Reclamation of traditional foods in Indigenous communities: Benefits, barriers and challenges

Tim Stevenson
Food Matters Manitoba

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This is a free public seminar
Monday, 2nd November 2015, 10:30am to 11:30am
Seminar Room 1, Building 24 Conference Centre, University of Canberra

Please send your RSVP to uc-ciri@canberra.edu.au
About this Event

Social and Emotional Wellbeing is an Indigenous concept that encapsulates a whole of life way of looking at the individual, family and community. Indigenous identity is inherent with the land and is shared with us through traditional food activities. The loss of traditional food practices, the sharing of culture and lore, along with other life skills, has left Indigenous communities seeking to reclaim traditional customs including food harvesting. The land is medicine and provides a linkage to our food, our health and our culture.

Food Matters Manitoba undertook research (*The Standing Medicine People and Youth Taking Action*) on environmental contamination on traditional food and medicine. This research provided insight on the impacts of Industry encroachment, upon traditional territories of the Indigenous people in the southern Manitoba. These studies also provided a valuable bridge between the understanding of Traditional Knowledge holder and scientific inquiry.

The implications of exposure to environmental contaminants has had a negative effect on not only the environment, but has influenced traditional food choices as well. The waterways through First Nation communities are a source of nourishment for a variety of traditional food and plant species, and ultimately First Nations themselves. However they are fragile and are susceptible to contamination. The results from the study indicate that there are low levels of herbicides, pesticides and heavy metals in the plants, animals and water life tested. This represents a low risk of getting sick from environmental contamination when consuming traditional food and medicines.

The food and medicines harvested from the land have nutritional and health benefits. Consequently, our research indicates that traditional harvesting should continue, and encouraged. As such, this work has led to a range of recommendations in relation to future research in the area of food security, sovereignty and harvesting, including cultural knowledge exchange and acquisition. It is theorised that traditional food and medicine activities will strengthen the cultural foundations of communities providing a protective element as well as supporting a healthier environment.

Our Speakers

**Tim Stevenson** is Cree/Ojibway from Peguis First Nation, with family in Fox Lake, Manitoba, Canada. Currently, he is working at *Food Matters Manitoba* as Northern Indigenous Program Liaison and previously as Traditional Harvest Research Coordinator. Previous to this, Tim worked extensively with First Nation communities in Manitoba, providing research, advocacy, facilitation and liaison addressing issues such as, health and wellness, education, employment and training and youth development. He is passionate about learning traditional customs and enjoys working with the community. Tim serves his community by providing support to community cultural events and ceremony.

“I have learned so much more about the food from the land and how it connects us to our identity and history as a people, we learn about our responsibilities to life, ideas such as respect for the land and learning how to practice respect through traditional harvesting practices, which intern allows us to recognize respect in other parts of our life and how we treat each other. The food from the land is a valuable asset to our people; it provides for a good life, we must ensure the younger generations develop skills through our traditional harvest practices.”

**Stewart Sutherland** was born and raised in Wellington NSW the heart of Wiradjuri country. For over a decade he has worked in Indigenous health, in more recent years focusing on identity and mental health particularly Social and Emotional Wellbeing of the Stolen Generations (people forcibly removed from their families). Currently undertaking a PHD at the Australian National University Canberra, researching the interplay between reconciliation and the social emotional wellbeing of people forcibly removed from their families.
About UC CIRI
Late in 2013, a group of UC researchers interested in Indigenous issues established the University of Canberra Collaborative Indigenous Research Initiative (UC CIRI). Launched by UC Chancellor, Dr Tom Calma AO, the purpose of the group is to encourage coordination and sharing of information on Indigenous research at UC and wider, with the aims of collaboration, growth, support, impact, profile and resources. With funding from the DVC for Research, UC CIRI is also providing seed funding for research and support for Indigenous post-graduate students.

As a part of this initiative, UC CIRI delivers a program of seminars and networking events. The seminars feature Indigenous research being undertaken by UC and eminent speakers from across Australia.

We are delighted to have Tim Stevenson and Stewart Sutherland, present in our seminar series.

If you wish to join or inquire about UC CIRI please email uc-ciri@canberra.edu.au or go to our website at http://www.canberra.edu.au/ciri/home

About AIATSIS
The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is a world-renowned research, collections and publishing organisation. We promote knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures, traditions, languages and stories, past and present.

Venue and Parking