought Indigenous groups into direct contact with nation-state actors, exposing some of the poor living conditions that had ensued after the fur trade's collapse in the 1930s (Bonesteel 2006). Motivated by the need to provide social services and assert sovereignty, the Canadian government established centralized, permanent settlements in the Northwest Territories under the 1958 Northern Vision initiative (Sheppard and White 2017). Consequently, the 1950s and 60s saw voluntary and enforced settlement into towns with colonial institutions such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, medical facilities, churches, and federal schools. From 1959 until 1997, Stringer Hall (Anglican) and Grollier Hall (Catholic) in Inuvik housed residential students from across the region who then attended the Sir Alexander Mackenzie Day school with local residents (Fraser 2020). The ongoing, culturally disruptive impacts of these schools emerged in my research as one middle-aged participant told me that her mother and husband did not develop the skills necessary to harvest because residential schools had displaced them from their home and prevented the transmission of traditional skills.

Outlining My Fieldwork

I quickly learned that Inuvik made an intriguing field site given that it is an urban Arctic locale in which subsistence hunting remains a valued and essential element of the local food system. I conducted nearly three months of fieldwork between January and March 2020, living in the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) housing complex available to those with a research license. I believe that the timing of my fieldwork turned out to be advantageous as there are very few subsistence activities during the winter compared with other seasons when many Indigenous residents spend time 'out in the bush' trapping, fishing, or hunting at whaling camps (whaling is almost exclusively an Inuvialuit practice). Not only was the majority of the population in town, but there were also very few tourists or other researchers present, and thus the community was not saturated with outsiders. I designed my qualitative methodology to capture subjective lived realities so that I might attempt to understand food sharing and selling as my participants understand them. I used the ethnographic methods of semi-structured interviews,

community-based participant observation, surveyance of public online platforms, and photography.

I cut my fieldwork short by almost four weeks due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Local and territorial officials closed nearly all public gathering places and cancelled several planned events, including the Muskrat Jamboree and the Hotii ts'eeda Health Science Conference. Indigenous organizations were quick to offer subsistence-related support to their beneficiaries, with a post on Facebook from March 20th announcing that "Inuvik HTC would like to help our members (1 person household) who are going out onto the land with \$300 worth of gas and \$200 worth of groceries." A few hours later, an update revealed that they were no longer taking applications after having already provided financial assistance to 54 households. IRC also developed an 'On the Land Program' providing funding for members who could demonstrate that they "already have an established camp...and ready transportation...[r]ecognizing that going out on the land is traditionally and culturally relevant especially during this time of uncertainty" (IRC 2020). It is perhaps worth noting that the qualifications to receive funding—owning a camp and a vehicle, the ability to spend a minimum of 14 days on the land in a single trip, and a high level of experience on the land (IRC 2020)—would have likely excluded already *country food insecure* households.

Research Methods

1) Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted 12 recorded interviews with 7 Inuvialuit and 10 Gwich'in beneficiaries (occasionally friends or family requested to do the interview together). I interviewed one non-Indigenous woman and her Gwich'in husband together. I tried to have a sample representing the diversity of community characteristics—age, gender, employment type—with the expectation that they would hold a variety of perspectives. While I was unable to recruit a teenage participant for an interview, I did have informal conversations with a number of children and youth and included their perspectives where possible. When I first arrived in Inuvik, I recruited participants by posting Information Sheets on Community Boards with high visibility such as at the

library, grocery stores, IRC headquarters, and Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre. As I developed relationships throughout the town, community members helped make introductions that they thought may provide useful information, and I am very grateful to them.

The semi-structured interviews lasted between 15 and 70 minutes. They took place in various locations, including the Midnight Sun recreational centre, the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre, the Inuvik Native Band Office, the Transient Unit in the Regional Hospital, and participant's homes. Given the intense multiethnic interactions of the past 200 years in the Western Arctic, English is the primary language of communication, and I was thus able to conduct the interviews myself. I did have the contact information for an Inuvialuktun translator if a participant had requested that service. While I tried to facilitate in-depth, open-ended discussions, I addressed a core set of questions so that I was able to compare answers. Topics covered included: how often do they get to eat country food and what are their favourite recipes; who do they share with or receive country food from; if and how often they buy country food products; and do they have any concerns about commodifying land foods?

2) Community-based Participant Observation

Participant observation was not only vital for contextualizing the other forms of data generated during fieldwork, but it also allowed me to build rapport in the tight-knit community. I am thankful that I was given the opportunity to volunteer at local organizations such as the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre, Parish Hall Food Kitchen, and Food Bank. Volunteering was paramount in developing relationships with community members and providing an opportunity to recruit participants. Ingamo Hall became central to my fieldwork, as the staff members—Nellie, Melissa, Patricia, Eileen, Kim, Stacey, Jojo—were generous in sharing their experiences, knowledge, company, and bannock. I jumped at the chance to participate in every event, social occasion, or quotidian activity I could, such as attending Town Council meetings, volunteering on an Elders trip to Tuktoyaktuk, and helping Ruth Wright teach children how to finger-knit. A sewing instructor invited me to participate in weekly IRC Traditional Sewing classes where I tried raw *muktuk* (beluga whale skin) and *quaq tuktu* (raw frozen caribou meat) while exchanging stories with Nungki, Donna, Peggy, Christine, and all the other wonderful women. I also participated in subsistence activities such as learning from Ruth

Goose how to butcher and prepare a caribou hindquarter at the Ingamo Hall. The informal conversations, cooking, sewing, travelling, and eating in the community were of particular importance to my research in that they afforded me an on-the-ground vantage point to some elements and experiences of traditional food sharing.

3) Online Platforms

I joined local public Facebook groups, including 'Inuvik's Buy Sell Trade,' 'Inuvik Events,' and 'Caremongering Inuvik.' I monitored the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Nihtat Gwich'in Council, Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Committee, and Inuvik Native Band pages to track posts relating to the exchanges and sales of wild foods. Not only were the posts themselves insightful, but the comments could be equally informative as members might critique, valorize, or police certain exchanges. As an illustration, on January 15th, a woman posted that she was "looking to buy caribou dry-meat. Please & thank you." In the comments, someone had responded that she "can't buy caribou, only bargain," and another respondent cited the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) *Wildlife Act* that prohibits the sale of caribou. This example of policing is most likely intended to avoid unwanted scrutiny from wildlife officials rather than a representation of what actually happens' on the ground.'

4) Photography

I used unobtrusive photography to document activities where fieldnotes seemed out of place, record large quantities of data instantly, and capture details of significant moments. I paid particular attention to instances when community members took it upon themselves to instruct me to take photos or videos as it highlights details that they thought I should know, that they believed are significant. For instance, the sewing instructor Donna told me to take photos and videos before she started to cut up some raw muktuk that had been donated to the Inuvik Community Corporation because she wanted me to document that "this is still our way of life." For photographs with discernible faces, I have the expressed permission of the subjects to share the images.

Subjectivity

My undergraduate degree in anthropology and subsequent graduate courses have challenged me to consider my positionality as a citizen of a settler-colonial nation-state and, more specifically, as a 'White' settler researcher working in an Indigenous milieu. How has the secular, neoliberal lens that I grew up seeing through highlighted or obscured facets of my research deeply embedded in Indigenous ontologies? How might my status as an academic and Southerner have affected power dynamics with community members? What stories will participants have thought appropriate to share with me, which have they concealed, and whose stories were not told because of my role as a researcher?

In fact, I feel that a great deal of the rapport I developed with community members in Inuvik was founded on my neophyte status. Humour and naivete were instrumental in not letting my 'Whiteness' exclude me from conversations and activities about traditional foods. One such narrative from my fieldnotes (using pseudonyms), which also has the benefit of displaying how my gender facilitated entry into specific social networks, might better elucidate my meaning:

One evening in the Inuvik Community Corporation Traditional Sewing class—which I was invited to attend despite it usually being reserved for Inuvialuit members—Sarah brought in quaq tuktu (frozen caribou) that her son had harvested to share with the group. Butcherknife in hand, the sewing instructor Denise cut up bite-size chunks of the quaq tuktu and placed them on a flattened cardboard box laid out on the table. She also put a square slab of uqsuq (whale oil/blubber), which she had retrieved from a Ziploc bag in the freezer, onto the cardboard and told me to dip a piece of quaq into it. While the uqsuq had quite a robust fermented seafood flavour and was not to my taste, I did enjoy the subtle flavour of caribou from the 4-5 pieces of quaq I ate with salt sprinkled on top. Denise called out to Betty, who had remained sewing her kamiks (animal skin boots), to come to have some food. However, Betty replied, "No, I don't eat it frozen, I'm too White!"—a reference to the non-eating of traditional foods as a marker of White identity. Kate, who has quite fair skin for an Inuvialuk, joked, "Not as White as me." It seemed as though the gag fell into my lap, and so I decided to embrace rather than retreat into my 'Otherness, quipping, "Not as white as me!"

Everyone in the room burst out laughing, and in that moment of flouting my difference, I felt more a part of the group than ever.



**Figure 1. Quaq tuktu [raw frozen caribou] & muktuk at the ICC Sewing Class.
Photo by Cahley Tod-Tims.**

In moments such as this, I realized that insider/outsider membership roles are not always dichotomous on the ground, that my personhood and active participation freed me from existing only as an observant outsider. I might not have the experience of living in a predominantly Indigenous Arctic community; still, I would like to believe that I made genuine connections through interacting as the person beyond the researcher persona. I volunteered at soup kitchens, I spent two evenings a week at sewing class, I packaged bags at the Food Bank, I spent four hours socializing with Elders on a bus ride to Tuktoyaktuk, I taught children how to finger-knit, I helped organize an International Women's Day event, and I baked bannock for an evening bonfire. And while there are

valid and emerging concerns about the roles that outsiders play in research in Indigenous communities, I have attempted to amplify my participants' voices so that they recognize their stories and experiences in this thesis.

Thesis Overview

This thesis is organized into five chapters, as follows. In this first chapter, I have outlined the literature on the current Arctic food insecurity situation and presented a historical, social, cultural, and economic backdrop in order to situate my study of contemporary country food exchanges in the Western Arctic. In Chapter 2, I review the ethnographic and theoretical literature that helps to elucidate and make meaningful the complexity of foodscapes on the ground. The third chapter evaluates the spectrum of country food access in an intimate way and argues that many of those beneficiaries who have limited social connections and are considered 'undeserving' of wild food gifts experience *country food insecurity*. In Chapter 4, I explore the perceptions of and mechanisms for selling traditional foods, including young people's actual and imagined relationship to country food. The final chapter concludes with an exposition of proposals from residents about what they believe are suitable and unsuitable ways to increase access to country foods in their community, as well as my own suggestions.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

In this chapter, I detail social scientific literature on theories of hunger and nostalgia, food and collective identity, traditional ‘rules,’ and the *deserving/undeserving poor*. Together, these theoretical perspectives facilitate a more in-depth analysis of the emotional and embodied experiences, institutional processes, and mixed food systems at play in Inuvik. By expanding on traditional foods’ deeply social nature, I hope to demonstrate that the abundance of country food-centred nostalgia I encountered expresses a *craving* beyond bodily urges for the associated communality of eating and sharing. I further aim to demonstrate the social and cultural salience of traditional foods by showcasing how they have made and (re)make shared identities rooted in place and memory. I then explore how ‘rules’ surrounding traditional foodways continue to inform perceptions on sharing and selling wild foodstuff while at the same time are being negotiated to fit contemporary contexts. Next, I apply theory on the morally determined and structurally upheld categories of deserving and undeserving poor (Katz 2013) in an attempt to show how this categorization impacts access to country foods. Finally, I embed this thesis within ethnographic studies of changes in traditional foods systems due to colonial disruption in previously egalitarian Indigenous communities. I do this not to universalize Indigenous experiences but to connect and add depth to the discourse on assimilative and adaptive dietary change.

Theory on nostalgia and hunger

To borrow from Lévi-Strauss (1963), food must nourish a group’s shared beliefs, traditions, and values in order to be “good to eat.” In the Arctic, “good to eat” foods that connect people to cosmologies, collective identities, reciprocity, and conceptions of well-being are most assuredly country foods. The sensual properties of these foods not only immerse Gwich’in, Inuvialuit, and Metis into an embodied sense of locality (Sutton 2006), the tastes, smells, and touches are also “repositories of memory” (Dusselier 2009; Yamin-Pasternak et al. 2014). As I noted in the introduction, a community’s cuisine is entwined in the cultural, social, political, economic, and historical contexts from which it is produced and consumed (Mintz 2008). Consequently, I suggest

that *hunger* for country foods cannot be solely examined as a nutritional phenomenon. Indeed, my participants' narratives in relation to their traditional foods "speak to a whole range of hungers" (Dusselier 2009, 335) beyond the esculent. Similar to a Proustian madeleine, symbolically-rich wild foodstuffs evoke an idealized time when participants informed me that 'everyone shared'—though, as is common with nostalgia, this is a sentimentalized reflection of past realities in which starvation and hardship were not uncommon. Holtzman (2006) suggests that gustatory nostalgia can also express grieving for the "smells and tastes of a lost homeland" (367). Six of my interlocutors came to Inuvik from smaller communities, and each of them voiced hunger for a taste of country food from home. Therefore, I propose that their expressions of hunger might be seen as a longing for the pleasure of eating food loaded with symbolism of family, love, and care (Briggs 1997).

Consequently, I also engage with the concept that the bodily pleasure in consuming country foods and associated social relationships mutually reinforce each other due to "the symbolic significance of people taking their food together" (Mintz 2008, 516). In other words, one experiences joy from a foodstuff because of the company in which it was consumed and takes joy in another's company because of the devoured foodstuff's sensorial quality. Indeed, several participants professed that their traditional foods "taste better when we eat together" and that they would rather wait for company than eat treasured edibles alone. The ritual of giving and receiving (and then consuming) foods with others creates personal and collective memories that shape relationships to both the food and people in question (Dusselier 2009; Holtzman 2006). For Inuit, this giving and receiving between social relations are understood to display closeness and affection (Briggs 1997). For these reasons, I suggest envisaging country food *hunger* as a type of nostalgia for connection and continuity can illuminate the salience of Indigenous residents' cravings.

Dusselier (2009) affirms that food "connect[s] the past with present concerns and future possibilities" (334). In Inuvik, ideas about the way Indigenous peoples used to produce, distribute, and consume country foods are often mobilized to express concerns over current food practices and societal trends. For instance, several participants reminisced that 'friends and neighbours used to drop-in unannounced and eat together' or how their 'childhoods were poor but so healthy and happy because they were on the

land.’ My ethnographic data is replete with these romanticized expressions of nostalgia for a time when traditional food was widely shared (and not sold) so that, unlike today, people “never, ever had to wish for it.” I also propose that participants expressed nostalgia for traditional economies and customs through critiques of capitalist values. By condemning that nowadays “when some people go hunting for country foods, all they see in their eyes is money,” Shirley suggested that the motivation ‘should be’ sharing like it was in the (imagined) past. In her article “From Trait to Emblem and Back,” (1997) anthropologist Jean Briggs described how cultural traits, like what and how a group eats, become emblems when confronted with massive societal changes. She argues that conflict with White people amidst intense colonial programs solidified boundaries between what was considered Inuit or White culture in the Arctic. Briggs further attests that behaviours emblematic of Inuitness, sharing resources and consuming country food (especially when raw or frozen), do not have to be based in ancient history nor practiced by all members—but they do have to be associated mentally and emotionally to the past. In Inuvik, ‘sharing not selling’ appears to be a nostalgic ideal that has come to represent Indigeneity against a backdrop of colonial capitalism.

Theories of Food and Identity

In her culinary memoir, Leslie Li (2005) asserts that food, memory, and identity are mutually constructed through the ingestion of foodstuff laden with “cultural concepts and values” (25) in both quotidian and ritual contexts. Traditional foods in the Arctic can demarcate identity through rituals such as young Gwich’in hunters giving away the entire caribou from their first kill to ensure successful future hunts, an event still practiced and revered in Inuvik. However, identity can be upheld through food in much more subtle ways, such as Raven, a young Gwich’in participant describing a time that her Southern teachers prepared reindeer meat with seasoning: “I was like why are you spicing it? Can’t you make some *normal*, without anything?” Raven expanded on this differentiation of identity through taste by declaring that “they had blown my mind that they were spicing it, and then I had blown their minds that I wouldn’t.” This description of northern versus southern palates is reminiscent of the arctic scholar Searles (2002) argument that Inuit collective identity is constructed through contrasts between Inuit and White food. Therefore, it is not just how and what an Indigenous group eats that affirms their

collective identity; it is also what they do not eat in relation to settlers “in colonial and post-colonial dynamics” (Jonaitis 2006, 142).

Understanding wild food consumption as essential component of health maintenance is not a new phenomenon for Indigenous peoples of the Arctic. However, what has emerged amidst the post-colonial landscape is the conceptual contrast between traditional foods as health-promoting and southern, store-bought foods as health weakening (Cassady 2008; Johansen 2002). For instance, a study on Iñupiat narratives about cancer revealed that some people in northwest Alaska conceived of the disease as resulting from ‘outside germs’ that contaminated the “*blood*” (Cassady 2008). The discourse on cancer prevention included avoiding store-bought foods because they are “watery, lifeless, without blood or heat, and riddled with additives and preservatives” (Cassady 2008, 380). Similarly, Borre’s (1994) study on the health beliefs of Clyde River, Nunavut Inuit confirms that country foods are understood to nourish Inuit bodies and spirits/souls in a way that ‘White food’ cannot. One of my participants professed that when she was presented with the opportunity to purchase a caribou, she “teared up because I really needed Native food. I was starting to get sick from not eating Native food...getting a stomach ache and feel[ing] weak” (Julia). That is to say, she conceives of country food as nurturing and healing her body, a body that has become “sick” from a lack of the sustenance that she grew up on. A study of Indigenous subarctic food systems likewise found that the James Bay Cree participants associated store-bought foods with “reduced mental and physical health and related wild meat consumption to feeling full and happy” (Spiegelhaar, Martin, & Tsuji 2019, 1). Along the same vein, an interlocutor told me “if you eat Native food, you’re fuller longer and everything else. And it’s just good soul food, eh?” (Lori). In a town such as Inuvik, where there is no escaping the colonial fabric of one’s physical and social surroundings, it is hardly surprising that traditional foodstuffs emblematic of Indigeneity (Briggs 1997) are so highly revered and associated with well-being.

Theory of ‘The Undeserving Poor’

Michael B. Katz’s *The Undeserving Poor* (2013) traces the moralization of poverty in the United States over the past two centuries. The author argues that the result of this moral rendering has been that poor people are categorized as either

deserving or undeserving of social support. Individuals judged not to be responsible for their poverty—originally widows, children, “impotent” adults, and now the documented “working poor”—elicit sympathy from the general population and state. In contrast, the undeserving poor—namely able-bodied adults and immigrants—are imagined to have “brought poverty upon themselves” (3). Katz argues that poor people's categorization is not really about evidence and is instead about “what people think” is self-inflicted suffering versus a happenstance of misfortune. He affirms that despite evidence exposing “poverty and dependence as complex products of social and economic circumstances usually beyond individual control” (7), moral classifications of deservingness continue to saturate public and institutional opinion. I argue here that if we broaden the notion of wealth to include access to items that cannot be readily purchased in the market economy—such as traditional foods—the lack of such foodstuffs is a type of poverty.

However, country food poverty differs from monetary poverty in that those starved of traditional foods are often financially secure and employed. In Inuvik, and I would posit in other Indigenous communities with high rates of wage employment and transience, it is the country food insecure residents who are categorized as “undeserving” of being shared with. Instead, it appears that Elders, single-parents, and vulnerable individuals are currently considered “deserving” of wild food distributions from Indigenous organizations and the general public alike. The circumstances of these “deserving” groups who are understood to be financially or physically incapable of harvesting elicit sympathy and a sense of responsibility to share with them from the community at large. To be clear, I am not suggesting that community members consider wage-earning, able-bodied adults to be undeserving of access to country foods from other methods of acquisition or that they are resented for lacking the skills, ability, interest, or time to hunt for themselves. It is only that they are imagined to be beyond “the limits of social obligation” (ibid, 4). Katz further clarifies that the *undeservingness* of certain classes of people is not necessarily about explicit contempt, but instead about passive neglect in “legislation, administrative regulations, and on-the-ground practice” (269). I believe that this distinction is crucial for understanding the wild food distribution arrangements that see some residents shared with frequently, while others, namely employed adults, may receive it only sporadically. Therefore, I suggest that similar

to financial poverty, moral definitions of deservingness appear to facilitate greater access to country foods for some residents of Inuvik over others.

Literature on Traditional ‘Rules’

By the term ‘rules,’ I refer to the “social norms, customary laws, guides, directions, taboos, and limits” (Wray and Parlee 2012, 70) that shape what is understood to be ‘right and wrong’ in a particular group. Wray and Parlee (2012) argue that a cultural institution, such as the sharing of Indigenous traditional foods, can be understood as a system of both explicit and implied rules. The authors (ibid)—whose research traces the disruption of harvesting knowledge and skills passing between older and younger Gwich’in hunters—suggest that even though harvesting methods have changed with new technologies and imposed systems of wildlife management, the practices are different rather than ‘lesser.’ This tracing of traditional ‘rules’ that are being adapted to fit contemporary contexts, similar to the hunting adaptations in Ulukhaktok referenced earlier (Pearce et al. 2015), illuminates the flexibility of culture (see also Briggs 1991; Condon 1983). For instance, the commonly uttered rule of “proper” Gwich’in and Inuvialuit ‘sharing not selling traditional foods’ appears to have several caveats that enable its exchange for cash. Locals told me numerous times that it was acceptable to provide some monetary compensation to hunters since everything “costs lots these days, even to get your caribou. You’ve got your shells, your gas, your groceries” (Shirley, Inuvialuit Elder). I also observed that providing shells, gas, and cash to hunters may, at times, be categorized as “modern bartering,” therefore negating the contention surrounding sales. Furthermore, community hunts funded by the respective Indigenous organizations—where hunters are given tags and compensated with money per animal recovered—might be considered another exception to the ‘rule’ about selling.

In fact, I propose that selling country food ‘for profit’ was not against traditional rules until enforced settlement and colonial agendas threatened to fracture Arctic life as locals knew it. As previously mentioned, there is a long history of Indigenous peoples selling wild food to whalers, miners, and fur-traders in the North. In his self-titled memoir *I, Nuligak* (1966), the Inuvialuk author recounts observing Inuit selling caribou and fish to the sailors of whaling ships around 1904 to 1906. Arctic scholar Briggs (1997) suggests that adopting new traits, such as selling country food and

consuming tea, bannock, Klik [canned meat], and sugar, was not a threat to Inuit identity when the rest of their life felt “normal.” However, when White culture was increasingly perceived as dominating and disrupting Indigenous culture, practices and attitudes associated with White people were critiqued and condemned (ibid). Briggs notes that Inuit say White people “buy and sell their services whereas Inuit give and share freely” (228), creating an ethnic divide between market and traditional economies in Inuit collective memories. While the exchange of cash for subsistence goods between Indigenous groups and outsiders has been going on for hundreds of years, what is new is Indigenous peoples from the same town or region selling country food to each other. In the past, when kin groups lived and travelled together, country food moved fluidly, though not always equally, between households. Today, people in small Arctic towns have neighbours who are not kin, yet the dynamic is still personalized. Consequently, I understand my participants’ declarations that selling country food is against ‘traditional rules’ as performing their Indigeneity in a landscape forged by colonialism. I also understand it as reflecting the discomfort of cash exchanges between neighbours.

I include below a few ‘rules’ pertaining to traditional food systems that continue to shape Inuvik residents’ ideology and practices. As is critical to consider with ethnography in any context, what people say they do and what is actually done on the ground is not always congruent. I make space for participants to explain these rules in their own words.

1. Sharing as a moral obligation to people and animals:

- “You have to learn to respect and share. If you had the last piece of meat or traditional food here, your neighbour had nothing to eat, you take it and you give it to your neighbour” (DAA).
- “When we were growing up, we were always taught if you share good things happen. And if you give out food, you have more next time you go hunting. And you’d always get lucky. They always say if you don’t share your food, you won’t see any animals. So, we’re always willing to share” (Julia).

- “With hunting and meat, I’m spiritual—maybe spiritual...I’ll never deny anybody, I’ll never deny anybody. And I’ve been lucky—I’m lucky with a caribou or a moose or anything that pops in front of me. And I’ll share it all the time” (FS).

2. Show respect to animals & do not be wasteful:

- “Because the rules are don’t injure an animal and just leave it. If you injure an animal, finish the job and kill it [...] Because it’s a luck thing eh? If you abuse animals like that, you’re not going to be very lucky down the road” (Lori).
- “We got a couple of moose, we came back, we showed him how we don’t leave nothing. We take everything, everything” (HK).
- [Excerpt from field notes] *Having distributed Ziploc bags containing an approximately 7” x 5” slab of muktuk [beluga whale skin and blubber] to women in the Traditional Sewing Class, *Debra, an Inuvialuktun teacher, jested that it was going to make all of their houses stink. She then turned to me and her demeanor became serious, ‘you know if Elders were here, they’d get mad at me for saying muktuk is smelly. It’s our tradition to not say anything bad about the animal because they’ve given themselves to you. They’re so smart and I believe they do give themselves.’*

3. Share with Elders first and giving them the prized cuts:

- “The insides [of caribou] we like. The bible [3rd compartment of the stomach]. Like all the best, but that goes to the Elders, they get the best” (VC).
- “So one of the big things is when you get food you share it with the Elders” (Raven).

- “And it’s just always been taught: Elders first, share with Elders, and make sure your granny eats” (Lori).

Impact of colonialism on previously egalitarian Indigenous food systems

I situate my project within the broader context of ethnographic literature on previously egalitarian Indigenous communities that have undergone dramatic changes in their traditional food systems due to colonization and assimilation. Firstly, it is important to note that resource distribution in societies labeled ‘egalitarian’ does not manifest as bona fide equal access, with some households or harvesters possessing skills that result in the accumulation of goods and social prestige (Natcher 2015). Disrupting the myth of total equality prior to colonial contact is essential if one is to accurately trace sharing practices and continuities over time. Secondly, it is not my aim to make a generalized, normative statement about the change in Indigenous food systems. It is indeed true that foodways and subsistence processes have been substantially altered. Still, the valuation of such changes is expressed in this study through the voices of Indigenous people themselves.

Though the experiences of Indigenous communities worldwide are, of course, context-specific, there are threads that bind the adaptations to and consequences of dietary change amid colonial interactions. The San peoples of the Kalahari, for instance—whose subsistence practices were extensively documented by anthropologist Richard B Lee (1968)—also went through a significant dietary shift with their enforced transition to settlement life between the 1960s and 1980s (Fernandes-Costa et al. 1984). As the dislocation from traditional territories and participation in wage-labour minimized the San’s land use, maize and purchased foodstuffs replaced traditional meats and vegetables as staples of their diets (ibid). Similarly, the Nankane peoples of northern Ghana’s decrease in traditional harvesting practices can be attributed to colonial pressures (Tripp 1992). Women became involved in the cropping agriculture system, and men often sought wage employment in urban centres (ibid). I conversed with numerous residents who had left their remote communities for employment and education opportunities in Inuvik and consequently had less access to traditional foods. For example, Sheena, a young Inuvialuit woman who explained that prior to settling in

Inuvik, she had constant access to caribou meat, “but since I moved from Tuk[toyaktuk], I’m always running out.”

Though the health, economic, and sociocultural outcomes of such dietary shifts are often understood to be detrimental, it has also been documented that for some Indigenous peoples, such as the Maya of Guatemala, nutritional variety increased with the adoption of non-traditional food production (Kuhnlein and Receveur 1996). Of course, variety does not always equate to quality. The literature is replete with increasing cases of chronic health-concerns associated with the reliance on imported, store-bought goods in Indigenous communities—diabetes, dental caries, cardiovascular disease, and obesity, to name but a few (O’Dea et al. 1991; Myers et al. 2004; Elliot et al. 2012). For instance, Aboriginal Australian traditional food systems were based on low-fat, high-nutrient diets and nomadic subsistence patterns before the compounding effects of European settler colonialism eventually resulted in a dependency on low-quality store-bought foods (O’Dea et al. 1991). As with rural Aboriginal communities in Australia (Whelan et al. 2018), isolated towns in the Western Canadian Arctic also face the burden of extremely high costs for nutritious foods, a precarious situation that my participants confirmed the harvesting of country foods helps alleviate.

At this stage, it is vital not to become entangled in the trope that assumes Indigenous foodways have lost their ‘authenticity’ in the midst of colonization, and instead recognize that they have always been founded on “cultural fluidity, agency, and adaptability” (Dusselier 2009, 333). Drawing on their ethnographic research, Ali and Valliantos (2016) demonstrate that the Indigenous Pahari farmers in rural Bangladesh “continue...social-cultural practices directly related to food production, distribution or sharing of resources” (37) while also incorporating elements of hegemonic, commercial food exchanges. Referencing Bhabha (1994), the authors frame this acceptance of some aspects of colonial settler culture while rejecting or criticizing others as an ‘ambivalent relationship.’ The bricolage (Lévi-Strauss 1966) of ideologies and practices over time was visible in Inuvik, as some locals who were *craving* greater access to country foods were supportive or willing to explore ideas about incorporating these foods into the formal market economy.

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3. Country Food Access in Inuvik

Kuhnlein and Receveur (1996) define traditional food systems as “all the food within a particular culture [that are] available from local natural resources and culturally accepted” (418). For the Gwich’in, Inuvialuit, and Metis peoples I spoke with, the affective, sensorial, and sociocultural associations of traditional foods make them by far the most desired and prized nutritional items. Participants described eating traditional foods as satisfying their hunger in a way that store-bought foods are incapable of doing. Furthermore, their production, distribution, and consumption play a host of roles foundational to a sense of kinship, community, well-being, and identity (Condon et al. 1995; Lambden et al. 2007; Stern 2005). Indeed, one Inuvialuit participant, who estimated that wild food constitutes at least half of her overall diet, affirmed that “sharing and eating [country food] is who we are; if we didn’t do it, we would feel fake.” Her statement, imbued with ideas about collective identity, emphasizes how country food sharing is as vital an element of traditional foodways as the actual consumption. To paraphrase my participant, it is not what they do but *who* they are.

However, due to compounding factors associated with the transition from a semi-nomadic subsistence lifeway to permanent settlement in towns and employment in the wage-economy, participation in traditional harvesting activities in the Western Arctic has been dramatically reduced over the past 70 years (Kenny et al. 2018; Kuhnlein and Receveur 1996; Natcher 2015). The reduction in participation also coincides with an increased reliance on imported market goods, a trend seen throughout the circumpolar region (Duhaime 2002). While the loss of tangible, healthy wild foodstuffs is a serious repercussion of this dietary shift, there is an additional loss of practical and cultural knowledge relating to traditional harvesting activities (Kuhnlein and Receveur 1996). In his study on the social dimensions of food exchanges in the Little Red River Cree Nation, Natcher (2015) argues that a limited social network may increase a person’s vulnerability to social exclusion from wild food distribution, or as I argue, vulnerability to *country food insecurity*. With fewer Indigenous peoples participating in subsistence activities and the higher degree of relocation from smaller communities into regional centres such as Inuvik, robust social networks facilitating access to wild foods have been

greatly diminished (ibid). Moreover, the social networks that do persist over regional and territorial distances require substantial effort to maintain. As referenced earlier, Lee's (2002) ethnographic study in Alaska illustrates the laborious tasks that her participant, Flora, undertakes in order to cultivate friendships with rural relations who have access to country food: the physical job of lugging a full cooler box on planes and automobiles, time spent travelling from 'bush plane to bush plane,' and organizing temporary housing in all of the locales she visits.

Means of Acquiring Country Food

People access country food in Inuvik through a variety of means, including harvesting, gifts, bartering (a number of participants also used trading as synonymous with bartering), purchase, and organized distributions. Though I did interview one full-time hunter who lives "in the bush" year-round, most of my participants who harvest themselves reported that they go out during their 'spare time' on weekends, holidays, seasonally, or when they are spontaneously invited to join a hunting party. As one Inuvialuit wage worker put it, "when the Spring comes, I go to Husky Lake after work and jiggle [ice fish] until 10 to 11 pm." For decades, Arctic scholars have remarked on the paradox that contemporary harvesting requires both money and time, with the former usually acquired through wage labour which itself acts as a barrier to the latter. In Inuvik, and elsewhere in the circumpolar North, this apparent conundrum may be mitigated by having both a wage earner and a hunter in a household or close kinship group. For example, several female participants employed full-time in the wage economy had partners who were hunters and/or trappers. In addition, I noticed that women occupying the traditional role of wild food distributor is still quite common in Inuvik's harvesting households. For instance, while I interviewed a husband and wife together, the husband, Harley, revealed that he had dropped off caribou meat from his latest harvest at various households as directed by his wife.

Sharing

For the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic, sharing traditional foods has historically been understood as a moral obligation beyond expectations of immediate reciprocity (Collings et al. 2015; Levesque et al. 2002; Searles 2002; Stern 2005; Wray and Parlee 2013). In present-day Inuvik, gifts of wild foods, usually articulated as

‘sharing,’ still occur frequently. Adults may share the foodstuff with their older parents, relatives share it with visitors or on their own travels, hunters donate it to organizations, and acquaintances might share it as an ad-hoc event. An example of an ad-hoc gift would be when an Inuvialuit woman told me that the last person who shared country food with her was her church pastor, “he gets meat too from other people in town, so whenever he has extra, he will bring some here. So he gave us a [caribou] shoulder piece and a few leg bones for—you know you cook it and you eat the bone marrow in the legs.” In this instance, there is no expectation that a young single-mother would reciprocate with a gift of her own. A further scenario when there is no expectation of reciprocation would be when an individual or household donates wild food to an organization considered to be deserving or in need, such as the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre, the Band offices, the Children First Society, the Homeless Shelter, the Transient Unit, or the Long Term Care Unit. For instance, I was present when a staff member at the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre brought in the arm of a caribou that he had hunted over the weekend for the soup kitchen meal. The staff at Ingamo Hall also showed me the contents of their deep freezer where they store country foods (muktuk, whale meat, moose ribs, cranberries) that community members have donated. These foods are then used during events such as soup kitchens, Elders luncheons, healing circles, and youth programs “because they attract people.”



Figure 2. Donated moose meat at the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre. Photo by author.

Receiving gifts of country foods from smaller communities, where participation in harvesting activities is more prevalent, was also a common means of acquiring traditional foods for my participants. For instance, Anna (a pseudonym) receives a box of country food containing “muskox, trout, char, or seal depending on the season” once a month from her family in Ulukhaktok. Anna told me that she then shares that country food with friends who are also from Ulukhaktok now living in Inuvik because they share the same affinity for it. Similarly, participants shared countless stories of bringing country foods with them when they visited friends or relations down South. Martha (a pseudonym), for instance, showed me the eight small Ziploc bags of caribou dry-meat that she had packed in her weathered pink backpack to share with friends on an upcoming medical trip to Edmonton. Or Peggy, who told me a story about airport security scanning a large slab of half-frozen beluga whale muktuk that she was bringing her son attending university in Edmonton. While there are many instances of country foods being given as gifts to extended or non-kin under spontaneous circumstances, I was also told that “people share less now because it is so expensive to harvest, it stays in the family more.” I believe that this is an important factor to consider when analyzing the inclusivity of sharing networks.



Figure 3. Martha's caribou dry-meat portioned for friends in Edmonton. Photo by author.

Furthermore, there are circumstances where gifting must be nuanced to illuminate the subtle ways that reciprocity is enacted to create and maintain social relationships. While a country food gift exchange may appear unbalanced on the surface, closer inspection of the context may reveal that the giver was, in fact, reciprocating a service or good that they have received or expect to receive. For example, Raven told me that when she went to Sachs Harbour on a one-off trip, she “came home with this huge box of geese and fish and I can't remember there was two others things in there...for my family and my grandma.” Raven was given this food by the daughter of a very close family friend who she refers to as “Auntie” and for whom Raven's family had previously done favours. Consequently, upon finding out that Raven was in Sachs Harbour, “Auntie” instructed her daughter who lives there to deliver a box of country food to Raven to take home to her family. Another example of the socially complex forms of reciprocity I observed in Inuvik was when Elders were given country food and then served it to their family. Shirley, an Inuvialuit Elder who often receives

country food from her daughter's household, informed me that "when I got my caribou meat this year [from a community hunt], I was so happy. I got a hindquarter and I got an arm. And I'm all alone. So I brought it to my daughters and they cut it up and we had meat." In these circumstances, Shirley is able to share the caribou from a community hunt that, as an Elder, she was entitled to with her daughter, who regularly provides country food to her.

Bartering

Many residents in Inuvik also use an informal exchange process locally known as "bartering" to acquire country foods. Bartering is sometimes akin to trading and sometimes to sharing. It resembles trading when the exchange is pre-arranged and values are negotiated, such as the barter of a whole fish for store-bought toiletries. In other circumstances, often when the two parties have a social relationship, bartering looks like extended families in different hamlets sharing wild foods. I was told numerous times that bartering country foods with kin or close friends "isn't trading like measuring weight or quantity; it's just sharing when you have it." For instance, I met an Inuvialuk woman at the IRC Cultural Weekend in March 2020 who informed me that she gives her relatives beluga muktuk in the summer who then reciprocate with caribou in the winter. Another Inuvialuit participant who had recently moved away from Tuktoyaktuk (where she used to eat country food every day) revealed how she provided cleaning services at a hunter's camp in order to get access to land food:

Sheena: *He gave me moose meat and fish. He went out and do fish while I cleaned out his cabin. So that was the trade, I cleaned out his cabin and he gives me some Native food.*

Cahley: *Oh, nice. Was that a good—is that a good trade for you?*

Sheena: *Oh yeah! Yes. When you're craving for it, you'd do anything for it! [giggles]*

Though barter in academia is generally understood as the exchange of goods or services without the use of cash, providing money "for gas and shells" as compensation for foodstuff falls under the realm of bartering in Inuvik. Indeed, one young man referred to this type of exchange as "bartering with modern items," reminiscent of Stern's (2005) argument that cash and material goods allow non-harvesting individuals

to participate in Arctic sharing networks. As previously mentioned, selling traditional foods for profit is often conceptualized as different from giving cash as fair compensation for incurred expenses, with the latter widely viewed as acceptable. By using the term bartering, residents may thus avoid the stigma and moral discomfort associated with selling as well as strategically align with the letter of the law. While it is 'illegal' to commercially harvest caribou according to the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (1985), First Nations, Métis, and Inuvialuit hunters are permitted to "barter or trade for caribou meat" (11) or receive a small amount of cash for reasonable expenses incurred while hunting from "native users who are unable to hunt by virtue of age, illness or other disadvantages." For instance, a Gwich'in Elder told me that "I was talking to my grandson, I said if I get money I'll go get you gas money so you could hunt for me" (DAA). Unsurprisingly, DAA envisions the exchange not as buying country food from her grandson but providing him with the "modern items" necessary to hunt.

Inter-community bartering throughout the Mackenzie Delta region is also a commonplace mechanism that participants engage in to access traditional foods. These trades may include exchanging local country food for other regional country foods or store-bought items, crafts, or services. However, inter-community exchanges are far from a new phenomenon, with Friesen (2012) noting that the archaeological record implies a long history of interregional trade between Inuvialuit and Iñupiat (Alaskan Inuit) nations. For instance, the archaeological record reveals a diverse range of imported trade items dated between AD 1400-1800 in the Mackenzie Delta area, including ivory, copper, iron, soapstone, and baleen (34) for which Inuvialuit nations would trade sea mammal oils, furs, and sealskins (35). The following quote by Inuvialuit Elder Shirley illustrates a typical country food exchange, "my uncle in Old Crow might say 'Bring me a pail of muktuk, I got caribou in my cache for you.' Okay, so we give them their pail of muktuk, they'll give us caribou." A Gwich'in participant also elucidates how people utilize inter-community travel as an opportunity to increase trade:

... so people from Holman [Ulukhaktok], every time those people come down here they'll bring—'cuz they don't need to bring anything here, but they can still bring X amount of weight on the plane—it's straight char. And they'll bring it here and trade with people or sell it, depends. (Harley).

Perhaps only behind caribou, Arctic char was one of the most highly desired and valued country foods for Inuvik residents I spoke with, as shown in the story below. Since Inuvik often has cheaper and more diverse store-bought goods than the regional hamlets, participants told me that sometimes they would send or offer to bring store-bought food or items when visiting relations in smaller communities. For instance, Jessie (a pseudonym), a young wage-earning Inuvialuit woman, told me that she tried to purchase arctic char for her mother through contacts back home in Paulatuk a while ago since they cannot get it in Inuvik. Jessie found a woman with char in Paulatuk who told her that she did not need money but instead wanted a few toiletries that she could not get from the small hamlet store. Jessie thus purchased the items, put a “care package” together, and sent it with someone she knew who was flying to Paulatuk. Jessie’s story not only illustrates a trade of market and traditional goods but showcases the effort required in maintaining access to foods that “taste like home.” This inter-community exchange required:

1. Local contacts as Jessie had to ask around to find someone willing to trade char and find someone flying to Paulatuk.
2. Cash to purchase the toiletries.
3. The effort and time to organize the trade on behalf of her mother.

Not everyone in Inuvik has the capability or will to facilitate such a transaction. Moreover, country food supply is not guaranteed, as Jessie also informed me that she had not been able to secure a char for her mother this year since she was told it had been a poor fishing season in Paulatuk.

Selling

In the following chapter, I present an in-depth examination of the purchase of country foods; however, I will provide a brief synopsis of the various forms I observed during my fieldwork here. The formal sales of traditional food are limited to the Inuvialuit Community Economic Development Organization (ICEDO)’s Craft Shop, which sells a selection of edibles such as the frozen whole fish, dry-fish, muktuk, reindeer dry-meat, and frozen cloudberry that were available during my fieldwork. The shop also purchases country food from harvesters for community events such as the IRC Cup Cultural Weekend that provided attendees, including me, with a free lunch of reindeer chili, moose dry-meat, and muktuk. Even though many participants confirmed that they had bought wild foods from the store—such as Julia who stated, “if my family members

don't have it [muktuk] in Aklavik, I come here to buy it"—it appears to be a specialty or luxury purchase rather than providing regular access. It seems instead that informal sales, namely transactions over Facebook and via word of mouth, are the prevailing type of monetary exchange in Inuvik. For instance, posts on Inuvik's Buy & Sell Facebook page announcing that someone is "looking for some muktuk, will be arriving Jan 21-22. Thanks" or "ground muskox meat for \$40" in Ziploc bags were almost a daily occurrence during my stay. One young participant also described a larger, more organized sale announced over Facebook:

Oh there's this lady from Aklavik who makes—who spends most of her time on the land, so she—and she makes really good dry-fish and stuff. So she comes in by boat every, I don't know, throughout the summer she'll come maybe four times. And basically, it's posted on Facebook and there's this WHOLE line up of people who show up at the river waiting for her [...] She's really good and literally SO much money gets exchanged at that time (Raven, January 2020).

Informal sales also occur through word of mouth when harvesters let their local contacts know that they have wild food available. Informal caribou sales are a particularly 'grey' exchange since selling them for cash beyond reasonable compensation for harvesting costs is technically illegal. One participant told me that even though community members are "not supposed to buy caribou, people do because they want it and the hunters need the money since gas is so expensive." However, those sales that occur via word of mouth necessitate particular social connections, something not all residents have. Therefore, environmental laws that prohibit commercial caribou sales and thus force them to appear on the black market could be seen as a barrier to country food security. For instance, Margaret confirmed that she used to purchase "caribou dry-meat until they stopped it and started putting that ENR [Environment & Natural Resources] message saying that you can't do that and stuff."

Organized traditional food distributions in Inuvik predominantly take the form of community harvests, or 'community hunts' as my participants often called them. Community hunts are managed and funded by the various local Indigenous organizations such as the Nihtat Gwich'in Council (NGC), Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Committee (HTC), and the Inuvik Community Corporation (ICC). For example, on Nov 12th, 2019, the Inuvik HTC Facebook group posted that they were "looking for 5 hunters

to do the Community Caribou Harvest. They get 5 tags each and will be getting paid per caribou.” On Nov 25th, they posted a follow-up notice “[t]o our Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Membership of ELDERS and SINGLE PARENTS, we are now taking names for our annual Caribou Meat distribution.” As I discuss in greater detail below, it is common for community hunts to prioritize categories of people thought to be most in need and *deserving* of traditional foods. Organization representatives then drop the portioned meat—a hindquarter, rump, organs, etc.—off at the respective households. On May 13th, 2020 (in the wake of COVID-19), the ICC announced over Facebook that “in partnership with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and contributions from Indigenous Services Canada...the [ICC] is currently doing a Community Geese Harvest. We will purchase a total of 500 geese, a maximum of 20 geese per person at a rate of \$25 per goose. The geese **must** be plucked and gutted before purchasing.” Inuvialuit beneficiaries were invited to put their names down to be included on the distribution list. There are, however, more ad-hoc distributions by Indigenous organizations such as the NGC posting on June 11th, 2020 that “we have geese to give away, the[y] need to be plucked and cleaned....they are frozen right now. Please call **** to let me know that you are coming.” Though Elders had high praise for community hunts, participants with low country food access who did not fall into a category considered in need—namely those who are not Elders, single-parents, or unemployed—expressed frustration with the exclusivity of the distribution model.

Exploring the Spectrum of Country Food Access

Despite the persistent myths of Northern egalitarianism, access to traditional foods in Inuvik is not equal. In fact, I observed and was informed of significant variation in the frequency of acquisition and consumption by Indigenous residents of the region. As one Gwich'in participant—who had just shared caribou dry-meat that her daughter-in-law made with our quilting group—told me that “some people eat it every day, and some people might go years without.” Data from my interviews appears to confirm this statement, with one young Inuvialuit woman stating that she gets to eat country food “[m]aybe if I’m lucky like once a month, or couple times a month” while a Gwich'in Elder from Fort McPherson reported that she has it “[e]veryday. If it’s not meat today, it’s fish tomorrow.” Although my participants’ access to country food was stratified, the *craving* for it was consistent. Therefore, it would seem that there is a portion of the

Indigenous community in Inuvik that has to wait for weeks or months to satisfy their *hunger* for wild foods. What appeared to exacerbate country food insecure residents' frustration and melancholy over their limited access is that the majority of them, especially the older adults, grew up eating it every day. They had memories of when they "never, ever went hungry" for it, and yet now it can be a struggle from them to acquire.

Family Networks and Country Food Security

My observations suggest that sharing within close kinship groups remains the heart of traditional food distribution in the Mackenzie Delta region. Community members who revealed that they are able to consume country foods daily or weekly were either part of a household with a hunter or regularly received the food from family members. I asked interview participants who they received wild food from. The answers included: "my cousin's boyfriend," "my dad and brother-in-law," "sons and daughters of older relatives," "my son hunts for me. And then my grandson," or "my daughter and my son-in-law and they go harvesting for me." While these participants relied on local family members for regular access, they often alluded to social networks in the surrounding hamlets where participation in subsistence activities tends to be greater than in the more urban, wage labour-driven town. For example, an Inuvialuit woman who brought a caribou arm into the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre to make soup for the Healing Circle program told me that her nephew in Fort McPherson had given her the whole animal. As an aside, Fort McPherson is a predominantly Gwich'in community, and so this country food gifting between aunt and nephew elucidates the very mixed Indigenous identities and ties in the region. While teaching me how to break down the caribou arm, the woman explained that even though her husband does not like to hunt, she has "enough family" to have steady access to traditional food. The many relatives that country food secure participants can rely on for sharing or call upon when in need most likely means that alternative access methods—namely organized distributions, ad-hoc arrangements, and purchase—are supplemental. In contrast, my data suggest that country food insecure residents are often dependent on these unreliable country food sources.

Though it seems intuitive that subsistence hunters have the greatest wild food access, the high cost of contemporary harvesting means they are also reliant on cash and/or wage-earners. Indeed, research in Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador) revealed that individuals in the wage economy are central to traditional food sharing networks since hunters count on the support of those income-generating individuals to gain access to hunting resources such as boats, Skidoos, and rifles (Dombrowski et al. 2013). For instance, a full-time Gwich'in hunter who lives "in the bush" year-round affirmed that Elders buying ammunition not only helps him to keep hunting but also to keep sharing. "Shells cost money you know. And Elders they buy it, they buy shells, and they give me a box of shells. If I get caribou, I'll bring back caribou for them" (FS). He later stated that by sharing with Elders, in return for them providing shells, he has been "lucky with a caribou or a moose or anything that pops in front of me." The hunter's social connections in town thus provide him with the tools needed to keep producing and distributing meat in a manner that maintains his Gwich'in traditional values and spirituality.

Additionally, a 21-year-old wage-earner described how "some people might be nice enough to give me money for gas or shells or let me use their equipment," after which he shares food from his harvests. And while he said that he "wouldn't sell moose meat to make dry-meat" like some other harvesters because it goes against his "traditional values," he also suggested that "some people got to do what they got to do" in order to survive. This form of reciprocity, whereby community members provide hunters with equipment or technology in exchange for the foodstuffs they *crave* the most, is essential for maintaining subsistence harvesting in contemporary Arctic towns. As an aside, the idea that hunters could make a living or at least subsidize the cost of their own harvests through the commercialization of country foods has been a proposed 'selling point' throughout the circumpolar North (Duhaime 2002; Ford et al. 2016).

Children's Access to Traditional Foods

Since children are most likely not harvesting, purchasing, or being shared with by themselves, one can speculate that they are highly dependent on their kin/caregiver's access to traditional foods. Data from my interviews with adults and casual conversations with children appear to indicate that, like with adults, kids' country food access falls along a spectrum of frequent to limited. Participants explicitly aired concerns

that “young people are just slowly getting away from the main traditional food” (DAA) due to factors such as a lack of access or taste for it. Indeed, I noted that older adults tended to worry that young people were not consuming enough country food.

One Gwich'in Elder told me that fellow grandparents “cram it into soups and sandwiches” to ensure their grandchildren continue to eat it. It seems that peer pressure also creates social barriers to country food consumption for youth in Inuvik. As an illustration, a woman in the ICC sewing group informed me that even though her teenage son enjoys eating all types of country food, it can be challenging for adolescents because terms like “muktuk-eater” are used as an insult in school. In fact, she admitted that she stopped eating muktuk and whale oil as a teenager because it was not considered “cool to eat that smelly stuff” (see Yasim-Pasternak et al. 2014).

Participants that were themselves *country food secure* would often tell me how their very young relatives loved traditional cuisine. For instance, an Inuvialuit woman who surmised that at least 50% of her diet was land food enthusiastically recounted how her “grandson’s favourite food is fermented herring roe. Some people say it stinks, but if we smell it, we go [expression like she is sniffing a desired fragrance].” Similarly, an 81-year-old Gwich'in Elder, who stated that she eats country food every day, proudly confirmed that her young grandchildren enjoy eating “traditional caribou cuts. Kidney, heart, there’s other intestines that we eat too” (DAA). Likewise, while chatting with two Inuvialuit sisters who had recently moved from Sachs Harbour—and still receive packages of country food from there, including polar bear paws, fish, seal oil, and caribou—about their young children’s taste for country food, one professed that her daughter “prefers caribou frozen” and the other nonchalantly stated that “my kid only likes *quaq* [raw frozen meat] with whale oil.” While these instances of youngsters consuming foodstuff replete with nutrients are undoubtedly positive, it is perhaps concerning that households with limited country food access may not be able to do the same for their children. Although the procurement of healthy food is desired for all children, I believe the profoundly social, cultural, and spiritual element of traditional foods adds gravitas to the issue of access.

Various programs that aim to extend young peoples’ access to country foods and get them ‘on the land’ have been developed in Inuvik. These are comparable to school gardening programs that aim to get children to consume more vegetables by

having them grow, cook, and eat them to promote healthy eating and (re)connection to the natural world. For instance, the Traditional Food Program at East Three School in Inuvik was implemented to “promote youth engagement with traditional foods” (Kenny et al. 2018, 429) through traditional skills and knowledge instruction from hunters and Elders. Though this program succeeded in increasing youth involvement in subsistence activities, as with many grant-funded northern initiatives, the program only ran for one year. That being said, it appears that local institutions may provide children with ad-hoc access to wild foods. For example, while I was teaching them how to finger-knit at Aurora College, I spoke with two Gwich’in girls in Grade 4 who had that day helped butcher a moose that the elementary school Principal had brought in. They told me that students who volunteered to break the moose down were allowed to take a Ziploc bag of meat home. Both girls had jumped at the chance, with one of them excitedly declaring that she could not wait to “slice it thinly and fry it with seasoning salt” for dinner that night.



Figure 4. Moose meat a Grade 4 student received at school. Photo by Cahley Tod-Tims.

I also spoke with the Executive Director of the childcare facility run by the Children First Society, who informed me that parents and community members occasionally donate wild food such as moose, caribou, fish, and geese for the daily meals that the facility provides. The Director stated that she likes to serve country food to enrolled children whenever possible, revealing that she regularly purchases 10-20 wild fish in the summer whenever her two local contacts have availability. Interestingly, she remarked that during the previous summer (2019), she had been able to acquire a lot of fish from her contact because he had a great deal of salmon—which a number of participants had told me were “taking over” the native species’ habitat—and it is not as desired by community members. These examples help to illustrate the ad-hoc nature of country food exchanges in Inuvik. Indeed, the only planned and ongoing delivery of country food I was made aware of was an Inuvialuit language teacher who received a package from her family in Ulukhaktok once a month. While spontaneous sharing or trading may not have a significant impact country food access for those with large social networks, people without these connections may have to wait great lengths of time to be shared with.

Country Food Insecurity/Poverty

In her study of Salvadoran immigrants' cravings for traditional meals, Stowers (2012) states that “[f]ood cravings, both physiologically and psychologically, are associated with food deprivation” (380). The number of Indigenous peoples moving away from their hometowns and kinship networks—primary sources of country food—to Inuvik for work emerged as a theme in my data. Therefore, I suggest that as country food insecurity rises in this urban locale, experiences of *craving*, albeit perhaps nostalgic in nature, will correspondingly intensify. Along with articulations of ‘craving’ and ‘hunger,’ *starving* for country foods sometimes emerged in the food discourse of the people I spoke with. While the participants in Stowers’ (2012) research endured widespread, acute food restrictions during the civil war in El Salvador and thus were physiologically starving, one young, wage-earning Inuvialuk passionately declared, “we are *starving* for our food.” I argue that the intensity of cravings for country foods and the bodily and emotional sense of salubrity once consumed makes attending to this food deprivation a priority for local organizations and Indigenous and Territorial governments. For example, when I asked how it feels to eat country foods after she has been craving

it, Sheena replied that “[i]t makes me feel happy and my body feels energized again. The nutrients from store-bought food is different from on-the-land food that you caught yourself and prepared yourself, worked with by yourself.” I understand Sheena to be referencing the pleasure of eating culturally-rich foodstuff procured by one’s own hand. How the personal aspect of ‘working with’ harvested food makes their consumption all the more satisfying. Accordingly, I posit that the social, cultural, spiritual, and nutritional deficits felt by those who do not get to nourish themselves with desired foods is a type of insecurity, that is, *country food insecurity*.

Deserving residents

Katz (2013) argues that citizens judged deserving of resource transfers have garnered sympathy because their poverty is imagined to be beyond their power to control. In Inuvik, residents who fall into the categories of Elder, single-parent, juvenile, physically-challenged, and vulnerable are considered *deserving* of receiving gifted country foods. While my observations indicate that Elders’ deservingness is founded on long-standing, traditional ‘rules’ that call for them to be treated with respect, households donating to organizations that provide for the *deserving* vulnerable (the Friendship Centre, Homeless Shelter, and soup kitchens) have emerged from consequences of settlement. Accordingly, the moral rendering of certain individuals as deserving can be seen as an ongoing and dynamic process. The “undeserving poor” analogy is not perfect, it does present a lens for thinking about how those imagined to be deserving of resources might not actually be the ones most in need. Moreover, it helps illuminate the nuance of country food (in)security in Inuvik, where the residents “starving for [their] foods” are financially-secure households.

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which Elders in the Mackenzie Delta are prioritized for wild food distribution, both in formal programs such as Community Hunts and in informal sharing networks. For instance, on their Facebook page, the Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Committee (IHTC) revealed that “54 Elders, 15 single parents, and 3 members received caribou meat” from the Community Caribou Harvest in December 2019. In other words, only 3 out of 69 deliveries went to non-Elder or non-single parent households. A similar story of formal Elder prioritization occurred a few months earlier in August 2019 when the IHTC Facebook page posted that “2 pails of

muktuk, whale meat, and caribou were donated. 1 ziplock bag of each to Elders so put your name down.” During my fieldwork, a representative of the Inuvik Native Band office (INB) posted on Facebook that they “have caribou meat for Seniors, Single Parent families, Elders and health challenged individuals” and that the “meat is a priority for Band membership.” The latter statement, which means that band members are prioritized for this distribution, is an important stipulation because it once again limits who is considered an eligible recipient of traditional food sharing. An Elder key informant told me that even though she is Gwich’in, she is a registered Band member of Vuntut Gwich’in First Nation from Old Crow, YK, and therefore not entitled to receive country foods from the Inuvik Native Band. I include these stories not to criticize current sharing practices that emphasize Elders as *deserving* but to illustrate that with finite resources, the distribution model excludes some country food insecure households. There was not a single country food insecure participant who suggested that Elders should receive less, only that they desired options that would increase their own access and satiate their *hunger*.

Elders are also prioritized through informal country food sharing by relations or general community members. While most country food exchanges occur via close kin or social connections, providing for Elders appears to be recognized as a communal responsibility. For example, a young employee at the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre told me that she and her husband had recently caught 30 loche [burbot] and after keeping some for themselves gave the rest to Elders. In fact, this practice is so taken for granted that it was two months into my fieldwork before I realized that I had yet to explicitly question *why* Elders are considered most deserving of traditional foods. Consequently, I asked two Inuvialuit interlocutors:

Cahley: *This might seem obvious, but why is it so important that Elders are shared with first?*

Lori: *Because they’re—to me, it’s because it’s their delicacy to begin with; they grew up with this food. And it’s just always been taught: “Elders first, share with Elders, and make sure your granny eats.”*

Sheena: *You respect your Elders because they were there for you as a child. When we were vulnerable as child, they were there for us. And now it’s time for us to give back our time and respect.*

Elders' sensorial attachment to country foods was reiterated in narratives about sharing. While sitting at a table with volunteers and staff at Ingamo Hall Friendship centre after a soup kitchen lunch service, one Inuvialuit woman with high access to country foods told the group that approximately once a month, she takes uncooked wild food to the Long Term Care Unit in the hospital. She revealed, "I like to cook there because the smells make the Elders happy, and then they jig [dance]!" Another Inuvialuit community member told me that she and her subsistence trapper husband share country food with Elders because "you want them to have the pleasure of having a good meal."

A few participants made reference to the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit cultural 'rules' that call for sharing food with Elders as their motivation. For instance, while describing who his household shared caribou from their latest harvesting trip with, Harley confirmed that "we gave a whole one to Uncle [...] 'cuz we always take care of our Elders, especially when they're family. So with him, I know there's nobody from his immediate side of the family that goes hunting for them." Harley's statement also alludes to how the overall decrease in hunting participation has resulted in larger social networks becoming dependent on a smaller number of harvesting households (Natcher 2015). There are, of course, other motivations for sharing with Elders. Responding to my query about who she distributes wild food to, Julia replied, "now that they're so old, they can't do very much so I tend to share with my grandparents, my aunties and uncles, my older cousins." Elders are considered *deserving* of being shared because of their perceived physical limitations and for the perceived wisdom of age.

In contrast, adults who are imagined to be physically able to hunt and yet, due to their lack of harvesting skills, time, or equipment, may be no more "capable" are not recognized as automatically deserving. Two Inuvialuit interlocutors also told me that younger people might feel a sense of obligation to share with a non-kin Elder who "respected your family or was good friends with your grandparents" (Sheena). Furthermore, Elders' social elevation is related to their reverence as knowledge keepers about cultural practices. In this way, the next generation maintains social networks that assume responsibility for sharing with Elders.

While Elders are prioritized for receiving country food, it is also important to note that I witnessed and was made aware of how often they go on to distribute food they receive or cook it for their family. For instance, after jesting that “a hug and a smile” is the pay that he receives for sharing caribou with Elders, a full-time Gwich’in hunter explained that “if an Elder gets meat, they’re making dry-meat. And that dry-meat is going to the ones they love too!” (FS). The hunter’s story manifested itself when a Gwich’in youth told me that her grandmother is her primary source of traditional food:

Like when I was growing up, we used to go there for lunches sometimes. And like I said, she’d make fried [caribou] meat and Kraft Dinner [*giggles*], like that was lunch. We’d just hang out with her during lunchtime and eat her food. We were really little, like maybe four or five kinda thing. And otherwise now it’s more of a ‘oh let me make you food,’ and so she’ll make food and then we’ll just pick it up from her. And sometimes we’ll hang out there and eat [caribou] meat and we’ll take the rest home (Raven).

In fact, a few days after our interview, Raven texted that “my grandma gave me some drymeat today and I thought you might want to try some?” (I gratefully accepted her moose dry-meat later that day).

Undeserving Wage-earners

While they may not rely on the local Food Bank or struggle to afford produce at the NorthMart grocery store, many wage-earning Indigenous residents are not able to acquire the foodstuff they desire the most on a regular basis. However, unlike Elders, the disabled, the vulnerable, and, to a lesser extent, single-parents with young children, residents who are employed full-time are often not considered *deserving* of being gifted country food. Alternative means of acquiring it were few, and some participants voiced frustration and sadness for their current 'country food poor' situation. Many, likewise, expressed nostalgia for an imagined time when "everyone shared." Though the literature shows us that this romanticized time of unbounded generosity does not represent the reality of historic Indigenous food systems, it nonetheless speaks to a *hunger* for foodstuffs laden with memories, sociality, and values. For many wage-earners, the *un/deservingness* cast upon them exacerbates their hunger.

The following passage adapted from my field notes provides an ethnographic snapshot into a conversation I had with Margaret, the participant who first caused me to reflect on the concept of country food insecurity. I believe that her story elucidates the emotional and practical difficulties that non-harvesting, wage-earning, able-bodied adults may encounter in their struggle to access traditional foods in present-day Inuvik.

Margaret's Story

One Monday morning in mid-February, I spontaneously decided to visit the Nihtat Gwich'in Council (NGC) that I walked by each day on my way into town. Raven, a friend and previous interview participant, had informed me that the organization distributed caribou to its Members last Christmas after hosting a community hunt. She had suggested it might be useful for me to talk with staff about the distribution process. The NGC office building on the corner of Bompas St and Mackenzie Rd was brand new; its shiny red metal exterior stood out in a town with an abundance of seasoned wooden A-frames. As the Administrative Assistant, Margaret Gordon was sitting at the desk when I approached. She had short curly brown hair, a floral scarf tied around her neck, and was wearing a bright blue down jacket embroidered with the Nihtat GTC logo. In my well-rehearsed introduction, I told her that I was hoping to learn about the ways that people share traditional foods in Inuvik. Margaret replied that she had one employee in mind for me to talk with but he was out of the office, so she kindly said she would try to answer any questions I have. I handed over my Call for Participants sheet that had some basic project information and asked her about the caribou that had been donated at Christmas. She informed me that it had happened only once in three years. She also revealed that the hunters had been reimbursed for petrol and it was therefore not a 'donation' but a funded community hunt.

Margaret then went on to tell me that single-parents and Elders—groups considered to be in need and deserving—are always shared with first, a system that she believes is too exclusionary. Under the current distribution ideology, her own household is not considered deserving because her partner is “technically” able to provide traditional food, as in he is an able-bodied adult. Having agreed to participate in a recorded interview a few moments later, Margaret expanded on this point, stating,

...they expect you to get your own meat. But let's say you didn't have all the hunting gear and your partner's not interested in hunting or whatever, then you wish for it you know? We wished for it for many, many, many years when there was hardly any caribou and the ones that did get it would save [it]. And I understand why they do, yeah. It's just, I think people have to have a little different way of thinking you know? There are other people that do need some traditional foods. I get them as gifts very rarely.

As a consequence of not having the necessary equipment or experience to hunt wild foods, Margaret and her partner rely on others' "generosity" or ad hoc events such as the Nihtat Gwich'in Christmas community hunt in order to access foods they "wish" for. This dependence on sharing is made even more precarious when environmental factors like species population decline or extreme weather patterns limit harvesting. For instance, Margaret recounted a familiar story that when the Porcupine caribou was scarce a few years ago, families "were hoarding" the meat. She said that while she understands their reluctance to share since caribou is "so precious," it made it very hard for families like hers that depend on other people sharing with them. A further barrier that impedes Margaret's, and most likely other community members', access is the Environment & Natural Resources legislation that prohibits caribou sale.

As one of my standard questionnaire prompts, I asked Margaret if she had ever participated in harvesting, hunting, or fishing? She replied,

Yeah, I did when I was younger. As I told you before, my mum and dad were hunters. They lived on the land a lot. So, when I was growing up I did a lot of that until I went to school. And school became important, so I did less and less of the on-the-land stuff.

Even though Margaret spent her early childhood on the land and "never went without" traditional foods, nowadays, unless someone "generously shares," she is often without. The southern education system and wage economy interrupted her participation in a Gwich'in subsistence lifestyle, leaving her saddened that she no longer possessed the necessary skills to harvest foods that are "so precious." An example of the type of "on-the-land" skill she was dispossessed of was the ability to break down wild game:

And then the thing is, too, when you get a whole caribou, what do you do with it if you don't know how to skin it, or things like that, or cut it up? And you know basically that's the way I've seen people give it away, is they just give away a whole caribou. And leave it in your hands to either cut it up yourself or get someone else to cut it. So that's another, how would you say, barrier, I guess.

After I had turned off the recorder, Margaret said she wanted to learn how to butcher a whole caribou, including its head. She also wanted to learn how to make dry-meat, smoked fish, and filet different types of fish. She wants the Gwich'in to organize a program for this and thinks there should be more collaboration with Inuvialuit because "they eat the same foods." Near the end of our conversation, Margaret became animated and enthusiastically proclaimed, "you know I feel better when I eat it [country foods]. I feel happier, I have more energy. It's what I grew up on, so it satisfies me more".

The cultural and emotional dimension of consuming traditional foods that Margaret conveys is why understanding the barriers to access is so vital for the well-being of all community members. This specific form of food scarcity goes beyond household nutritional surveys and calorie counts. *Country food security*, or food sovereignty as I argue it should be conceptualized, is about addressing people's *hunger* for foods that connect them to their culture, identity, and homeland (Cassady 2008; Nuttall 1992; Yamin-Pasternak et al. 2014). Like Margaret, other country food insecure residents in Inuvik live next to, and are perhaps friends with, community members that do have regular access or are considered deserving of being shared with. Unlike for individuals who live down South or in cities, country food is in sight but out of reach for many wage-earners. Considering an interlocutor told me that going without it leaves one feeling "hungry all the time," this is a matter of great consequence—and justice.

A further exemplar of country food insecurity in Inuvik is the situation of Thomas (a pseudonym), an approximately 50-year-old Inuvialuit maintenance worker. After inviting me to "ask away" about country food sharing, I inquired whether he participated in harvesting or hunting. Thomas conceded that ever since new policies were introduced that prohibit the hunting of caribou close to town, he only harvests occasionally when his cousin invites him. No matter the intent, these types of regulations are a barrier to people who may not have the time or equipment necessary to hunt

further away from town. Thomas told me that he gets to eat traditional foods only about once a month, even though he grew up eating it every day when his family “lived on the land out of town.” He said that “time and money” are what keep him from harvesting. Research on the barriers to subsistence harvesting faced by other Indigenous communities in Canada also cited financial cost and time as the two most common factors that prevented people from harvesting (Natcher 2015). And though Thomas affirmed that “people do still share, especially with Elders, single mothers and children,” he felt that in general, they “do not share as much nowadays because of the cost of hunting.” Thomas also told me that he was “always hungry in town” when he was an unemployed youth, but up until the age of twelve, he “never, ever went hungry because he was living off of the land.”

His situation is reminiscent of a conversation I had with an Inuvialuit Elder who, in response to my question of whether there are people who seem like they do not have enough connections to be able to access country foods, affirmed, “yeah, there’s lots of those. There’s a lot of extended families that are ignorant to their own family when it comes to country food. They’re not gonna share with them, they’re gonna say ‘You got Skidoo, you got whatever. Why don’t you go out? You got big boys’ ...that kinda attitude” (Shirley). This assumption that able-bodied “big boys” with financial means *should be* capable of producing country foods themselves and their immediate families is perhaps part of the reason that this category gets classified as *undeserving*.

The high degree of transience is another factor that may influence whether a resident of Inuvik is country food insecure. Though urbanization is far from a new trend, the extent to which traditional food sharing is tied to kinship means that families living farther apart from each other may have a more challenging time distributing land food. For instance, while sitting across from each other at the Cancer Support Quilting Group, I casually asked Betty (a pseudonym), a full-time public employee who looked to be in her 60’s, where she gets her country food from. She replied that she last got it from the Nihtat Tribal Council two months prior when they distributed it to members at Christmas time. She also informed me that she is shared with when she visits her daughter in Whitehorse, who, along with her partner, “go hunting all the time and mostly live off country food.” It would seem that despite Betty having a very close consanguineal tie to a household with high country food access, the distance and

frequency of travel mean that she experiences a degree of *country food insecurity*. That being said, it is perhaps not merely the distance but the current costs of transporting people and cargo across the North that perpetuate barriers to access. For example, Martha told me that her mother used to regularly receive berries, fish, and meat from relatives in Old Crow, YK, because it only cost \$100 to send at the time. The high cost of transportation is why residents so often take advantage of sending or bringing country foods when travelling.

I believe that my participant's *country food insecurity* experiences demonstrate that it is a unique and poignant issue affecting communities that have undergone a dramatic change in their traditional food system. Unlike many Western food security paradigms, my country food insecurity concept accounts for the nuances of living in a mixed traditional and cash economy whereby an individual or household can be affluent in one economy but poor in another. Of course, it is not as simple as a 'rich versus poor' experience, with participants falling along a spectrum of daily to rare access. A short excerpt from an interview with a young Inuvialuit mother elucidates the desire for options that make it easier to access country foods:

Shawna: *It's kinda hard to get native foods. If there's that seafood guy around, I'd be able to get char but that's about it.*

Cahley: *That's about it? Okay. How do you feel about that?*

Shawna: *I don't know, I think it should be easier. I miss having Native food. It's really good.*

For those country food poor or insecure people who are considered *undeserving* of being gifted wild foods, the alternative means for obtaining it are currently limited. As such, there is a selection of Inuvik's Indigenous population who are "starving for" and missing the foods that "feel like home."

By broadening the notion of wealth to include access to items that cannot be readily or affordably purchased in the market economy, in this case, country foods, I argue that a lack of such foodstuffs is a type of poverty. As such, I employ Katz's (2013) concept of the undeserving poor to suggest that there are understood to be deserving and undeserving country food poor residents in Inuvik. Through his examination of

Western welfare states, Katz stipulates that lines have always been drawn between those considered deserving and undeserving of help when resources are finite. In Inuvik, the deserving poor—those whose need is collectively agreed upon to merit traditional food gifts, include Elders, single-parents, physically-challenged, and vulnerable groups (homeless, reliant on food programs, etc.). On the other side of the coin, the undeserving poor appear to be employed, able-bodied youth, and non-aged adults. For many of my participants, the *deservingness* imbued upon these categories had tangible impacts on the scale of their country food (in)security. With markets for country foods a currently un(der)developed option, the moral rendering of certain groups as *undeserving* decreases their accessibility.

On the basis that many of my wage-earning participants had less access than Elders I spoke with and were told about, I posit that, as with financial poverty, deservingness is not actually gauged on the evidence of country food need. Therefore, one of the aims of this thesis is to document the experiences of country food insecure/poor residents as evidence of their need—of their hunger.

4. Selling Traditional Foods

I preface this chapter on contemporary practices of and perspectives on country food sales by stating that I am not here (nor is it my place) to take sides with those who sell or do not sell, buy or do not buy traditional foods in Inuvik. Instead, I attempt to unpack the traditional food-related discourse in this Arctic community where there is widespread variation in country food access. I will also examine the contexts in which Indigenous peoples are currently exchanging these highly valued foodstuffs for cash as a way to illuminate congruities and complexities within the discourse. Due to compounding factors associated with colonialism—including but not limited to reliance on wage labour, formal education system, the nuclearization of kinship groups (Stern 2005), environmental management agendas, and urban settlement—it appears that regular access to country food in Inuvik is increasingly stratified. People I spoke with attempt to mitigate their access through different arrangements such as trading or formal and informal buying. While trading, used in this text as synonymous with bartering as that is the term my participants most often used, is largely accepted as a culturally appropriate mode of exchange, selling traditional foods is quite contentious—an outlook found in many northern Indigenous communities as discussed in the introduction. Furthermore, the concept of selling itself requires nuance as ideas about ‘fair’ cash compensation emerged as distinct from selling ‘for profit.’ In this chapter, I outline the forms of selling I observed, delve into perceptions of current practices, and explore proposed initiatives that residents imagine may or may not work to increase country food availability.

Current Formal Sales

While the formal sale of country food is not a new phenomenon in Inuvik, with both Allen’s Country Foods and Ulu Foods having operated in the late 1950s and 1980s, respectively, it is currently a limited venture. A *New York Times* newspaper article from 1985 describes how Ulu Foods—owned by the Inuvialuit Development Corporation (IDC)—sold “caribou and whale meat, seal blubber and other ‘country foods’ on which the Inuvialuit traditionally relied” (Wren 1985, p. 9). Along with the bricks and mortar

store in Inuvik that sold wild food "and clothing made from muskox skins" (*Inuktitut Magazine* 1983, 96), they also ran a processing business that sold fish to southern markets (*ibid*) and a line of salamis and other cured meats made from muskox (Pamela Stern, pers. comm.).



Figure 5. ICEDO Craft Shop country food freezer. Photo by Cahley Tod-Tims.

At present, the Inuvialuit Community Economic Development Organization (ICEDO) operates a Craft Shop located in the IRC head office building on Mackenzie Road. The shop predominantly sells Indigenous crafted goods such as sealskin mittens and beaded jewellery, but they also have a freezer in the back (no advertisement). Throughout my fieldwork, the freezer contained berries (\$30 for one medium-sized

Ziploc bag), whole fish, muktuk (approx \$250 for a 5-gallon pail or \$30 for a medium bag), and dry-fish (herring 10 for \$180). I went into the shop approximately six times and saw people buying country food on three of those occasions. A number of my participants acknowledged that even though they had purchased country food from the store, they did not do it often, in part, because of high prices. An Inuvialuit Elder provided some insight into how the Craft Shop procures land food:

June, July, and August they [IRC] start letting hunters know in the communities that they need muktuk, fish, and—muktuk, dry fish, and dry-meat for their craft shop. So, they could start selling to the tourists, right? So, they could sell muktuk and whatever. Sometimes they would contract people to go out and get the muktuk. Other times, like in this case where my uncles came back from whale camp, they would just go—an average person can just walk in there after a whale hunt and ‘I got five pails of muktuk for sale’ and they’ll buy it (Shirley, February 2020).

It thus seems that the Craft Shop purchases country foods on an ad hoc basis and contracts hunters at specific times of the year for community events. Though I have not seen how the Craft Shop operates during the summer when the vast majority of visitors are present—the tourism industry has been growing in the region with the completion of the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway in 2017—it does not seem likely that tourists are the target customers for beluga muktuk. As a quick reminder, muktuk is whale skin and blubber usually served raw. It is perhaps possible that tour operators purchase it for their clients to sample since I was told at a public Inuvik Tourism Stakeholder Meeting that there is a great desire from tourists to be able to eat more country foods. Due to regulations concerning the commercialization of wild foods, restaurants are limited to serving fish and reindeer. You do not have to be Indigenous to purchase country foods from the Craft Shop. However, its inconspicuous placement in an unmarked, upright freezer leads me to believe it is predominantly for local use.

I learned more about the ICEDO Craft Shop when I attended the IRC Cup Cultural Weekend in celebration of the IRC Native Hockey Tournament at the Midnight Sun Complex. Along with traditional tool and craft-making workshops, free country food was served, including moose stew, local fish patties, reindeer chilli and soup, cooked muktuk, and moose dry-meat. Having first inquired about how the plastic container full of muktuk cubes had been obtained, the IRC On-The-Land (OTL) Wellness Programs

Manager informed me that IRC's new policy is to purchase all country food through the Craft Shop. He said this method ensures that the food comes from reliable, quality-assured harvesters who are compensated fairly and ensures the shop makes a profit. He also informed me that IRC purchases country foods seasonally so that they are fresh and then stores them in a large deep freezer by Stanton's Grocery, an IRC subsidiary, to use for events and programs throughout the year (they had geese and ptarmigan in the freezer as of March 7th, 2020). He then went on to tell me that he had recently purchased a whole moose, and by the time it was processed, it cost them \$1,500.



Figure 6. Muktuk & moose dry-meat at the IRC Cultural Weekend. Photograph by Cahley Tod-Tims

These examples of the IRC buying country food from local hunters to either sell in their shop or serve at events are significant because it illustrates that the foods already have an established monetary value, that there is a demand for store-bought traditional foods, and that at least some hunters are willing to be remunerated in cash for their harvest.

Current Informal Sales

Word of mouth

This type of informal sale occurs when buyers and sellers of land food use social networks to facilitate exchanges. One prominent member of the Gwich'in community claimed that despite cultural and Environment and Natural Resource (ENR) restrictions, caribou is definitely sold in Inuvik. When I inquired how the hunters advertise that they have caribou available if the exchange is illegal, she said that "they call up people they know want it." Similarly, in a conversation at the ICC sewing group, another woman described when she and her husband almost bought a whole caribou for \$400. "My husband said that was too much because it didn't even have the stomach or organs that he likes, but I would have bought it because caribou is so yummy!" She further commented that she believes selling or bartering directly with hunters is acceptable because "they're just going to use that cash to buy gas." Likewise, while sorting through a pail of donated muktuk, another woman in the ICC sewing group frustratedly remarked that she had given a man \$200 for a whole caribou last year, and he had yet to supply her with any meat. A resident also told me that "people sell caribou and say it is reindeer [*wink wink*]" because commercial reindeer sales are legally permitted. I believe that this is a clear example of residents enacting their agency to access highly desired caribou opportunistically within the confines of existing policies. By describing their transaction as "bartering" or just paying for gas and ammunition, Indigenous residents may evade the social and legal sanctions against caribou sales. Furthermore, it seems as though some people are capitalizing on the proximity of a mostly unattended reindeer herd that very closely resembles caribou.

It is worth noting that just because country foods circulate in Inuvik's cash economy does not necessarily mean that it is available to all residents. Seeing as though access through word of mouth denotes certain social connections, it is possible that certain residents may not have the associations required to purchase country foods, may not have the cash at the time, or may not trust the seller. An excerpt from an interview with Julia elucidates how engaging her social network facilitated such a purchase:

Cahley: *Okay. So I know you told me you've bought muktuk, have you ever paid for other country food?*

Julia: *Caribou. Once I had to pay for a caribou when there was nothing around.*

Cahley: *Mmmm. How did you find out about it?*

Julia: I asked around, like I phoned relatives saying, 'Okay, where would I find a piece of caribou for supper?' And this one hunter had some so I asked him 'Please may I buy a caribou?' [giggles]. So nicely he gave me a whole one for one hundred bucks. A whole caribou!

An individual without relatives to phone may not have been able to acquire traditional food in their time of need. Furthermore, since buying an entire animal can require hundreds of dollars, a secure freezer for storage, and the skills and tools necessary to break it down, the mere availability does not equate to accessibility nor affordability. Similar to Margaret's wish for butchery training mentioned in the previous chapter, an Inuvialuit participant expressed a desire for "the town to put on an event that demonstrates how to break down and prepare caribou head multiple times" because that was a skill she had not been taught—though she was able to breakdown the rest of the caribou and make dry-meat. It is also possible that certain interview participants have purchased caribou or other wild game and did not feel comfortable sharing that information with me.

Facebook

I monitored the Inuvik Buy & Sell Facebook page daily, since the literature on selling country foods in other Inuit communities referenced that this is the most common online platform for exchanges. Indeed, country food sale postings were quite common, though it was limited to dry-meat the majority of the time. For example, the following posting represents a typical advertisement, "\$75. Large zip bags of moose drymeat. (As per ENER rules can only sell to indigenous people)." Replies may include simple comments such as "Looks so delicious" or "Would like too gets some dry meat on the 27th, will be in Inuvik then, will be staying at Hospital transit." Since Inuvik has the only hospital in the Mackenzie Beaufort Delta region, out-of-town patients who require medical treatment stay in the hostel-like residence on the second floor of the hospital called the Transient Unit. There were several postings by people who were or would be staying at the Transient Unit requesting or selling wild food during their stay. A posting on February 2nd, 2020, displaying three bags of frozen muskox meat (a species not found around Inuvik) with the text "I'm staying @ the hospital (up at transient)" illustrates the type of foods that people bring to sell.

Conversely, I was told that patients staying at the Transient Unit would regularly bring country foods with them to sell or to share during their stay, “They come here for medical and they usually bring it with them. And then they’ll say they have char for sale [on Facebook]” (Margaret). Margaret also revealed that there is a high demand for fish from the Eastern communities, “I would buy char [*snaps fingers*], fifty bucks.”

Travel between Inuvik and fly-in communities can be costly, upwards of a thousand dollars for an hour-long flight. As such, Indigenous peoples covered by the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program—registered members of an Inuit Land Claim organization or a First Nations person registered under the *Indian Act* (Government of Canada; Indigenous Services Canada, 2019)—may utilize official channels of a medical trip to unofficially sell country foods and craft goods. Capitalizing on the extended buying networks that medical travel and social media present are not unique to Inuvik's Indigenous visitors, as these practices have also been observed in Yellowknife, NWT and Alaska (Stern, pers. comm). Though aspects of modernization and colonialism have disrupted traditional food systems, including the social connections that facilitate access, I would suggest that the widespread use of inter-community medical travel and social media in country food transactions represents a (re)making of distribution networks.

Perceptions of Selling Traditional Foods

Concerns with Cash Transactions

Participants who expressed opposition to the idea of exchanging country foods in the market economy often referenced the ‘traditional rule’ that wild foodstuff should be shared in order to uphold social and cultural responsibilities. By sharing instead of selling, participants are thus preserving a practice that is understood to be moral, one that maintains their obligation to engage with humans and animal relations in a respectful manner. Furthermore, participants who opposed the sale of wild foods often articulated their reasons as stemming from the belief that sharing ensures luck on future hunts or because selling it represents southern values of “just money, money, money.” It should be emphasized that while profiting from the sale of country food is a somewhat contentious topic, I heard no judgement on its purchase. Instead, the moral ambivalence

surrounding 'for profit' country food exchanges appears to be reserved for the seller. I argue here that this is due to the value placed on sharing, which has been set up in opposition to selling in residents' collective imagination.

While snacking on a mound of homemade dry-meat at his kitchen table, Harley, a Gwich'in full-time heavy equipment operator who regularly hunts caribou, told me that there was never a circumstance in which he would accept cash for traditional foods, "people do [offer], but we don't accept it." He stated that once his "costs are covered"—"bring home more meat than my gas is worth"—his family like to share because "greed is not a good thing." AJ, Harley's wife of ten years, replied, "yeah, if you're not gracious with your bounty then how can you expect to be blessed with a nice harvest?" While I do not question the integrity of their beliefs, I think it is vital to consider Harley and AJ's economic position in this matter. They are both employed in well-paying, stable jobs and are homeowners, a status that less than 40% of the population in Inuvik occupy ("Inuvik" 2019). And while I cannot predict what they would do if their financial situation were more precarious, I can suggest that they, and other economically-secure households, are able to forgo any payment for country food because their livelihoods and ability to subsist do not depend on it.

The following excerpt from an interview with an Inuvialuit woman who recently moved to Inuvik from Ulukhaktok to be close to her son elucidates a similar perspective to Harley and AJ:

If you're a true hunter, you don't take compensation; you just give it. You just give it. And then once you do that, when you're hunting, trapping, fishing, you're always going to be able to see something or catch something or harvest something because the thing is you're giving, you're giving it away. 'Cuz animal's presenting itself because it knows it's going to be shared (Lori).

However, despite Lori articulating a rather decided opinion about hunters who sell their catch, she also stated that she would "probably" buy it in a store "if I had the money and I was craving it that bad." While Lori's beliefs may appear incongruent on paper, they perfectly capture the complexity of participants' lived realities. As previously

mentioned, sharing and consuming country food has become an emblem of Indigenous identity (Briggs 1997), an ideal that can be verbalized (rather than practiced) with ease. As such, I posit that espousing the virtues of sharing has become a commonplace identity performance in a locale with a great many non-Indigenous residents and visitors. However, when confronted with the reality of gaining access to foods that one is “starving for,” reflecting on whether the method of acquisition aligns with their sharing philosophy is not always a priority.

Besides concerns with the morality of selling traditional foods to other Indigenous persons—since the sale and barter of animals to settlers, traders, and whalers has been documented for well over a century (see Arnold et al. 2011; Bonesteel 2006; Nuligak 1966)—several participants also voiced concern with the affordability of potential commercial sales. Shirley, an Inuvialuit Elder, suggested that stores taking a commission would mean that “it’s going to be pricey. It’s going to cost you more than double...I’m gonna go there and say ‘I’ve got a piece of meat to sell to you for fifty bucks. Here you can sell it on the counter and cut it up’ whatever. I’ll sell it for fifty. You know how much they’re going to sell it for? Hundred. Can you afford a hundred bucks?” Similarly, while Julia revealed that she buys wild food directly from hunters approximately once a month and believes that people should be able to purchase it in stores, she also worries that “[i]t’s going to be so costly [giggles]. I don’t know, the way the meat prices are now in the stores, I find it so costly.” The manner in which Julia giggled at the prospect of buying country foods in stores makes me think that, despite agreeing with the principle, the reality of articulating it made her uncomfortable.

When I asked if there was anything more she wanted to add at the end of our interview, Julia made an intriguing suggestion: “the Nutrition North [retail subsidy program] subsidize so much healthy foods. They should do that the same with Native food if they’re going to put it in the stores. So that they don’t have to think, ‘oh this is going to cost me so much to buy this’.” Another concern raised by participants pertained to the processing of country foods into value-added products that are not desirable to locals. For instance, one young Inuvialuit single-mother who specified that she would not want to purchase processed country foods (sausages, jerky, or canned foods)—which is what the ICEDO commercialization initiative proposes—“better to have just frozen and raw. Because someone needs to cook it, that way better to be raw” (Shawna). Along

with concerns about altering wild foods from their unprocessed and desirable state for consumption (frozen, raw, dried), apprehension regarding the quality of value-added goods was also observed. The following excerpt on country food sales explicates this point:

Cahley: *Do you think that people should be able to buy it in the store?*

Lori: *Yeah, but then again, it's probably processed if it's on a shelf from a store. And being taxed on it, it has to be processed. You lose a lot of nutrients and fat when you process meat and process food you know? And the freshness of the meat or the freshness of the item, you know goes.*

Cahley: *So if it was canned or something?*

Lori: *'Cuz the preservatives or something on it too so. If it's processed, it has a different taste.*

Therefore, I surmise that there are both ideological and practical concerns about traditional food commercialization in Inuvik.

It is also worth noting that, as with most groups which occupy a privileged position in society, those residents who have large social networks or household access to traditional foods may not see a need for the sale of such foodstuff if their lived realities do not include this specific form of food insecurity. I was told by an Inuvialuit wage-earner whose husband is a hunter and trapper that it could not be true that people in Inuvik were going without wild food because “everybody shares here. It’s still common here because it’s our custom.” Similarly, a full-time Gwich’in hunter responded that “everybody who works in an office has some connection with a hunter” (FS) after I commented that country food might be harder to acquire for office workers. Coming from households that procure country foods themselves, it appears that these two participants do not see the labour involved in making and maintaining sharing networks. Office workers who moved from a smaller hamlet may not have a “connection with a hunter” in Inuvik or have the time to go out to a camp and clean in exchange for wild food like my interlocutor Sheena did while unemployed. It should also be emphasized that even “in pre-settlement era, food sharing was not an automatic process, but one contingent on ecological conditions, personal circumstances, and societal directives” (Collings et al. 1998, 302). Therefore, the idea that “everyone shares,” ergo everyone has access,

obscures the complexity of country food distribution. I hope that the data gathered in this thesis can help spotlight the spectrum of access so that there is a greater community-wide understanding of the need for more inclusive initiatives. Indeed, when I was voicing my concerns as a non-Indigenous researcher over the usefulness of my project, a member of the ICC traditional sewing group assured me that it was important that the stories of those experiencing country food *hunger* and *insecurity* were told.

Influence of Country Food (in)Security on Perception of Sales

A study examining local perspectives on food security in Paulatuk (Todd 2011), a small hamlet in the ISR, identified "a desire to be able to purchase wild game and fish at the local store" (216) amongst wage employees. This finding prompted one of my research aims: to ascertain whether employment in the market economy, which can act as a barrier to access, influences a participant's opinion on the sale of country foods in Inuvik. And indeed, I noticed a pattern between people's perceptions of selling traditional food and their access, with a number of *country food insecure* informants articulating a desire to purchase them. For instance, while discussing whether she would like a store similar to Ulu Foods to open again, Debra (a pseudonym), an Inuvialuit full-time teacher, responded: "[o]f course, I'm a single mother and I want to eat traditional foods too." Similarly, a young Inuvialuit woman who recently relocated from Tuktoyaktuk for job opportunities replied that even though she had not yet purchased country food, she would if they were for sale in stores, "Cuz I don't know the land around here and I made this my new home so there's gotta be another way to get the food. If we can't hunt it ourselves, there has to be another way" (Sheena). Shawna echoed a similar sentiment that "it would be cool if they had a store with Native foods," especially if they could get foods from around the region since "smaller communities are closer to the ocean and get all the fish." While identifying a clear consensus for a model of country food sales was beyond the scope of this thesis, the data indicates that there is interest in and/or support for an inclusive initiative that allows locals to purchase these desired foods more easily and affordably.

However, it is not only country food insecure individuals who buy wild foods and believe that formal sale options should be developed. A number of participants who consume it weekly or even daily told me that having traditional foods in stores would be

“fair.” For example, when asked if people should be able to buy country food in stores, LG, an Inuvialuit Elder who hunts and fishes seasonally with his son, replied:

LG: Only as a matter of access to it. You know? To make it accessible. I mean you shouldn't have to talk in secret and find out who has it. You should be able to go and have some access, especially if you don't know anyone and you're from out of town. Like the young lady who's looking for some Indigenous food.

Cahley: Who doesn't have a hunter or family. It would be okay for her to go buy stuff?

LG: Yes. And I'm sure she's been asking all over the place where she could get some you know? So, it shouldn't have to be that difficult for her.

Simultaneously, there was a theme amongst those more country food secure Inuvialuit and Gwich'in individuals that it is wrong to sell wild foods (for profit) because it is “not their way.” For example, VC, a non-wage earning Gwich'in artist with vast social connections—“if I'm stuck for meat for my mum, I'll just go like that [*picks up his phone*]”—said that he has “never bought dry-meat in my life” because he makes his own. He emphatically declared that “we don't sell our meat, we don't sell our caribou...we can't sell it no matter what.” Shirley, an Inuvialuit Elder whose daughter and subsistence hunter and trapper husband regularly share their harvest with her, recounted a similar ‘rule.’ “My father taught us never to sell meat. As much as it costs you to go out and get it, never sell food. Never.” I suggest that the staunchly held perspective that country foods should “never be sold,” and instead shared, can be understood as a matter of collective identity performance. As discussed earlier, sharing has become emblematic of Indigeneity (Briggs 1997), a way for residents whose lives have been upended by colonialism to express their Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and/or Métis identity. Indeed, Searles (2002) affirms that practices associated with country foods have become a way for Inuit to differentiate themselves from White people whose lifeways are critiqued as being individualistic and capitalistic. For people who do not see their cultural values and customs enacted in mainstream society, upholding these emblems of culture—hunting, sharing, and consuming country food—may seem integral to maintaining a collective and individual sense of self.

And yet, ‘rules’ about selling traditional foods can vary depending on the species harvested and the amount of labour put in. As has been witnessed in other ISR

communities (Wesche, pers. comm), selling fish and value-added country foods like dry-meat is generally acceptable because of the understanding that buyers are paying for the labour rather than the actual meat. Thomas for instance, the Inuvialuit maintenance worker, said that while he is unsure about the idea of purchasing country food at stores, he does not mind buying dry-meat and dry-fish “because that person put in their time and money.” Likewise, an Inuvialuit Elder who continues to participate in subsistence activities, asserted that he spends around \$200-300 on smoked fish each summer, which he also explained is acceptable because he is “paying for their labour” (LG). In fact, the conceptual differentiation between dry-meat and dry-fish versus raw, cooked, or frozen land food is pronounced enough that a number of participants seemed to categorize them as different types of country food. A Gwich’in hunter who proclaimed that selling meat “for profit” is against “our fucking values,” casually stipulated that “I don’t mind if you sell dry-meat” (FS). Similarly, another participant affirmed that they had never purchased country food on Facebook, “just dry-meat.” Even though in most other contexts dry-meat and dry-fish are assuredly conceived of as wild foodstuff, it appears to hold a different status in relation to sales.

Discourse about the sale of caribou on the other hand—a culturally valued, legally protected, and nutritionally desired species—is far more controversial and complex. To illustrate, one afternoon while nibbling on dry-meat that her daughter-in-law had made and discussing the grey market sale of caribou, Martha suggested that “people know it is illegal, but then shit, you want it!” This moral quandary rings true of conversations I had when people said that even though they were concerned about the consequences of commercializing country food, they would purchase it were it to become available in stores. For example, despite Kim, an Inuvialuit full-time wage earner originally from Paulatuk, asserting that she does not “think people would’ve wanted to utilize so much of our country food because they [animal species] are pretty close to extinction” by opening a country food store, she also said that she would “for sure” buy it if it were available. As with all aspects of culture, people make and remake social norms so that they fit their present lived realities (Ali & Vallianatos 2016), and it seemed as though the morality of traditional food exchanges in Inuvik is currently being (re)made to accommodate the growing issue of access. One lived reality that seems to be influential in this remaking of food morals is that more and more people are leaving their small hamlets for opportunities in Inuvik. The hunger for wild foods that they had regular

access to growing up and now cannot be harvested locally nor easily acquired thus grows. The result appears to be that certain residents who espouse traditional rules about 'sharing not selling' are having to negotiate such rules against their cravings for the foodstuff that 'reminds them of home' and 'leaves them full and energized.' To illustrate this point further, an Inuvialuit Elder told me that his favourite country food and the one that he has the greatest memories of is char because "I grew up with Arctic char back in Ulukhaktok". This Elder then stated that my query about commercializing traditional foods was a "very difficult question to answer because we've grown to share our food you know?" However, and this is by no means questioning his sincerity, he also revealed that if it were available in stores he would "definitely would buy Arctic char [laughs]." I suggest that his lack of local access to and cravings for a food that contains childhood memories of his mother making dry-fish mean that he could morally negotiate the purchase of it at a store.

Though support amongst *country food insecure* individuals for more options to purchase country foods was evident (though support is not exclusive to this group), an exchange with a Gwich'in interlocutor illuminates concerns about the expense of such food items:

Cahley: *Do you think that people should be able to buy country food in stores here?*

Margaret: *Yep. Not at the high prices that you see the prices here, [it should be] reasonable. Something where they're not looking for profit, maybe then we'll get good prices.*

Cahley: *So, if they were available, you would purchase them at the store?*

Margaret: *I did, when they used to have a meat store here and they used to sell all kinds of traditional foods like fish. And I'd buy the muktuk from there and cook it up myself.*

The store in question was Ulu Foods, the 'country food outlet' that operated in the 1980's. Interestingly, the Inuvialuit Elder who had adamantly recited her father's 'rule' against selling country foods used to frequent Ulu Foods:

...we used to be able to go there and buy country foods. We could buy how you go to the store and get beef stew, we could buy caribou chunks for caribou stew. We were able to

buy caribou steaks, caribou tongue. All the beef you see on the counters today, we were able to buy the same caribou (Shirley, February 2020).

She also disclosed that her parents had actually started a business called Allen's Country Foods "where we sold reindeer meat, we sold fish, we sold caribou meat, we sold the tongues, the innards of the animals." When first confronted with this seemingly contradictory position of a participant telling me that "it's not our tradition" to sell country foods and yet their family had sold it via a formal business I was admittedly confused. As such, I inquired further:

Cahley: *So just a quick question because I know you said that people should be sharing instead of buying, but do you think that the Ulu Foods or your parents store...so was that okay that they were selling country food?*

Shirley: *Well that was through a project right, it wasn't them actually selling*

Cahley: *Oh*

Shirley: *It was an organization, COPE in those days, it was called COPE [Committee of Original People's Entitlement]*

Cahley: *That's right yeah*

Shirley: *They bought country foods from the different communities and they just wanted somebody to be the agent to sell for them.*

Cahley: *I see*

Shirley: *It wasn't like my mum and dad selling.*

Shirley's last sentence appears to be a key distinction for a number of participants. Beyond issues of harvesting laws and policy, such cultural and social acceptance of Indigenous organizations paying hunters to procure traditional foodstuff but dissension when the exchange is an Indigenous individual-to-individual is intriguing. Along the same vein, Inuvialuit Elder LG stated that while he does not agree with "slaughtering for money," he believes traditional hunts, during which "approximately 20 animals may be taken," that result in Elders being shared with are acceptable. His perspective once again points to the idea that when organizations, as representatives of the community, take on the role of distributor, through community hunts or perhaps a country food store, they act as a "moral buffer" (Gombay 2005) between the exchange of

cash for wild foods. In other words, hunters getting paid in cash by an Indigenous organization/business is not perceived as an issue because country food is either distributed in a culturally appropriate way or it negates the problem of hunters selling directly to other Indigenous persons. The following response to a question on whether hunting should be a job that people make money from elucidates this further:

Maybe if Community Corp. or Hunters and Trappers hired five or six people to do it, it'd be okay. But if it's...for me, if it's one individual to another, or from one individual to an organization, or from an organization to an individual, I'd rather just see things get exchanged. No money in the process. But everybody's changed nowadays, money this money that (Lori, March 2020).

Because of their widespread acceptability, it would perhaps prove fruitful to explore initiatives that increase country food insecure peoples' access with a moral buffer framework. For instance, none of the participants voiced any critique of Ulu Foods even though it sold country food to locals in exchange for cash. With this in mind, the ICEDO's proposed initiative to have Community Corporations take on the running of country food commercialization may be met more favourably than a private business venture.

The Trouble With Youth These Days...

The age-old narrative that youth of today are lazy, disrespectful, and materialistic emerged in conversations about the change in country food sales and subsistence practices. After only a few weeks in Inuvik, I noticed a pattern of older adults explicitly stating or implying that young people do not have the virtue of patience or work ethic when compared with how hard life in the Western Arctic was 'back in their day.' Additionally, youth were cited as hunting with the intention of selling for profit, a transgression of traditional subsistence 'rules' that call for only taking what you need. For example, a Gwich'in Elder told me that she would like to see more on-the-land programs involving Elders because "a lot of younger people don't have respect today." This imagined lack of respect for traditions was expressed through stories of youth 'being wasteful with animals because their only motivation for hunting was to sell it' or youth grinding meat instead of the laborious task of slicing it to make dry-meat because "they just want it quickly."

In contrast, older adults would praise youth who followed the socially acceptable 'rules' regarding harvesting, particularly when they shared country food. Martha for instance, described with a beaming smile how she "was so proud" when her son told her that he had given the caribou hindquarters (with which she had originally planned to make dry-meat for relatives living in the South) to an Elder who did not have a hunter in the family. I was told in many iterations that youth who were "raised properly" ate traditional foods in their traditional form, spent more time on the land than indoors, and shared rather than sold country foods. In other words, it seemed as though youth had to perform recognizable social and cultural norms in order to avoid criticism, with little acknowledgement given to ways youth have adapted rather than abandoned traditional foodways. For example, an older Gwich'in participant had critiqued the way that "youth eat caribou with teriyaki nowadays" as an exemplification for how they no longer follow cultural customs since traditionally meat was rarely seasoned. Though this participant's perspective is, of course, valid, I believe that it is essential to recognize that Indigenous food systems have always been founded on "cultural fluidity, agency, and adaptability" (Dusselier 2009, 333). There is no single authentic cuisine that can be corrupted since all foodways have adapted over time when new methods, materials, or ingredients are introduced (ibid). Accordingly, I would posit that young adults consuming country foods in any form, such as fried caribou with Kraft Dinner or muktuk with HP sauce, demonstrates continued involvement in Indigenous foodways.

Though I did not have the opportunity to converse with as many young Indigenous people as I did older adults, I was struck by how many of them articulated a version of traditional beliefs and an appreciation for country foods (especially considering that I had been told they only "play video games and eat pizza pops"). I spoke with one 21-year-old Gwich'in man who declared that after spending time on the land learning about traditional values from Elders, he no longer felt comfortable with the idea of selling wild food for a profit. He differentiated between compensation and profit, elaborating that "long ago a hunter would have bartered a pound of muktuk for some caribou, but now people barter with modern items" like cash, gas, shells because "we have to adapt to change." Therefore, not only do some young people disagree with selling country food, but some Elders expressed support, or, at least, acceptance of it. LG for instance stated that he believes it is important for those with little access to be

able to acquire it with dignity and DAA affirmed that a hunter has “got to get money for it” since they “pay for gas, pay for shells, go long ways to go for meat.” Consequently, I suggest that individuals' perceptions and practices relating to the sale of country food is not determined by a demographic category such as age or gender, but rather influenced by the intersection of their personal experiences.

5. Conclusion

Review of my main findings

The purpose of this research project was to understand the perceptions and conditions of traditional food sharing and selling in present-day Inuvik. Inspired by the ICEDO's proposal to commercialize country foods, I sought to determine whether the expansion of formal wild food sales was something residents wanted and whether age and employment status may affect people's perspectives. This research was also influenced by Molly Lee's (2002) description of an urban-dwelling Yup'ik woman's maintenance of social networks via the harvesting and circulation of wild foods in between urban and rural Alaska, as I hoped to explore the social relationships entangled in contemporary exchanges. After spending close to three months with Indigenous residents of and visitors to Inuvik, I conclude with several key findings:

1. The differences in local people's access to traditional foods are significant; some participants confirmed that they consume it daily, while others had to wait months to satiate their hunger. I conceptualize those residents who do not have regular access, often full-time professionals without strong social connections in the region, as being *country food insecure*. Significantly, the connection to and cravings for country food remained high despite a participant's level of access. In other words, a lack of access does not diminish the salience of traditional foods. The inability of *country food insecure* residents to readily access such foodstuff should thus be treated as a cultural, social, and nutritional issue requiring action.
2. Research using a Western food security model fails to capture the mixed traditional and market food systems in the Canadian Arctic, where a resident may be simultaneously store-bought food secure but *country food insecure*. The importance of country foods to Indigenous residents' physical and emotional well-being and the current lack of options to acquire it outside of social networks makes this an issue of food sovereignty.

3. Community members 'in need' of wild foods are either considered to be *deserving* or *undeserving* of being shared with by way of formal and informal arrangements. Elders, single-parents, vulnerable groups, disabled, and children are deemed *deserving* while employed and able-bodied youth and adults are considered *undeserving*. I argue that this moral categorization is not based on evidence of who actually has the least country food access. Instead, peoples' deservingness of being shared with appears to be informed by both who is imagined to be capable of harvesting (able-bodied adults) and who is imagined to need country food for their well-being (Elders and children).
4. Though many participants agreed that compensating hunters with cash for community hunts or to buy gas, shells, and equipment was a fair exchange for wild foods, perceptions of commercializing the culturally-valued foodstuffs were varied. Many country food insecure participants expressed an interest in purchasing it more easily and also had concerns about affordability. On the other hand, participants who were harvesters or who had regular access often cited traditional rules, including that wild foods should be shared because that is the Inuvialuit/Gwich'in way and that the animal needs to be treated respectfully because it has given itself.
5. Rather than solely relying on commercial purchases, many *country food insecure* participants expressed an interest in accessing wild foods through more culturally appropriate and familiar methods. Though the sensorial pleasure in consuming foodstuff that 'tastes like home' is indeed vital to residents, country food's social and cultural elements mean that how and from whom it is acquired also matters. Therefore, I suggest that increasing the sale of country foods in the market economy would not solve the multifaceted issue of country food insecurity.

Limitations

My study was limited by the scope of a master's research project in which I was the sole investigator in a field site that I could not make multiple trips to. My

fieldwork was also cut short by almost four weeks because of COVID-19 safety protocols. I was not able to follow through with plans to interview two full-time harvesters, participate in community festivals across the region in April 2020, learn how to break down a caribou with a participant, nor get to present to post-secondary students at the Aurora College as all of these activities were cancelled. Interviews with hunters could have provided me with more data on the distribution side of sharing, and recruiting more youth from the college would have increased the variety of perspectives. As it is, my study is limited to 17 interview participants, though I had in-depth casual conversations with many more community members. I was unable to recruit a teenage interview participant, and thus that voice is lacking in the research—which I think would have provided an interesting foil to all of the older adult rhetoric about ‘youth these days.’ However, I conducted interviews with three Elders and have casual conversations with children around 8-12, so the sample size is quite diverse in age. Five of my interview participants were male, and 12 were female so there is perhaps a slight gender bias. However, I spoke informally with many male community members who provided crucial and insightful information.

Areas for Future Research & Recommendations

Arctic food security is a growing, cross-disciplinary area of study that has serious implications for community members' health on the ground. However, food security research that centres insecurity and *hunger* for the foodstuffs that many Indigenous residents associate with conceptions of health, culture, kinship, and identity has thus far been lacking. Throughout this thesis, I have referenced the need for research that considers the mixed traditional and market food situations in contemporary Indigenous communities and incorporates this into methodologies and project goals. I believe that future research specifically on country food (in)security is necessary to understand the barriers that affected groups face and the emotional and physical experiences of hunger they endure. By examining this nuanced form of food insecurity, culturally-informed and contextually-specific solutions to the problem of traditional food access can be developed. And while the commercialization of country foods is one proposed method to increase access, I would suggest that both research on the environmental impacts of such a venture and local community members' perceptions be closely analyzed to ensure sustainability and appropriateness. This research is

especially poignant in a context where the pressures of modernization and climate change continue to amplify in northern Canada.

My Recommendations

My recommendations complement the existing literature that critiques food security research for overlooking the affordability of and Indigenous peoples' access to traditional foods as part of their framework (Huambachano 2018; Power 2008; Todd 2011). Yet I go one step further and suggest that the issue of stratified access should be framed as one of food sovereignty, which has at its core “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food” (La Via Campesina 2007). In particular, Indigenous food sovereignty emphasizes the need for self-determination over food systems and identifies the injustices and structural inequalities communities face against the backdrop of colonialism (Martens et al. 2016; Robin 2019; Rudolph & McLachlan 2013). The legacies of colonialism and the pressures of modern life in the Western Canadian Arctic—including but not limited to enforced settlement, residential schools, Western education systems, and wage employment—have and continue to disrupt Indigenous peoples' involvement with their traditions (Natcher 2015). Since my research indicates that traditional foods have become largely inaccessible for certain Indigenous residents without the social connections, abilities, or time to harvest for themselves, community-based solutions that increase their access could be seen as improving food sovereignty. I believe that working to achieve food sovereignty includes collaboratively developing food policy and programs that reflect the needs of all Indigenous community members. With this in mind, the primary barriers to access that require further investigation include the exclusivity of community hunts, the unreliability of grey market transactions, the minimal formal purchasing options, and the moral categorization of employed able-bodied youth and adults as *undeserving* of being shared with—despite evidence from this research indicating that they may be one of the most *country food insecure* groups.

Participants' Recommendations

Localizing experiences of, perspectives on, and responses to traditional food sharing and selling in Inuvik has been my goal from the onset of this project. Therefore, I

choose to conclude this work with the various recommendations, concerns, and proposed solutions regarding country food access that community members shared with me. I hope that their ideas can serve as a jumping-off point for further research or local programming.

1. **Inclusive community hunts:** several country food insecure residents critiqued the current distribution procedures that often see Indigenous organizations and hunters share the overwhelming majority of their catch with the *deserving* Elders, single-parents, etc. As previously mentioned, they did not express anger at these groups being shared with; they only want to be included themselves.
2. **Affordable purchasing options:** while most participants affirmed that they would buy country food from the store if it were available, they had concerns about the cost. One interviewee, therefore, suggested that subsidizing country foods under the Nutrition North Canada program at stores could make them more affordable for customers.
3. **Training on how to prepare animals:** the lack of butchering skills was referenced by a couple of community members as a barrier to wild food accessibility. For example, one country food insecure informant told me that she wants the Gwich'in Tribal Council to fund a program to learn how to make dry-meat, smoked fish, filet different types of fish, and butcher a whole caribou, including its head. For reference, the ICEDO mobile country food processing course does teach some of these skills; however, it is only for Inuvialuit beneficiaries and is a multiple-week course and therefore not conducive to a wage-earners' schedule.
4. **Programs for young people:** a few interlocutors suggested that programs aimed at teaching youth subsistence skills could increase the community's capacity to provide country foods. One participant envisioned enhanced access

by way of hunters giving away their first kill, a custom still practiced by some families in Inuvik:

Yeah, they should take young guys out or young girls that like to hunt and hunt with them. Because if they go and they get their own, say their first caribou, then they take that caribou cut it up and share it with the community. Or have a big feast and dance. Especially if it's a young guy. That tradition still goes on in smaller communities (Margaret, February 2020).

As someone with limited access and who is often omitted from sharing arrangements, it is understandable that Margaret would like to see options that foster distribution amongst the entire community. I was told that it is common for a young Gwich'in boy to share their first caribou and that an Inuvialuk's first beluga whale catch is likewise shared. Relatedly, a Gwich'in Elder responded to my final interview prompt in which I asked if there were anything else they would like to say by advocating for additional on-the-land training between Elders and youth:

I think what should, not much Elders left now, is to teach our younger—we do take our students out on the land. At spring, they have a bunch of students up Midway teaching them traditional stuff. Like somebody gave them caribou, showed them how to—I think we need more of that. And how to fish at summertime, how to fish under the ice (DAA, February 2020).

By teaching youth harvesting skills, not only are traditional customs and knowledge maintained, but that hunter's social connections may, in turn, be afforded access.

5. **Adaptive bartering:** bartering with gas, ammunition, equipment, or 'cash compensation' is already taking place in Inuvik. However, a few community members suggested that people in need of country foods should be able to trade with items accessible to them. For instance, one Inuvialuit Elder confirmed he was happy to have received homemade bread in reciprocation for sharing land food. Another participant suggested that "if I wanted caribou, why can't I give that person sugar and tea or flour? Something that they could make something with, know what I mean? It's called bartering" (Margaret, February 2020).

While I lack the expertise on local policy and programming to declare the feasibility of these recommendations, it would seem that the capacity already exists for some of them to be taken up. For instance, Facebook could perhaps serve as the platform to facilitate adaptive bartering since sales are an established trade on the site. As there are many skilled Elders and hunters in town, butchery training also seems like a program that could be developed quite easily by the various Indigenous organizations. I would personally recommend that the tutorials be filmed and made available on the organizations' websites to be accessible to anyone, at any time. The Harvesters Assistance Program in Nunavik could perhaps serve as a model for more inclusive community hunts since the model of Indigenous organizations paying hunters to procure traditional foodstuff was widely accepted by residents. I will be preparing a plain-language report for the Aurora Research Institute as part of my research license agreement, and in that report, I will highlight the preceding recommendations.

My ethnography brings the various experiences of country food acquisitions in a contemporary Arctic setting into one space. This coming together of voices representing a continuum of traditional food access has allowed for a meaningful conversation to occur. I have shown that while country food insecurity differs from classic food insecurity in that it tends to affect middle-class, able-bodied adults, it is nonetheless a serious emotional and physical issue. The social, cultural, and spiritual importance of country foods does not diminish with access and expressions of hunger and cravings appeared over and over again in my *country food insecure* participants' discourse. I have also created space in this study to discuss the mechanisms for and opinions about selling wild foodstuffs, a contentious and yet present phenomenon. Though a handful of participants passionately affirmed that they "wouldn't accept the money" for country food, the reality is that selling allows hunters to cover the ever-increasing costs of subsistence harvesting while providing access to highly desired fare for people who may not have the time, ability, or resources to acquire it themselves. The issue in Inuvik is that informal sales are often ad-hoc and may require social connections to hunters and formal sales are limited to the ICEDO craft shop, which I was told is not affordable for regular use. Therefore, the development of country foods in the market economy presents one option that could facilitate access for country food insecure residents and the community at large. However, there may be better suited, more

sustainable models that further research could help establish. It is my hope that narratives declaring “we are starving for our food” convey the immediacy needed to work on such solutions.

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