



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY PRACTICES AT THE ONEIDA NATION OF WISCONSIN TSYUNHEHKW[^] FARM: The Three Sisters, Ceremony and Community

INTRODUCTION

I became acquainted with the term 'Indigenous food sovereignty' when I was working on a research project at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas in the Fall of 2011.¹ Although my research focus was primarily on Haskell's history as an athletic powerhouse and the contemporary role of sports at the institution, I attended as many events organized at the campus as I could, including the Haskell Indigenous Food Festival. The Festival hosted a number of speakers from different tribes as well as non-Indigenous activists involved in the food sovereignty movement. This is where I first learned about the complexity of the problem of food insecurity on American Indian reservations, the ways in which it is being combated, and how the solutions introduced have not focused solely on access to healthy food, but have been intertwined with other cultural activities. I also learned about the importance of recovering traditional tribal foodways

1. Haskell opened in 1884 in Lawrence, Kansas, as an off-reservation boarding school for Native American children, offering agricultural education for grades 1-5. The school gradually transformed into a 'normal' school, and later into a high school, a junior college, and finally into a university. In the process, it changed from an institution aimed at forcefully assimilating Indigenous children into American society, to an institution promoting and fostering Indigenous sovereignty (Buchowska 15). The results of my research were published as a book, titled *Negotiating Native American Identities: The role of tradition, narrative and language at Haskell Indian Nations University*.

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and using ideas and technologies that are in line with Native American holistic approaches to health, food and the environment.² I have been thinking about the issue ever since, which has led me to work on my current project concerning the Native American food sovereignty movement in the U.S., of which this paper is a part. Within the scope of the project, I aim to analyze the legal, cultural, political, and discursive strategies of the movement to achieve food sovereignty from a national and transnational perspective. My research at Oneida consisted of participant observation of work at the Tsyunhehkw[^] farm and semi-structured interviews with several of its employees, as well as with employees of the Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems, and members of the Oneida community involved in growing white corn and other agricultural work. In this article, I rely mainly on interviews with the late Jeff Metoxen and Kyle Wisneski.³ Jeff Metoxen was the manager of Tsyunhehkw[^] at the time of my visit, and he facilitated a major part of it. Before working at the farm, he had served his community first as a member of the Oneida Police Department for five years, and later as Chairman of the Gaming Commission of the Oneida Nation for nine years. Kyle Wisneski was responsible for field crops and animal husbandry at Tsyunhehkw[^] at the time of the interview, and is the current manager at the farm. He is also a father and member of the Wolf Clan. His father was a commercial flower retailer, and Kyle Wisneski grew up helping him with his work. However, he soon realized that the pesticides used in the industry were harmful to the environment and decided

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2. I use the term “foodways” to mean “the systems of knowledge and expression related to food that vary with culture” and “the connection between food-related behavior and patterns of membership in cultural community, group, and society” (“Foodways”).

3. The Oneida form part of the Iroquois Confederacy (as called by the French), referred to as the League of Five Nations by the English, or the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, as they call themselves. Haudenosaunee translates into the People of the Longhouse. The Confederacy, which was founded by the prophet known as Peacemaker with the help of Hiawatha, is made up of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. It was intended as a way to unite the nations and create a peaceful means of decision making. The exact date of the joining of the nations is unknown and it is one of the first and longest lasting participatory democracies in the world (“About the Haudenosaunee Confederacy”).

to turn to traditional gardening. He had his own garden at age 12–13. He was first inspired by his grandfather, who was a tree farmer and who passed on his knowledge about organic farming to him, and later by his son Braxton, who was three-years-old at the time of the interview. He is also a founding partner of the Indigenous Seed Keepers Network (ISKN), which trains other farmers in seed saving techniques. The communities involved in the network hold many rare seeds, which together make up a large collection of some of the rarest seeds in the world. ISKN has been working for about seven years, and Wisneski is very proud of this work.

Apart from my visit to Oneida, I also learned about and looked at the work and goals of the Indigenous and international food sovereignty movement at the 13th Annual Indigenous Farming Conference at the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota, in March 2016, and Slow Food International's Terra Madre—Salone del Gusto meeting in Turin, Italy in September 2018.⁴

Through my research at Haskell Indian Nations University, I have also gained an understanding of Indigenous research methods and an awareness of the implications of my position as a Polish scholar conducting research in an Indigenous community. In line with the theory of 'cultural interface' proposed by Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata, I believe that my experience as a non-Indigenous scholar trained in the Western tradition allows me to add a valuable perspective to the discussion on Indigenous food sovereignty in the United States (Nakata).

Food sovereignty can be defined as "the right of Peoples to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect for their own cultures and their own systems of managing natural resources and rural areas, and is considered to be a precondi-

4. I would like to acknowledge everyone who has inspired and helped me with my work, including the Haskell community, the organizers of the Indigenous Farming Conference at the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota, the Oneida community in Wisconsin, and the International Forum for U.S. Studies at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. A major part of my work is focused on the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, where I conducted my research in March 2016 thanks to the generosity of Lea Zeise and her family, as well as to the late Jeff Metoxen, Kyle Wisneski and other employees and members of the tribe.

tion for Food Security” (“Declaration of Atitlan”). Food security, in turn, was defined at the World Food Summit in 1996 in Rome in the following way: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (“Rome Declaration on World Food Security”). At this summit, the organization *La Via Campesina*—The International Peasants’ Movement also introduced their own political vision of food sovereignty. The organization was created in 1993 in Mons, Belgium with the aim of bringing together farmers to create a common strategy against increasingly globalized agricultural policies and agribusiness, which were negatively affecting the livelihoods of many farmers and food producers (“The International Peasant’s Voice”). Its members include peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, rural women and youth, indigenous people, migrants, and agricultural workers from around the world. Native Americans (as well as many other Indigenous communities worldwide) have also been affected by these neoliberal processes.

Statistically, Native Americans are one of the unhealthiest ethnic groups living in the United States, with obesity, diabetes, and heart disease having reached alarming numbers. This situation is caused by widespread food insecurity, which affects as many as 40 per cent of Native Americans (Blue Bird Jernigan et al. 1), and the group’s genetic propensity toward these diseases when exposed to an American diet (Milburn). The majority of Native American reservations fall under the category of food deserts, which means that access to healthful food there is limited.⁵ This state of affairs is often seen as yet another instance of colonization and part of the larger political and economic oppression, while tribal food sovereignty is seen as a decolonizing solution to the food and health issues that Indigenous communities face. The above statistics can be attributed to the colonial history of the U.S. and decades of hegemonic policy toward Native Americans—removal from their traditional lands, relocation to reservations, forced assimilation, intense agricultural production, the resulting

5. According to the definition of a food desert there is no source of healthy food, such as a grocery store, within 10 miles.

inability to practice subsistence farming and cultivate traditional foodways, reliance on nutrient-poor governmental food subsidies, and the continuing pollution of reservation lands and waters by oil and mining companies (Bye). Poverty, which is widespread among Native communities, is at the same time an effect of the above policies, and a major cause of many of their health problems. Another consequence of these processes is the loss of traditional tribal knowledge and ceremonies related to food production and disconnection from traditional food and foodways.

In response, many grass roots Native American organizations and tribally-run initiatives have been created in the past several decades. Their work tackles the issue by focusing on different aspects of the problem, such as economic development, cultural sovereignty, or environmental sovereignty. Their decolonizing strategies range from focusing on the execution of treaty rights and recovering of tribal knowledge to educational programs and cooperation with Indigenous communities and non-indigenous food sovereignty organizations, both nationally and internationally. The organizations involved in the movement include tribally focused organizations, such as the Tohono O'odham Community Action (TOCA), Native Harvest and the White Earth Land Recovery Project on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota, the Iroquois White Corn Project of the Iroquois tribes in New England, or the Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative of the Muscogee Creek nation in Oklahoma. When it comes to inter-tribal initiatives, they include, among others, the Intertribal Agricultural Council, founded in 1987, and the Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative (NAFSI), which forms part of the First Nations Development Institute, which runs developmental programs in all socio-economic areas, not just food security, and Native Seeds, which focuses on the preservation and exchange of seeds between farmers. Furthermore, the actors engaged in the movement meet during numerous inter-tribal events that serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge, networking, and creating new organizations and strategies for seed saving, fighting biopiracy, recovering crops and foodways, and achieving food security. These conferences are attended not just by Native American farmers, but also by non-Indigenous farmers from Turtle Island (North America)

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and advocates of food sovereignty. The conferences include the previously mentioned Annual Indigenous Farming Conference, held in White Earth, Minnesota; the Great Lakes Intertribal Food Summit, organized by the Jjajak Foundation; and the Native American Culinary Association's Food Symposium, held annually in Arizona. The symposium brings together a growing number of Native American chefs, who are bringing back and promoting Indigenous cuisines around the country, such as Sean Sherman, who is from the Pine Ridge Reservation and runs the catering company 'the Sioux Chef' and a food truck called 'Tatanka Truck', and Ben Jacob (Osage), who runs the Tocabe restaurant in Denver, Colorado.

Moreover, there is a growing literature on the subject, which includes contributions from many Indigenous scholars and activists. In the context of this article, it is worth mentioning Choctaw historian Devon Mihesuah's work, particularly her article "Decolonizing our Diets by Recovering our Ancestors' Gardens" (Mihesuah), in which she advocates for recovering Native American foodways to bring back health to Indigenous communities; Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), in which she emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between humans and other living beings and shows how much we can learn from plants and animals; Anishinaabe environmentalist, economist and writer Winona La Duke's book *Food is Medicine* (2004), written together with Sarah Alexander, which draws a strong link between traditional foods, the health of Indigenous communities and the environment; and La Duke's book *Recovering the Sacred* (2005), particularly the chapter "Three Sisters", in which she describes the relationship of the Haudenosaunee people with the Three Sisters—corn, beans and squash. American Studies scholar Elizabeth Hoover's work is also noteworthy in this context, for example, her article "'You can't say you're sovereign if you can't feed yourself': Defining and Enacting Food Sovereignty in American Indian Community Gardening" (Hoover), as well as her blog "From Garden Warriors to Good Seeds", in which she describes the numerous Native American food sovereignty projects that she has visited across the whole country.

This paper considers the food sovereignty work of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin Tsyunhekw[^] farm, seen as a part of the larger Native American food sovereignty movement. In particular, it looks at the practices that revive traditional foodways and adapt them to the community's contemporary needs. It analyzes the importance of the Three Sisters (corn, beans and squash), and the ways in which the message of environmental stewardship implicit in their story—the responsibility to honor them as the people's sustainers—is interpreted by the community members today. It also looks at how the Oneida have adapted some traditional ways of planting and harvesting white corn to contemporary cultural and technological developments. Next, it considers another role of white corn for the tribe—as tribal culture and ceremony accompany the planting and harvest of the corn, it allows them to revive these Oneida traditions. Last, it looks at how the Oneida concept of serving the community is implicit in the work done at the farm. The study is based largely on some of the interviews conducted with Tsyunhekw[^] employees in March 2016.⁶

THE ONEIDA NATION OF WISCONSIN

The Oneida of Wisconsin moved from Haudenosaunee lands in upstate New York to their current reservation west of Green Bay in 1822. There is a popular conviction that they had become Christians and followed Eleazor Williams to Wisconsin, leaving behind their traditions and culture (Cornelius 1). Such a point of view, however, disregards major forces impacting their removal to Wisconsin: these include U.S. government and treaties, New York State treaties, Ogden Land Company complicity, War Department Policy, and the Church (Cornelius 1). Like most other Native Americans in nineteenth-century United States, they “faced a concerted effort to remove them to the West” (Tiro xiv). By 1838 the Oneidas were divided into two nations—one in New York

6. Parts of the Introduction pertaining to the Author's involvement in the research and the statistical and historical background of the Native American food sovereignty movement have been used by the Author in the article “Transnationalism as a Decolonizing Strategy? ‘Trans-Indigenism’ and Native American Food Sovereignty” published in *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* vol. 53/s1, 2018.

and one in present-day Wisconsin (xiv). However, the Oneidas of Wisconsin had not left their traditions, language, nor culture behind. After the move they continued to govern their Nation as Chiefs, maintained clans, continued their language, and grew corn, beans and squash, while the women wore traditional clothing, made maple syrup and continued holding ceremonies, although in secret. Until this day, they uphold the Oneida values of their ancestors (Cornelius 1).

Although some of these practices became less common over time, largely due to the policy of forced assimilation, in the past few decades the Oneida community and the tribal government have made a substantial effort to revive their language, ceremonies, and foodways. Many of them were made possible thanks to the gaming contract the Oneida signed with the state of Wisconsin in the 1980s and the opening of a casino. The tribe became a “textbook example of how to use casino dollars to successfully create an infrastructure” (Loew 131). These efforts included an Oneida language immersion program in the tribal pre-school, teaching the Oneida language in the Turtle school, re-building the longhouse in the 1980s, and bringing white corn from the Haudenosaunee in upstate New York. As asserted by the late Jeff Metoxen, manager of Tsyunhehkw[^] at the time of the interview: “A lot of that stuff was taken away, but in Canada, in New York, they still had those things, the longhouse, ceremonies, they still had their language, so it was cool, we could go there and take part of that” (Metoxen 2016). The work of Tsyunhehkw[^] can definitely be seen as part of the effort to re-establish traditional foodways, as well as ceremonies linked to foodways and philosophies inherent in the Oneida approach to food and the environment.

TSYUNHEHKW[^] AND THE THREE SISTERS

Tsyunhehkw[^] forms part of the Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems (OCIFS) group, which was established in 1994 to address developmental issues associated with poverty and health problems on the Oneida Reservation (OCIFS Brochure 1). Apart from Tsyunhehkw[^], OCIFS includes the Oneida Farm/Apple Orchard, Oneida Food Distribution/Food Pantry, Oneida Grants

Office, and the Oneida Health Center. As such, it is a tribally-funded and tribally-run initiative.

The Tsyunhehkw[^] certified organic farm grows ca. 3–6 acres of Iroquois white corn each year, and also has a medicinal garden and a glass house, where different fruit and vegetables are grown. Moreover, it breeds cattle and chicken, and has a cannery (located in the Oneida school), where its products are processed and then sold at the Oneida retail store at an affordable price. Various workshops are also organized at the farm and cannery, both for community members (not just Oneida citizens) as well as school students and students of the nearby University of Wisconsin at Green Bay. Lastly, Tsyunhehkw[^]'s employees help community members set up their own gardens, and a community garden is also made available to those interested.

Central to the Oneida's understanding of food and stewardship of the corn, as well as of the environment more generally is the Three Sisters story. The Oneida version of the story on the tribe's website, as told by Amos Christjohn, starts with a description of Sky Woman falling from a hole near the Tree of life and grabbing seeds from the ground near it, to eventually land on the back of a large turtle ("Creation story"). It goes on to describe how the turtle expanded to form Turtle Island and became part of Mother Earth, and how the first seeds included Corn, Beans and Squash, which became the Three Sisters for the Iroquois people. They are considered the main providers for Iroquois' sustenance. "It is our tradition and responsibility to honor our sustainers" (Metoxen 2):

When the humans had been created, (the Creator) shukwaya?tisu instructed them that all that was needed for a good life was readily available to them. They would want for nothing, there was water, food, medicines-everything needed to sustain them. All that was asked of the humans was to gather what was provided and give thanks. Over time, we failed to provide this recognition and ignored our responsibilities (Metoxen 2).

The text goes on to describe the vision of Handsome Lake, a Seneca prophet who lived at the turn of the eighteenth century and who played a major role in the revival of traditional religion among the people of the Longhouse. His vision concerns his conversation with the Three Sisters while he was preparing to leave this world.

The Three Sisters asked him to take them with him. He realized his people would go hungry without them; however, the Three Sisters insisted on going because they were not recognized in ceremonies anymore. “Handsome Lake explained to the people that they had forgotten their responsibilities, and that the Three Sisters were going to leave this world if they continued in this way. The people recognized they had failed and began again to honor the Three Sisters in their ceremonies” (Metoxen 3). The moral of Handsome Lake’s vision is clear—if the Three Sisters will not be honored, they will disappear and no longer provide sustenance for the people. White corn is also present in the Oneida creation story. Although Tsyunhekw[^] to a large extent focuses on the production of white corn, the philosophy behind the Three Sisters story is very much also present in the harvesting of other plants and animals on the farm. Moreover, they have a small Three Sisters garden that they use to teach the community members and students on the relationship between corn, beans and squash, and about the importance of the story to Oneida culture. The three crops are planted in a technique known as companion planting as they benefit each other—the maize (as corn can also be referred to) provides a structure for the beans to climb, which in turn provide nitrogen for the soil, while squash spreads close to the ground preventing the growing of weeds.

INNOVATION AS TRADITION

Tsyunhekw[^] workers recognize the importance of caring for their corn, how the seed is selected, where it is planted and whether the soil is good. Technology is used, but only to an extent that allows for keeping the corn as heirloom as possible, and not breaking the protocol of handling the corn. For example, genetically modifying the corn would kill the spirit of the corn, according to Kyle Wisneski, current manager at Tsyunhekw[^], who follows the longhouse tradition (Wisneski 2016). Also, the farm uses commercial fish emulsion as fertilizer, as in the past fish heads were used to fertilize the corn. The responsibility goes back and forth—between the corn and humans. As Jeff Metoxen stated “I think it plays a role a lot of the time, I know that at times they looked at it and said [some technological innovation would be] great for you, [and] I felt that

concept played a role in why it didn't work for them" (Metoxen 2016). He continued, "technologically you could work on a lot of these things, but this isn't corn silage, it isn't sweet corn. A lot of times they failed because they try to apply these concepts to it. They look at it as a marketable product, and not as a sustainer. I don't support that. I think we need to recognize the technology, [while] at the same time I'm trying to find out more about my culture, and what to do in the future, it's [about] not getting lost in it, not an entrepreneurial train of thought" (Metoxen 2016). Although the amount of corn planted at Tsyunhehkw[^] requires using mechanical equipment, such as a planter or picker, the corn is hand-harvested in a traditional way every October by the community during the annual Harvest and Husking Bee. People will often question the traditional character of the agricultural practices at Oneida. They will ask, for example, how cattle, chicken or an apple orchard are part of the Indigenous sovereignty effort. Metoxen answers:

Because it's a symbiotic relationship with nature, we have so many acres, [cattle] produces manure that can help [utilize] some of the land, that can produce some of the soil, the more they eat, the more they poop, so you can plant there, and move them around, so if you don't have them, it's impossible... and if you have chicken, you have fresh meat and fresh eggs, etc. It's part of that relationship, there's so much I feel and pursue—that you have to have more of a biodiverse aspect and thought process, instead of being monoculture, instead of being 'white corn is all I care about' (Metoxen 2016).

He adds,

we never did that, no matter what century you go back to, it was a mixture of everything. There's all this work with today's technology and today's issues that we're facing—how do you make it diverse? How do we reach my interpretation of food security to pursue food sovereignty? (Metoxen 2016).

Therefore, using modern technology is in fact a continuation of Oneidas' creativity in seeking diverse ways to cultivate the corn, as well as a continuation of the emphasis on biodiversity in agriculture. Hence, although cattle and chicken might not be animals traditionally bred by the Oneida, their contemporary use is a continuation of an Oneida tradition of innovation in agriculture.

Traditional ceremonies guide the agricultural year on the farm. They include giving thanks to the Creator through prayer, smudging for a good season to start, and a seed planting ceremony, which currently is not practiced, but as stated by Jeff Metoxen “it’s part of what we’re aware of, say you go by the seasons, say you’re looking for the responsibility that you have and it’s a cycle.... So when we get the plant, we look for the start of a good season for it to sprout” (Metoxen 2016). There is also a green corn ceremony in August, before harvest, when the green corn (the early stage of the corn) comes up. It is similar to sweet corn in that it needs little processing to be edible. Metoxen explains:

It’s like sweet corn. You can probably just eat it if you want it. There’s also a traditional soup that we eat for the green corn ceremony made out of it, thanking that at least you’ll have a harvest—it’s more of a personal thing, an internal thing, but our longhouse follows that [...]. A lot of times, the clan system of the Oneida tribe, the turtle, wolf and bear—there is a responsibility they have to the longhouse, so a lot of times they’ll work with us when the green corn is ready, and they’ll come pick a bushel, and they’ll make a certain dish with it that they’ll go and present to the longhouse. It’s kind of an opportunity to barter. We don’t charge for that. We just say hey, could you help us out at certain times, and things like that. It’s kind of an open-ended thing (Metoxen 2016).

The above passage is indicative of not only the importance of corn in Oneida ceremonies, rooted in an understanding of corn as a relation and sustainer, but also of Tsyunhekw[^]’s role as the provider of corn for the longhouse ceremonies. As the harvesting of the corn (and agricultural practices more broadly) and ceremony are closely intertwined, Tsyunhekw[^]’s role as the provider of the corn cannot be underestimated in the community’s ability to conduct longhouse ceremonies. This is not to say that white corn was not harvested by individuals before Tsyunhekw[^]’s establishment in the early 1990s, but to have a large-scale harvest on the reservation is very much appreciated by the community.

Another ceremony that celebrates white corn and that Tsyunhekw[^] plays a big part in organizing every year in October is the Harvest and Husking Bee, which is at the same time the biggest cultural event in Oneida, attended by many in the community.

It celebrates the traditional way of taking care of the corn. It starts in a circle, with tobacco and prayer. As explained by Jeff Metoxen:

Then there's the harvest and husking bee, so there's a harvest moon, and harvest process, during the harvesting time you basically pick your seeds for the next season so then you're thankful for your selection process... so we talk a great deal about going into it with a good mind and a good heart, that you're ready for this, that you take these responsibilities and you see them through. You hope those things come through, and I believe in them (Metoxen 2016).

Tsyunhehkw[^] employees take great pride in their job as keepers of the corn. As stated by Kyle Wisneski: "I feel that a lot of people would like to have the job, the keeper of the corn. It goes back thousands and thousands of years, it's in our creation story, it's an honor. There's been a lot of Oneida legends that have come through this door and taken the responsibility to keep the corn safe, so it's an honor. I don't look at it so much as a job" (Wisneski 2016). They also see the Harvest and Husking Bee process as part of their responsibility to care for the corn, as it allows them to pass on the tradition of drying the corn:

That's something we share with them [the community] when we have the time. Why are we doing this? Well, this is the white corn, it's not for the cows, nor the pigs and the chicken, it's not silage. This is for the humans, it's our food.... This is something our people have had ever since the beginning. We are trying to make sure it's around. Those are the big steps that keep that around, that sharing. Braiding the corn is a traditional way of drying the corn—what are the responsibilities with it? Well the corn is wet, it's not like the sweet corn, almost everybody knows that you can boil it. This corn isn't designed to do that. If we try and do that, if we don't share with them these responsibilities, we're setting them up to fail. Again, it's important to share these steps [...] this is designed to be dried down in [a particular] way (Metoxen 2016).

Thus, apart from being an important ceremony in the community's calendar, the Harvest and Husking Bee also serves to teach the community, and especially the younger generations, how to braid it, thereby fulfilling the obligation to care for the corn. It also shows the importance of sharing the corn with the community and of community involvement in the process.

Indeed, service to the community is another tradition that is continued at Tsyunhehkw[^]. It is implicit in the farm's mission,

as its main goal is to provide the community with white corn and other food rather than to make a profit, but it does more than just that. The service is also visible in its mission to educate the community about traditional foods and food practices, how to be self-sustainable and grow one's own garden during various workshops and at schools, as well as the Harvest and Husking Bee, during which an education day is organized. The following passage is how Jeff Metoxen explains the meaning of engaging with the community as a tradition:

It's been a tribal event since white corn has been around. This is how in the past they would talk about it—this is what got your community involved, this is what got all the people involved and recognizing that everyone takes care of the corn. If there are certain requirements or guidelines for male or female, you would share what these were. If you could help out anywhere, every stage has something that you can do, even if you have certain restrictions on you. We've had people in wheelchairs, yeah, they're not gonna be in the field, but they can be under the tent area where we have harvesting. Just talking, I guess that's your community-building event. We actually have many more students than we have people. Usually there's a few hundred students (Metoxen 2016).

Metoxen's description of community involvement dovetails with the message implicit in the vision of Handsome Lake—the community takes care of the white corn, while the corn not only sustains the community, but also builds and integrates it. Tsyunhekw[^] fosters this reciprocal relationship.

CONCLUSION

Tsyunhekw[^]'s work is part of the food sovereignty effort that the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin has been successfully undertaking since the early 1990s through its Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems. At the same time, it also forms part of the larger, Native American food sovereignty movement in the United States, with its employees working together with Indigenous seedkeepers and organizations, participating in intertribal and international food sovereignty conferences, co-organizing the annual Great Lakes Food Sovereignty Summit, and taking part in numerous other initiatives.

The Oneida of Wisconsin have been both creative and successful in keeping their agricultural practices, traditions, and ceremonies

alive. A careful use of technology and abiding by traditional protocols allows them to harvest substantial amounts of heirloom white corn that they can use in ceremonies, sell to individuals at the retail store, and consume on various other occasions. Guided by the revived longhouse tradition, they have been able to conduct ceremonies throughout the year. Lastly, through their educational service and the annual Harvest and Husking Bee, they have been able to bring the community together and engage it in the harvesting of the corn, as well as spread knowledge about its cultural importance.

As such, for the Oneida, achieving tribal food sovereignty is a decolonial process, as it brings back foodways that are at the core of Oneida culture and beliefs, and combats health issues and food insecurity on the reservation that have been caused by colonial policies of removal and assimilation. The work done by Tsyunhehkwa[^] also shows that achieving tribal food sovereignty is inextricably linked with cultural sovereignty, as food, stewardship of the land, language, ceremony, and community are all part of the process.

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