

# THE PRISON GARDEN AS ARTISTIC BOUNDARY OBJECT:

## *Fostering Food Sovereignty and Social Citizenship for Indigenous People in British Columbia*

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**F**OOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION require connections to family – broadly defined – and community, and within many Indigenous contexts in British Columbia these connections expand beyond the intrapersonal to encompass the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, the communal activities that encompass foodways, and reciprocal and relational connections with land (Adelson 1998; Morrison 2011). These connections encompass Indigenous communities’ foodways and practices, diverse and resurgent meanings, and customs and knowledges deeply connected to the land (Napolean 2016). These ways of being and of relating to each other and the natural world are often founded in creativity, spirituality, emotionality, and the interwoven social lives of humans and the non-human world. Foodways encompass the social, cultural, and economic practices surrounding the production and consumption of food; they are “all of the traditional activities, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours associated with the food in ... daily life [including] production, preservation, preparation, presentation, gathering, marketing ... uses of food products other than for eating, and folklore” (Darnton 2012, np, quoting Michigan State University Museum). However, colonialism, state-sponsored structures of violence, socioeconomic marginalization, and dispossession have purposefully disrupted these Indigenous foodways in British Columbia, resulting in food insecurity as well as the wider negative impacts of reduced food sovereignty – social isolation, spiritual disruption, economic vulnerability, low educational attainment, and high unemployment. These same factors are also known to be correlated with the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples at each stage of the criminal justice process in British Columbia and across Canada (Sapers 2016; Perreault 2009), and are inextricably

linked with colonial notions of citizenship and productivity. These lived experiences of colonialism and marginalization have been, and continue to be, reflected in how foodways and meanings are operationalized in gardens and kitchens across Canada; for instance, in the contention surrounding bannock, seen as cultural food and/or as a harbinger of colonial hunger (Tennant 2016; Wastasecoot 2016). Through analysis of a prison garden as a *boundary object* – as a place that exists between the worlds of settler and Indigenous foodscapes in British Columbia – it is possible to trace the impacts of colonialism on concepts of Indigenous citizenship and food sovereignty, wherein Indigenous citizenship is a colonial construct tied to notions of productivity steeped in neoliberal capitalism. According to findings from a qualitative research study on the impact of a federal prison garden program in British Columbia<sup>1</sup> – wherein incarcerated men grow and donate food to rural and remote First Nations communities in the Central Interior of the province – foodways and practices become an artistic and therapeutic site of resistance and resurgence, where Indigenous concepts of social citizenship and sovereignty push back against colonial notions of a national workforce fed by productive fields and extractive processes.

## BACKGROUND

Indigenous communities in Canada and abroad recognize the importance of Indigenous foods, foodways, and artful practices not only for community health and nutrition but also for cultural and holistic well-being (Elliott et al. 2012; Morrison 2011; Mundel and Chapman 2010). In contrast, in citizenship theory the rights and responsibilities of both citizen and state are founded on understandings of productivity and wealth (Bulmer and Rees 2016). In the British Columbian and Canadian contexts, citizenship and food security – the sustainable physical, social, and economic access to the quantity and quality of foods that individuals and families need to meet their nutritional needs (Edelman 2014; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2015) – are considered basic human rights.<sup>2</sup> However, for

<sup>1</sup> This research was conducted by the lead author (Timler) to fulfill the requirements of an MSc in Population and Public Health, and was supervised by the co-author (Brown). The full thesis has been published elsewhere (Timler 2017).

<sup>2</sup> The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not explicitly reference food and social rights; however, the Supreme Court of Canada has stated the Charter must be interpreted in line with Canada's international human rights obligations, including those outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the United Nations Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, both of which include the right

Indigenous peoples in British Columbia and throughout the colonial world, citizenship and the right to food is complicated by relationships to the province and state founded on dispossession from land, the restriction of subsistence activities, and the purposeful starving of children and communities as a tool of colonial submission (Carter 1990; Johnson 1990; Manuel and Posluns 1974; Milloy 1999; Mosby 2013; Mosby and Galloway 2017a, 2017b). This history of colonial violence continues to play out in homes and in prison kitchens alike, affecting food security for Indigenous peoples living in BC communities and correctional institutions (Geddes 2017; Mosby and Galloway 2017a, 2017b; Sapers 2014). Today, Indigenous bodies are constituted by the wider Canadian state as marginal citizens (Zedner 2010; Vaughan 2000), weighed down by ongoing colonial forces aimed at reducing their socioeconomic flourishing and holistic well-being. Historic and contemporary colonial structures and processes act as barriers to Indigenous claims to land and sovereignty, severing relationships inherent in Indigenous foodways and reducing complex and holistic food-based reciprocities to a relationship of mere survival. Against this backdrop, the case of a prison garden provides an opportunity to explore the tensions surrounding land, foodways, and relationships that continue to play out for Indigenous peoples across British Columbia.

### *Food to Support Colonial Productivity*

Prior to colonization diverse Indigenous peoples in British Columbia subsisted on varied and nutritious foods (Kelm 1998; 1999, Ministry of Health and Welfare 1994), diets, and foodways based in meaningful connections to complex ecosystems and the natural and spiritual worlds. Foodways provide a means to hold and transmit biocultural knowledge through the art of oral histories, the crafts of toolmaking and food preservation, and the relationships between individual, community, and the natural world (Adelson 1998, 2000; Napoleon 2016). Colonization brought purposeful repudiation of pre-existing Indigenous relationships with land and foodways – a systemic disavowal of the worth of Indigenous peoples and their foods. The imposition of agriculture was intended to civilize “unproductive” Indigenous bodies while tethering communities to colonial churches and disrupting the seasonal movements, ceremonies, and traditions encompassed in foodways; in essence, “colonial patriarchy found its first foothold in the fields and gardens of Indigenous [com-

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to food and absence from hunger (Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, 2018; 2019 [1966]).

munities]” (Carter 1990; Grey and Patel 2015; Holly 1990). Agriculture was seen as a better use of the land than communal and careful tending, harvesting, fishing, gardening, and hunting (Grey and Patel 2015; Turner and Turner 2008). These preconceived notions of under-utilized lands and unproductive Indigenous bodies supported land theft, dispossession, and environmental degradation. The reserve system, the regulation of subsistence activities, and environmental degradation forced Indigenous peoples to increasingly rely on wage labour, colonial foodstuffs, and government rations (Kelm 1999; Turner and Turner 2008). Relationships to labour and store-bought food were further complicated by systemic racism and barriers to employment (Schissel and Wotherspoon 2003; Stewart and Marshall 2011a, 2011b; Forrester, Trainor, and Brazil 2012).

Gradually at first, and then with unambiguous violence within residential schools, Indian hospitals, and forced starvation campaigns, this “culinary imperialism” began to change the food habits and preferences of Indigenous peoples (Kelm 1999, 37). These processes increasingly distanced communities from the restorative and holistic relationships with land and nature central to many Indigenous worldviews and to the well-being of Indigenous communities. Colonialism narrowed the focus of food to the numbing of hunger – hunger for nourishment, for connection to land and ancestors, and for well-being – slowly replacing ancient foodways with the “five white sins: flour, salt, sugar, alcohol, and lard” (Elliott et al. 2012, 5). This has resulted in disproportionately high rates of food insecurity and correlated diet-related diseases among Indigenous populations in British Columbia (British Columbia Provincial Health Officer 2009), which are in turn correlated with wider socioeconomic inequities tied to negative social and physical health impacts and criminal justice system engagement (British Columbia Provincial Health Officer 2009; Kaufman and Widom 1999).

Just as the concept of colonial citizenship reduces individuals to labourers, foods and foodways are reduced to functional objects (Lambert and Lester 2004; Zedner 2010; Vaughan 2000). This neoliberal reframing of food, from relationship to object of control (Alfred and Chlup 2009; Giroux 2005; Wacquant 2010), creates a division between citizens – on the one hand, settlers who require food to support social and economic productivity, and, on the other, Indigenous peoples, people in prison, and others pushed to the margins of society who require food to survive but never thrive (Zedner 2010; Vaughan 2000). By removing “unproductive” peoples from productive lands and spaces (Razack 2018; de Leeuw 2009; King 2012), foodways and the relationships that exist in the forests,

streams, and valleys can be clear-cut and mined, reducing the social webs of the natural world to privatized resources for neoliberal expansion (Herbert and Brown 2006). This exclusion of Indigenous peoples from their territories allows productivity to overshadow meaningful and complex foodways, and this is furthered in prison contexts where Indigenous peoples are often denied context-specific, land-based, and relational healing (Muller 2013; Wacquant 2010). These forms of healing offer the potential for social connection and citizenship that takes into account the power of nature and the careful and creative relationships required to support culturally mediated foodways and holistic well-being (Kirmayer, Simpson, and Cargo 2003; Mundel and Chapman 2010; Kimmerer 2013).

### *Foodways to Support Social Citizenship*

The marginal citizenship of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia is felt not only in the political realm but also in the disruptions colonialism continues to exert in the social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of individuals and communities (Adelson 2000; Radu, House, and Pashagumskum 2014). Citizenship for Indigenous peoples is inextricably linked with land rights, title, and sovereignty (Napolean 2016). The conditional status of Indigenous peoples across Canada has played out in imperial attempts to destabilize social relationships, connections within and across communities that, prior to colonization, were often created and supported through the activities, engagement, ceremony, and story surrounding the gathering, preparing, and sharing of food (Napolean 2016; Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Simpson 2014). By focusing on the ways foods and foodways have been weaponized to disrupt social well-being, the concept of social citizenship provides a way of interpreting imperial notions of food as an object whose purpose is to support productivity and, in so doing, to reveal the social relationships inherent in food sovereignty. Social citizenship provides opportunities to explore notions of community (Davy 2014), and the concept of food sovereignty offers alternate ways to support citizenship and belonging for Indigenous communities (Wittman 2009).

Social citizenship expands the notion of rights from a focus on labourers and employees to a focus on individuals engaged in community (Davy 2014). As colonialism continues to erect barriers to community cohesion and well-being for Indigenous people, “the dining room table [remains] every bit as much a site of cultural struggle as the classroom

desk” (Milloy 1999, 275). Reclaiming and revitalizing foodways and practices persist as acts of resistance and as a move towards community resurgence and well-being. Sovereignty for Indigenous peoples in British Columbia is “inherent and collective” (Barker 2005, 20), cultivated through connections with land, non-human beings, and the wider community (Adelson 2000; Kamal et al. 2015; Simpson 2004). Culturally mediated social citizenship therefore requires investing in relationships of sovereignty: these include the plants, animals, oral histories, and practices that collectively nurtured and nourished communities prior to colonialism and that continue to experience resurgence today.

## METHODS

The lead author conducted this ethnographic research to fulfill the requirements for a master of science in population and public health (Timler 2017). This study was conducted under the umbrella of a larger research program that looks at the impacts of a prison employment initiative in British Columbia (Brown et al. 2017) and that is discussed elsewhere in this special issue (Brown and Timler 2019). The larger study added context to this article; however, the latter is drawn from primary data collected by the lead author. With a memorandum of understanding (MOU) already in place with the First Nations government, ethics approval for the thesis research was then received from Indigenous community leaders and the Correctional Service of Canada’s Research Branch, both as amendments to pre-existing research ethics approvals. Approval was also sought through the UBC Research Ethics Board. This work was undertaken with a theoretical and moral commitment to decolonizing and ethical research, aligned with OCAP (ownership, control, access, and possession) principles and the principles of community-based participatory research (First Nations Information Governance Centre 2017; Salmon, Browne, and Pederson 2010). Decolonizing research is attuned to history and context, privileges Indigenous voices and ways of knowing, and positions the settler-researcher as a humble outsider (Smith 1999).

Qualitative inquiry included interviews and participant observation in two sites: the prison garden, located in southwestern British Columbia; and one of the recipient Indigenous communities, a community with approximately 350 registered band members located in the Central Interior of the province. The prison garden exists in a minimum-security federal institution. Interviews were conducted with Indigenous community

members ( $n = 10$ ), incarcerated men working in the garden ( $n = 10$ ), and program stakeholders ( $n = 5$ ). Participant observation was conducted over three weeks of living in the First Nations community and through eighty hours of participation in the prison garden. Thirty percent of the incarcerated men interviewed were Indigenous, with an average age of fifty-two and with 17.9 years as the average length of incarceration (range: three months to thirty-nine years). Thirty percent of the Indigenous community members interviewed were men, and the average age was fifty-five; community members held diverse roles, including as staff members at the health clinics and band offices, and as community leaders, elders, and members. Data collection and analysis aimed to explore the impact of the prison garden on the incarcerated men who worked there, the Indigenous people who received a portion of the donated food, and any possible meaningful connections that might develop between these two groups. Emergent themes were discussed with participants to ensure validity and to allow for participants to engage in the research in meaningful ways. Thematic analysis was iterative, and interviews were recorded, transcribed, anonymized, and coded using NVivo software. Initial findings from this study are forthcoming (Timler et al. in press).

## RESULTS

The prison garden provided a collective space for participating incarcerated men to heal, in part through the personal time they spent in the sunshine and rain, kneading the soil and tenderly interacting with plants, but also through the building and sustaining of relationships through the gifting of resultant produce. The First Nations community upon which this study focused appreciated the donated food, and, while the impact on food security was minimal (Timler et al. in press), the gifting of food provided a canvas upon which relationships could be imagined, created, and sustained. That the food came from a garden allowed for the participating men and community members to interact along the boundaries of colonial Canada, the prison garden acting as a fertile space for dialogue, connection, and reciprocity. The principles of decolonizing and community-based participatory research also supported the development of community cooking workshops, furthering this dialogic space and engaging First Nations community members in the art and craft of cooking.<sup>3</sup> Finally, through the discussions interwoven

<sup>3</sup> Cooking workshops were conducted by the lead author and a community dietitian as a response to participant feedback indicating that several donated vegetables were unfamiliar to community members and thus underutilized.



Figure 1. The prison garden in early summer. Photo by Gregg Bailey, Correctional Service of Canada.

between the garden and the community, the artistry and resistance of food sovereignty – a goal far beyond a simple garden, yet easily discussed among rows of greens and boxes of donated beets – poignantly emerged to create a reciprocity reflected in new forms of social citizenship.

### *Gardening as Healing for Men in Prison*

The experience of participating in the garden was therapeutic for the participating men as it connected them to the healing properties of nature. One man described how standing among the rows of flowers provided calming and reflexive self-care: “it’s like therapy.” Participants spoke about the freedom they felt in the garden, surrounded by nature. The aesthetic impact of the garden was also apparent, and the men spoke passionately about the power of “watching things grow” and witnessing the ebb and flow of seasonal cycles. The men spoke of their pride in the aesthetics of the garden, ensuring that plants grew straight and that root vegetables were washed prior to donation. The power of tending plants was made even more meaningful in relation to the men’s histories, and the aesthetic pleasure of working in the garden was deepened by the men’s knowledge of where the food was going – gifted to economically



vulnerable children, families, and communities. As one incarcerated man explained:

I think it's awesome. Just seeing the fruits of your labour. From beginning to end, knowing that you're helping out the community, right? For myself, taking a life twenty-three years ago, and then knowing that I'm giving back.

The majority of the food was donated to local foodbanks, homelessness reduction agencies, and school lunch programs, and the men were able to take supervised temporary absences from the prison to help unload boxes and develop connections with community staff and recipients, thus building social citizenship based on relationships and responsibility. While more remote Indigenous communities were unable to have this face-to-face connection, the men's experiences in local contexts added meaning to all aspects of the gifting of food. As one man described it:

You feel good after [donating to local organizations]. At the end of the day, having seen where the food is going, yeah, it made me feel better about myself. I was happy to see the smiles on those faces, that makes a huge difference.

### *Sharing Food as Supporting Relationships*

Donating the garden's organic produce not only provided socio-emotional benefit to the participating men but also supported the imagining and nurturing of therapeutic relationships with community recipients. One man traced his therapeutic journey over thirty years of incarceration, linking his healing while incarcerated to his ability to give back and to sustain relationships:

Many years ago I just wanted to give up on things and forget it, whatever. But then after a couple days of "sorry me, all about me," it was like, no, that's not going to work. You've got to give the people hope and something to work with [here in prison], and for the kids to be able to go to bed at night with a full tummy, and not have to worry about getting fed ... Because if you help somebody, they will in turn help you, or somebody else. Like this today, right here. You're learning from me, I'm learning from you. And other people will learn from both of us in the course of all this.

The positive therapeutic feelings experienced by the men were founded on the ideals of food sovereignty: donating food felt good, not because of



Figure 2. A federal prison truck, filled with produce for donation. Photo by Gregg Bailey, Correctional Service of Canada.

the productive potential of a nutritious diet but because of the relational importance of feeding community members and the opportunity to exist *in* community as opposed to on the margins. Participating men were able to build community among themselves; however, the development of relationships with staff and volunteers at local foodbanks and soup kitchens provided additional meaning. The men spoke about the fear of getting out after years of incarceration, and the impact of being seen as good people on the outside. One man was offered a volunteer position at a local foodbank – an example of how relationships and responsibility led to building a social citizenship beyond prison walls.

Receiving the donated food not only allowed Indigenous community members to gain access to fresh and nutritious vegetables once or twice throughout the growing season but also supported meaningful engagement with the men in prison. These connections provided hope for restoration on interconnected levels; the community understood the impacts of colonialism on the men and on their own healing and well-being. All the First Nations community members interviewed knew someone who was or had been incarcerated, and the garden provided hope for their friends, families, and the wider community. The garden also

provided an opportunity for restoration and for imagining the potential for healing (above and beyond the donation of food) based on shared experiences of marginal citizenship. Community members spoke often about their experiences with incarceration and ways to strengthen relationships and reciprocity with the men. When asked how to strengthen the prison project, one First Nations man described his desire to create reciprocity and collective healing connections between the men and community youth:

Some kinda connection with them [in prison] and the younger people that's around [this community], it's good. I mean, anything you can pass on and share is always a good thing. If [the men in prison are] willing to come and learn, that's fine. To teach on and pass on, whatever, and to be around people that are willing to help them.

### *Prison Gardens: Intersecting and Contested Social Spaces*

The prison garden in this study acted as a contested space, where intersecting social worlds reflected relationships to food *both* as colonial and as steeped in ancient traditions of Indigenous garden plots, both land- and marine-based. The prison garden was nested within the space of these overlapping worlds; it provided a space for reflection on foodways and practices, history, context, and the possibilities of resurgence necessary for food sovereignty. One conversation with a First Nations community Elder drifted from a discussion of the impacts of receiving food gifted from the prison garden to community values and sustainable relationships to the land and the wider community. These values and meanings were contrasted with the systems imposed by colonial capitalism:

I'm from a hereditary line, and my grandfather was a Chief for forty years, and he opened his door to everybody. Everybody would come to his house and everybody ate with him. And I thought, "How did he feed the whole community?" But they had deer, and they had salmon, and that's what he stored away in the wintertime. And he invited everybody to eat at his house, not asking for money [laughing] ... and I wish I was still back in those days, instead of today, because everybody wants money.

Within the context of capitalism and colonial productivity, community members saw the sharing of food as a social act, one linked to ancestral ways of building and sustaining community. Another man, participating in the garden project during his incarceration, outlined the impacts

of colonialism on Indigenous food security and sovereignty, seeing gardening and agriculture both as a means of survival and as a way to reconnect with land and ancestral ways of social engagement – a reconnection supported by the knowledge he gained in prison:

Farming, I'm sure back in the day that's what we used to have. I'm talking when colonization more or less got introduced to us, with chickens, pigs, cows, stuff like that. But most people would rather go to the supermarket, instead of harvesting. I believe that our Elders, when they share stories with you of how they grew up, they had to go – they didn't have a choice but to go pick berries and various plants, you know, medicines. Now they basically have a choice, right? ... And then residential school and all that kinda stuff, that had a huge impact on Indigenous communities. And it's gonna take generations for that to go away ... But the way I look at it now, I can make that change.

### *The Artistry and Resistance of Food Sovereignty*

Through the conversations and imagined connections born from the contested space of the prison garden, the relationships and responsibilities of food sovereignty began to develop. One man participating in the prison garden drew connections between his work in the garden and the work he did on the Indigenous healing grounds in the institution, interweaving both with the wider goal of holism and healing in culturally mediated ways:

You know the soil was always black, and that is responsibility. I had to cut the grass, weed-eat, weed the garden, water the garden, look after the sweat lodge, wash the blankets, build the sweat lodge, you know, maintain the fire. So, you know it was a lot of responsibility ... It's something that I want my family to be involved in. Because I do believe there are four aspects of our life, and you can't overburden yourself with, you know, just work, because you have to be balanced, right? You have to have time for everything. And so I want to get my family involved in sweat lodge, and bring them to the long house and stuff like that, and teach them, and show them.

The men understood the importance of balance, of relationships and communities that push back against the hyper-productivity and imbalance of wider society – imbalances that in many cases had led to their isolation, marginalization, and eventual incarceration. The power of foodways was understood against the backdrop of colonialism, and

the participating incarcerated Indigenous men understood the garden as one possible step on a pathway to food sovereignty, wherein the artistry of ancestral and evolving foodways was contrasted with the artlessness of global food markets and mass production. As another incarcerated man explained:

I want to do this in my own community. I think it would be awesome ... I mean, I have seventeen and a half acres myself ... I'm a band member, but I've never lived there. But I would imagine it's like that in most Indigenous communities, more fast food and potato chips than fruit and veggies. Yes, [rural communities] have better opportunity for wild meat and fish, right, but, I mean, it's mostly potato chips and pop and all that kinda stuff.

While gardening in and of itself did not and cannot achieve food sovereignty, it provided a space for collective engagement, reciprocal relationship building, and a means to work towards sovereignty and collective citizenship in diverse ways. The aesthetics and sensory meanings of foodways intersected with community well-being. This was highlighted by one incarcerated Indigenous man who shared how his time in the prison garden was a way to support art and ceremony, allowing him to connect with the communities receiving food in ways above and beyond the sharing of vegetables:

I sing when I'm out there. I sing various, I mean, I know powwow, I know sweat lodge ... When I'm preparing food here, for ceremony and stuff, you have to be in a good mindset. You don't want to [be] adding negative thoughts or feelings, you know you don't want to be angry ... so when I'm singing, I'm just putting that energy into those fruits or vegetables, whether they're growing or whether we're harvesting.

Both the participating men and the communities understood the power of the connections nurtured by the foodways intersecting in the prison garden as opportunities for healing, strengthening, and resisting. One First Nations community member started his interview talking about the impact of receiving gifted vegetables, yet the discussion easily unfurled into food and land rights. He spoke about resource extraction and the impacts of logging on ancestral waters, and of sport hunting on moose populations, and the ways in which relationships offered opportunities for resistance:

They're trying to keep [Indigenous peoples] all separated is the way I look at it. If we all got together as a people, [the colonial system]



Figure 3. A First Nations community member, preparing salmon to smoke. Photo by Kelsey Timler.

wouldn't have a chance. Like with that gathering that went on last summer, there was more police than there should've been. They didn't let enough Elders in there. That's just the way they are, they're scared, they're scared that if we all get together we're gonna come up with a better plan than what they're living in.

Dispossessed and at the margins of society, Indigenous participants understood how social citizenship extended itself through conversations about food sovereignty and provided intersections where foodways,

cultural well-being, and collective engagement could blend together in resistance and artistry.

## DISCUSSION

### *The Prison Garden: An Artistic Boundary Object for Food Sovereignty*

Art has been defined as something born from aesthetic goals and without practical or utilitarian use (Whittick 1984; Kant 2006 [1790]), and while historically gardening has been considered an art (Hutcheson 2004 [1972]; Kant 2006 [1790]), these gardens were largely ornamental, providing aesthetic pleasure akin to landscape painting, with expert gardeners “working primarily with aesthetic intention and with a feeling for colour, line, mass, light and shadow” (Whittick 1984, 51). As the opulence of large Renaissance-era landscaped gardens gave way to contemporary public parks and private backyard gardens, the work of artists employed by wealthy landowners and rulers shifted, becoming functional public spaces and vegetable gardens tended by the working class (Albers 1991): artistry was for the wealthy, and, in other hands, the same tools and processes became utilitarian. These ideals of productivity and capitalism ignored the aesthetic experience of engaging with nature, and the more-than-utilitarian nature of developing and sustaining relationships with plant foods and animals. These tensions between colonial citizenship, capitalism, and productivity shape the context and create boundaries within which the prison garden can be considered a contested landscape, torn between functionality and holistic connections, an extended social citizenship that unfurls and flourishes between human and non-human worlds.

The prison garden is bounded by concepts and lived experiences of colonialism, capitalism, productivity, and Indigenous foodways; thus, it can be seen to function as a *boundary object* (Star and Griesemer 1989; Singh 2011; Halpern 2012; Zurba and Berkes 2014; Zurba and Friesen 2014). Boundary objects are items, concepts, or spaces that are used differently by different communities (Star and Griesemer 1989), creating spaces for dialogue between seemingly disparate worlds (Rathwell and Armitage 2016), where they are “plastic enough to adapt to local needs ... yet robust enough to maintain a common identity” (Star and Griesemer 1989, 393). The prison garden exists within the dialogical space of boundary objects, where the men’s aesthetic and sensory experience of *being* in the garden and gifting food across prison walls provides space for messages conveyed across the boundaries of incarceration, meanings

made and renegotiated between the borders of colonialism, capitalism, productivity, and Indigenous social citizenship and sovereignty. In the context of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia and beyond, the aesthetics and artistry of foodways, when viewed as a boundary object, provide an avenue towards decolonization as “one is vulnerable to the cultural values and ideals reflected by the object” (Rathwell and Armitage 2016, np; Shciwy 2003). In this context, the boundary object extends past the garden to include the foodways that participants shared and reflected upon *because of their engagement with the garden*: the salmon net, the steaming bowl, the sweat lodge, the powwow song. It is through the collective engagement within and beyond the enclosed space of the garden that the aesthetic and sensory experiences of collective artwork “can enable participants of various backgrounds to consider their personal connection to past and present colonization, and the individual ways that they can work to promote decolonization” (Rathwell and Armitage 2016; Zurba and Berkes 2014). Many hands darkened by pruning, tending, harvesting, preserving, and preparing provide a collective and artistic experience. Just as a painting can transcend boundaries between different peoples and worldviews through engagement with the inherently human desire for aesthetic meaning, the sharing of food across contexts can ignite conversations, connect communities, and disrupt colonial ideals of worth, health, and individuality (Curtis, Reid, and Ballard 2012). The contentious space of the prison garden provides a canvas upon which these conversations about food, health, community, and healing can unfold. Decolonization is more than the removal of colonial force: it is Indigenous liberation and the collaborative tending of a shared future, one in which different foodways, identities, and communities sit comfortably at the same table.

Somerville (2013) described “art as public pedagogy.” In this study, participants in the prison garden described the aesthetic appeal of a nearly ripe red tomato set against deep-green scented leaves, and Indigenous peoples from nations across British Columbia and Canada – brought together in the prison spaces and connected to the communities receiving the gifted food – spoke of culturally rooted foodways and colonial dispossession. This engagement worked to forge a collective and artistic understanding of the meaning imbued in relationships among land, history, culture, and food sovereignty, relationships focused on reciprocity and community – a social citizenship before and beyond capitalism. If art itself evokes aesthetic experience, then the tending of gardens and crops, the sharing of food within diverse and rich cultural contexts, and



the reclaiming and resurgence of Indigenous social citizenship provides boundaries around a prison garden, demarcating the possibilities for food sovereignty in British Columbia and beyond. It is around the heavy tables of neocolonial British Columbia – where Indigenous foods, invasive peoples and species, the violence of colonial agriculture, and the resistance of Indigenous bodies tending the soil come together – that the prison garden provides an opportunity to sit and converse across the boundaries of farmers’ fences, reserve lines, and prison walls. The garden as an artistic boundary object furthers food sovereignty for Indigenous communities in British Columbia through the development of social citizenship aligned with the shared histories and strengths of men in prison and First Nations communities.

Boundary objects have been critiqued as neither “politically neutral [nor] necessarily consensual” (Huvila 2011, 2528). However, boundary objects as spaces of conversation and meaning-making require a contextual understanding of power relationships if we are to avoid erasing motivations and meanings and thus sustaining inequities. Without attention to power these objects or concepts may either “resist [or] creat[e] and maintain hegemonies” across diverse groups (Huvila 2011, 2528). It is in this awareness of power and history that a prison garden can connect colonial concepts of food and work to Indigenous foodways and resurgences; without an awareness of power and consent, any conversation about Indigenous food sovereignty is incomplete. The prison garden sits at the boundaries of colonial agriculture and Indigenous clam gardens and apple groves, providing opportunities for dialogue that can contribute to social citizenship (Adelson 2000; Carter 1990; Turner and Turner 2008), while also tracing the contours of social identity and belonging (Gal, Yoo, and Boland 2005). While boundary objects have been described as political levers to maintain the status quo or to support those in power to alter social situations (Kimble, Grenier, and Goglio-Primard 2010), Indigenous people have been so violently pushed to the boundaries of social belonging that resurgence and reconciliation requires political movement and social identity shifts. Colonial notions of productive citizenship pushed Indigenous peoples and their foods to the margins of society, reducing complex social connections to extractive relationships (Alfred and Chlup 2009; Giroux 2005; Wacquant 2010). Hall (2011) traces this one-way relationship to plants and animals to the Christian Garden of Eden, where the natural world was created solely to please and sustain Adam and Eve, and where no reciprocity or responsibility existed. This hierarchy of worth has been furthered through the dehumanization of

“unproductive” peoples – those deemed incapable of flourishing in the contemporary neoliberal world (King 2012). Indigenous peoples and people in prison alike are viewed as “less than,” a process that makes their mistreatment not only possible but probable (Paul 2006 [1993]). Resource development ignores the relationships required for ecosystem health, and the destruction of land erodes systems of health and social well-being for Indigenous peoples, resulting in negative health and social impacts, especially for women and girls (Amnesty International Canada 2016). Upon this foundation of ongoing racism and marginalization – one that continues to play out in the courtrooms, fish farms, and forest floors of British Columbia (Gilpin 2017; Jordan 2017; Richardson 2018; T̓silhqot’in National Government 2015) – reframing social citizenship to support Indigenous sovereignty offers a way to push back against this dehumanization. Reframing belonging from being tethered to labour market engagement to requiring an understanding of relationships, peoples, and non-human beings as worthy of respect and reverence allows for the humanity of Indigenous peoples and people in prison to become evident (Smith 1999). Within this context the prison garden supports healing for the participating men and communities through relationship building and collective engagement (Brown and Timler 2019; Brown et al. 2017), acknowledging their shared humanity and capacity to create and sustain community while also drawing attention to the power hierarchies inherent in foodways that have been attacked through cultural genocide. As the men grow and harvest vegetables, they are given the opportunity to nurture relationships with the soil and with the wider natural world. For many men, their experience in the garden provided linkages to their childhoods and histories, creating webs of meaning and connection across kitchen tables and garden plots past and present, as well as future plans to support community healing and social citizenship after release. The communities receive donated food as a gift and as an introduction, an invitation to build relationships across prison walls and colonial histories, and to introduce the prison garden and the men who work there to ancestral and complex webs of meaning, relationship, and responsibility. Social citizenship – founded in the concept of food sovereignty – is tended in the garden, not only through the actions of growing, gifting, and receiving but also through the imaginations of the participants eager to rebuild foodways and re-establish connections with peoples isolated by colonial individualism and productivity.

## CONCLUSION

The prison garden as boundary object nurtured and sustained conversations among and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous men in prison and First Nations peoples in a rural and remote community in British Columbia – conversations that traced the contours of colonialism, decolonization, and food sovereignty. The prison garden can become a table around which people can sit and discuss history, oppression, resistance, and resurgence through the more tangible topics of hunger, childhood, crime and victimization, incarceration, and freedom. The conversations born from asking questions about the growing and gifting of food in prison provided tangents founded in land rights and community well-being, outlining what is needed for the resurgence of food sovereignty across Indigenous contexts in British Columbia and abroad – a social citizenship founded on holism, land rights, social justice, and decolonization. True food sovereignty exists as an artistic practice, pushing the definition of art away from something made by a human towards something crafted within a healthy ecosystem, a social creation maintained across the seasons and over time (Barwell and Powell 2010).

While outside the traditional definition of artistry, art – at its most essential – is the practice and process of creative dialogue and meaning making. Art is emotion and connection, it is reciprocity and meaningful engagement with nature and the world. Just as the landscaped gardens of imperial Europe bore the label of aesthetic beauty, being in nature as part of a relationship provides a holistic artistry and sense of belonging that colonial ideals of productivity attempt to bury. The prison garden provides a space where Indigenous peoples and their artful relationships to foods and lands can push back against their dispossession at the margins of society (Melosio and Pavarini 1981; Kimmerer 2013), re-imagining concepts of social citizenship and belonging as a means of resurgence: “For something essential happens in a vegetable garden. It’s a place where if you can’t say ‘I love you’ out loud, you can say it in seeds. And the land will reciprocate, in beans” (Kimmerer 2013, 127). In the context of the prison garden, the collective tending, sharing, and imagining of past, present, and future foodscapes creates a space where the small leaves of a garden begin to cast the sun-filled shadows of food sovereignty and social citizenship.

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