

Breakout 2A: Indigenous Food Sovereignty

February 25, 2025

3:15 PM – 4:45 PM

Moderator: Cynthia Blackstone— Chief Administrative Officer, Ka:'yu:'k't'h' / Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations

Speakers:

- Frank Dragon (Negotiator, Ka:'yu:'k't'h' / Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations) and Dianna Dragon (Lands & Resources Co-Ordinator, Department of Lands and Resources, Ka:'yu:'k't'h' / Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations)
- Nicole Hutton and Catherine Littlefield—Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation
- Dr. Stephan Schott—Professor, Carleton University

Frank Dragon and Diana Dragon:

- For Indigenous people, land and water, and food make up the essence of who we are.
 - It's the core of what it means to be Indigenous—land, food, and water.
 - Plants and animal species have been sustaining us for thousands of years.
- Indigenous foods are gifts from the Creator that serve best in the place they came from.
 - "What we are is what we eat."
- Being sovereign from colonial foods involved fishing, hunting, and harvesting.
 - Sustained a unique Indigenous economy.
- Food for KCFN Membership - it's the connection between food, cultural health, and language.
- Food Fish Program:
 - Developed in waning days of negotiating with Canada on wanting to have a small fleet of our fishers to fish and harvest what was allocated in treaty.
 - Canada refused and was battling against this.
 - After the effective-date, I came up with a "buy back program" idea.
 - Fishers sold fish back to the Nation, the Nation then distributed food fish to everywhere except the Okanagan (at that time).
 - Our fishers had a "mosquito fleet"—they went for this system.
 - Commercially caught sockeye salmon as well as:
 - Spring, Coho, and Chum Salmon.
 - Halibut.
 - Yellow eye rockfish.
 - Lingcod.
 - Also, other seafood such as clams and sea urchin in the buyback program.

- Sockeye Distribution:
 - Not many sockeye salmon to harvest in KCFN territories.
 - Have contracted two commercial boats to harvest in harvesting right areas.
 - They move it to KCFN to process and distribute, then to the cannery where it's processed for members away from home.
 - Vacuum sealed.
 - Give fish heads and eggs to Elders in vacuum seal bags as well.
 - Provided until full allotment is fulfilled.
 - Done every time until each member receives their allotment.
 - Includes members in the USA.
 - Have a database of each member to communicate and track.
 - Use Facebook announcements.
 - Send emails.
 - Communication is key for distribution.
 - Keep a well tracked database with contact details.
 - Let them know when/where to pick up their fish.
 - Members in Seattle really appreciate the shipments.
- Extra fish are canned and distributed.
 - Canned fish for elders in winter months.
- Buy Herring from other nations.
- Ensure elders receive traditional foods.
 - This is incredibly important and appreciated.
- A clam garden was built in July 2024.
 - Goal is to have a traditional clam garden serve as a source of traditional food for all members.
 - Created with the help of Coastal Voices, the KCFN Land and Resources Department, KCFN Witwaak and the Nuuchahnulth Youth Warriors Program along with Hereditary Chiefs and KCFN members.
 - Required DFO's permission to build the clam garden.
 - Even as a Treaty Nation, still have to apply for permits.
- Frank turned the program over to Dianna five years ago.
 - She has grown it immensely in that time.

Nicole Hutton and Catherine Littlefield—NNDDC:

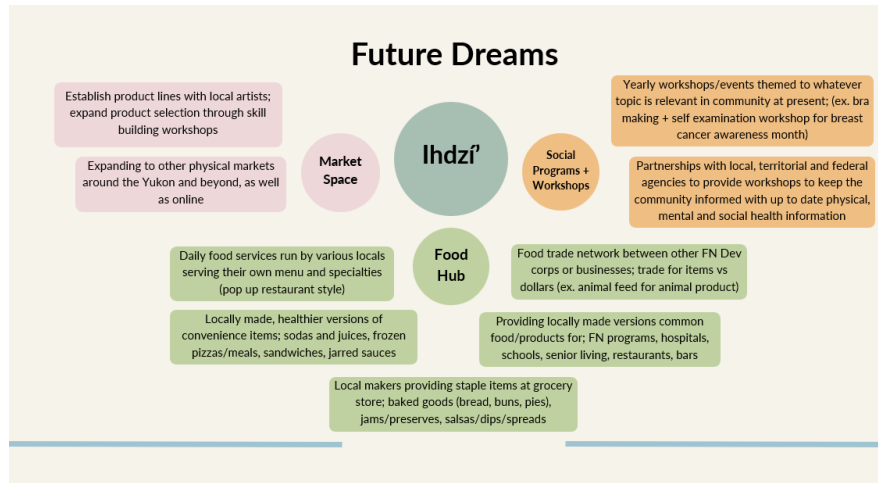
- We wanted to thank the Algonquin Anishinaabeg and appreciate how close we are to the Kichi Sibi. It's an honour to be here, and we want to honour the diverse territories and invaluable rights and responsibilities of you all.

- Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation (NND) is located in the heart of the Yukon, in Mayo.
- Work for the business arm of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun—the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation (NNDDC).
 - Focus on community development
- Introduced ourselves in Northern Tutchone to respect the link between food sovereignty and language.
- I did my MA at Carleton University and that's how I began working with NND.
 - Indigenous food sovereignty is a lens of how we approach our work at NNDDC.
- Food systems are the activities that go into food.
- Food is connective.
 - It's related to social wellbeing, health, and economics.
 - This is especially true in the current climate.
- Communities facing multiple and related crises, and food can be a source of wellness or illness.
 - This is holistic.
 - Nourishing and natural food access is complex and a collective issue (not for individuals).
- Research Interviews:
 - I did 26 interviews with NND community members, Elders, and government representatives and had key themes emerge, such as:
 - Food as a way of life.
 - Relationship around food is to respect the land.
 - You don't take more than you need.
 - Food is foundational to physical, mental, spiritual, social, cultural, economic, and ecological health.
 - Food governance must be founded on respect and responsibility for the land and for each other.
 - Education and knowledge sharing are essential for passing on culture including food and potlatch practices.
 - Cultivating wellness and healing are central priorities.
 - Food distribution involves both successes and challenges.
 - Community members deeply value traditional food practices, which are becoming less common and less accessible.
- Food is a convenor and connector.
- Looking at how as a Development Corporation we can support food sovereignty.
- Mayo is a remote community 400 KMs north of Whitehorse.
- Recently, a leaching pad from a mine collapsed and released toxins into water ways and ground near Mayo.

- This included cyanide.
- Shows how intertwined other areas are with food (economics, resource development, etc.)
- Ihdzí'
 - Food service in Mayo.
 - Shared program with Yukon university.
 - Name stems from garment making program (Ihdzí' Ihlé Ts'è).
 - Kitchen helper program.
- Combined Vision
 - Repeated restaurant closures (difficult with remote location).
 - Sewing program (from my heart to my hand).
- Guiding principles:
 - Low barrier access (join however you want).
 - Creativity.
 - Inclusivity.
 - Safety.
 - Sustainability.
- Prospective functions of Ihdzí'
 - Food production and sales.
 - Sale of garments.
 - Social space.
- Food systems research
 - Root.
 - Reach.
 - Reach out to other communities/nations to share capacity.
 - Rise.
 - Helping food program ideas to grown and blossom in future.
- Findings so far:
 - Local food protection.
 - Regional food partnerships.
 - Community food connection.
 - Aligning with and uplifting the values of caring, sharing, respect, and teaching.
- Food innovation hub:
 - Main focus right now.
 - Bringing back local traditional economy.
 - Include barter-based systems.
 - Health and wellness.

- Programs on wild foods and harvests.
- Food ecosystems network
 - Hunters.
 - Harvesters.
 - Producers.
 - Retailers.
 - Funders.
 - Government.
 - Industry.
- Sharing research
 - Storytelling.
 - Workshops.
 - Participation.
 - Collective ownership.
 - Co-creation.
 - Public accessibility.
- Could be co-op model.
- Right now, space used to be restaurant.
 - Re-did the kitchen.
 - Give facility access.
- Food Innovation Hub:
 - Evolved as needs did.
 - Limited access to shared social spaces.
 - Giving maximum access across demographics.
 - Aligning with community needs.
 - Trying to make local food service connections and outside of Mayo.
- Target User Groups:
 - Programming and educational organizations.
 - Not necessarily a formal teacher.
 - Existing food producers.
 - Caterer, large family, etc.
 - Prospective food producers.
 - Interested in exploring but may lack space skill, or experience.
 - Community
 - Any and all people interested in interacting with the space (consuming, buying, or making food).
- Pop Ups and Markets:
 - Have gone really well—tend to focus on holiday events .

- Workshops.
 - Cooking classes (lots of sourdough).
- Targeted markets.
 - Make hyper local markets to create full-time employment for harvesters.
- Future Dreams:



- Trying to go beyond Yukon with online sales.
- Bra making and self-examination workshop during breast cancer awareness month.
 - Versions of healthy convenience items to replace things like soda, juice, pizza, etc.
 - Healthier and fresher.
 - More local.
- Support First Nations programs in schools and hospitals.
 - Send moose soup to seniors.
- Food trade network with other First Nations, Dev-corporations, and businesses.
 - Trade not for money, but for what is needed in communities.
- Long-term dreams and plans:
 - Safe place to prepare and distribute food.
 - Variety of food services and regular work opportunities.
 - Initiatives oriented toward community healing, health, and wellness.
 - Ihdzi' space being community-led and flexible while growing in different ways.
 - Create regular work through food production/harvesting.
 - Different job options.
 - Already have had First Nation "Meals on Wheels" and community events.
 - Nutritional support for recovery (medical or addictions).
 - Dream of Ihdzi' outgrowing this space.
 - Set up different food hubs in different communities.

- Keep space flexible while growing.
 - Grow organically with those using the space.
- Connections:
 - Yukon University; food programs, sewing programs, health information and skill building workshops.
 - Regenerative Economy; local harvesters, non-timber products.
 - Carleton University; research and student capacity, hologram machine (language and storytelling), community problem solving through industrial design.
 - Living Relations; research projects in Canada and Aotearoa on importance of traditional connection to land and food and how this can inform just and sustainable food systems transitions.

Dr. Stephan Schott:

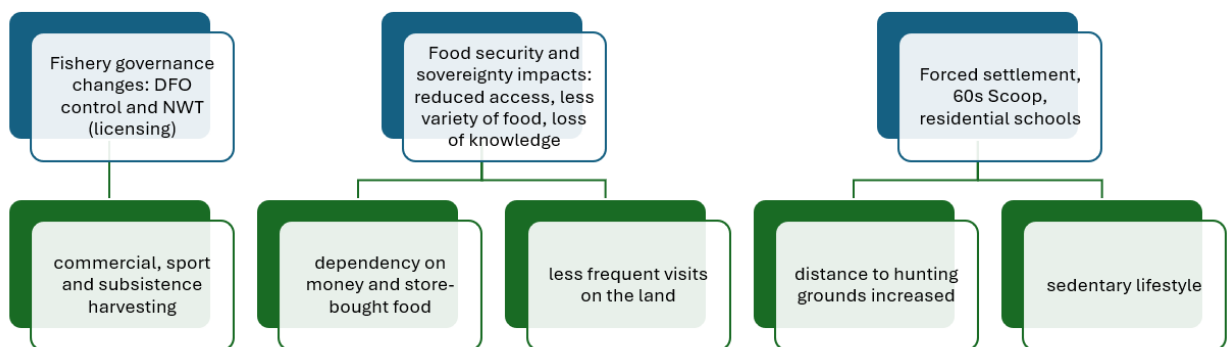
- Funded by 2 grants:
 - FISHES
 - NWT Communicative Impact Monitoring Program (rebuilding relationship to fish)
- Most work is on fish, but will go a little further in this presentation on food sovereignty as a whole.
 - Examine how food sovereignty was disrupted in the region and how it can be realised.
- Food and colonization:
 - “Settler colonial states have used and continue to use traditional foods and food systems as means to control Indigenous populations and gain access to their territories and resources.” (Robin et al. 2021)
 - “Food insecurity is not only a symptom of settler colonialism, but part of its very architecture...through the rules and regulations that exist around the sharing and selling of traditional or land-based foods and how it impacts Indigenous cultures and communities.” (Robin et al. 2021)
 - There’s a story here to explore how impact on food sovereignty was purposeful component of colonialism.
 - “Without food sovereignty, there is no food security”
- UNDRIP Definitions:
 - Food Sovereignty: “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.”
 - Food security: “having access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences” and “access to land and water that allows individuals to retain cultural knowledge and be culturally intact.”

- Brief history of colonial development in Sahtu Region:
 - Based on 1975 report by L. Johnston.
 - North-West Fur Company 1799 constructed by Alexander McKenzie.
 - 1825 hockey was invented by Explorer Franklin and his men.
 - Fort Franklin 1836-1852.
 - 1899 prospecting for minerals starts.
 - First mine established in 1932 at Port Radium by Eldorado Mining and Refining Ltd from Port Hope, Ontario.
 - Late 1950s first two sport fishing lodges established at Sawmill Bay and in Conjuror Bay.
 - In 1970s hydro power plans on Great Bear River with GBL as large reservoir but never followed up on.
- Important historic events for the Déljñę Got'ine:

Government (DGG)

 - 1921: Treaty 11 Signed.
 - 1949: School and store built in Déljñę.
 - 1993: Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement.
 - 2015: Déljñę Final Self-Government Agreement comes into force.
 - September 1st, 2016: Déljñę Got'ine Government self-government in operation.
- Impacts of colonization on relationship to land:
 - Mining of metals and uranium.
 - Used for Manhattan project.
 - Fishing lodges built around the lake at same time as forced relocation.
 - Waste from fishing lodges.
 - Toxic sludge from mines.
 - Disruption of social and cultural interactions, historic travel routes.
- ʔek'wahᑭᑦᑦᑦ Leeroy Andre, Déljñę's then elected leader, in an interview with CBC *Trail's End* host Lawrence Nayally in 2021:
 - "For many generations, we've avoided these areas because of the contamination."
 - "We're still scared to go on the land because we don't know what exposures we have, and we don't trust the government. So I want to make sure that the work that we do is by our people and for our people, and that they can see for themselves the work that they've done."
- Sport fishing:
 - Still settler owned, operated, and controlled.
 - Started by employing local guides from Déljñę.
 - They liked the work, but became more critical as time went on.
 - So, they started training white staff from Alberta and Manitoba.

- Focused on Trophy fishing.
- Very little revenue sharing.
 - Nothing is reported back by sport fishers/DFO.
- Had to do own work to estimate impacts.
 - Fish mortality from catch and release fishing.
 - Based these numbers on regulations and operating capacity
 - 15-40% mortality.
 - Likely even higher as lake trout are very susceptible to temperature changes.
 - 64,000-100,000 KGs of fish are caught with no license, all while community must go through arduous licensing process.
- Only 3 Déłnę cleaners only are employed by lodges.
- Food systems and regulations are preventing the sharing of fish.
- NWT licensing allows for fishing on Great Bear Lake---anyone can apply for small fee.
- Impacts on Access, Governance, Cultural Identity and Freedom to Act.



- Reduced access and resulted in loss of variety of food and knowledge for locals.
- How can we re-establish control over the land and food sovereignty?
 - Re-establish the relationship to the land and people.
 - Invest in future generations.
 - Decolonize governance systems: Environmental and social impact assessment, fishery and wildlife management restructuring, stewardship approaches.
 - Decolonize economic flows and relations and establish control over mixed economy.
 - Adhere to cultural principles.
 - Decolonize research methods: listen and understand Indigenous stories, concerns and knowledge.
 - Data sharing:
 - Convinced DFO to hand over data.
 - Putting this into Atlas for community w/ 25 years of data.
 - Déłnę to get involved in sport fishing.

- Use land claim fully to access land.
- Fish camps to reconnect Elders and youth to the land.
- Reestablish access to previous fishing areas.
 - Especially whitefish.
 - Have to travel to fish for it.
- Testing of contaminated sites, water, and fish.
- Délı̨ę Dene Principles-based Fishing Model:
 - Developed with Elders' principles of fishing and harvesting.
 - Code of conduct to adhere to.
- Modern needs based fishery:
 - Food for the community.
 - Emergency preparedness: wildfires, evacuations, floods.
 - Helped provide food via fishing.
 - More and more wildfires each year.
 - Supply to other communities and long-term care facilities.
 - Wellness programs and high school lunch programs.
 - Cultural activities: community feasts, Spiritual Gatherings, Fish Camp.
 - Prepared meals: catering and tourism.
- Characteristics of model:
 - Sustainable and no waste.
 - Take as much as is needed.
 - Limit catch-and-release.
 - Create a fishery that provides more steady supply of fish, creates local employment, transfers knowledge to youth.
 - Maximize value added and local authentic experiences.
 - Including sport tourism.
- Food Sovereignty: Hunting
 - Food inspection doesn't allow for wide access to country food.
 - Regain control over stewardship and management.
 - Take over sport hunting and proper sharing of meat and by-products.
 - Monitoring on the land by guardians and people camping out again.
 - Encourage hunting and butchering activities through training and Indigenous protocols.
- Food Sovereignty: Gathering
 - Access to berry patches and traditional plants.
 - Local cultivation, greenhouses and or improved access?
 - Processing, cooking: reconnecting with culturally important and nutritious, healthy food preparation and sharing methods.

- How to combine traditionally harvested food with store-bought food in a healthy, culturally appropriate and practical (realistic) way.
 - Nutrition north has subsidies for country food harvest, but don't support flour and rice.
 - Need to look at it more as full meals.
- Food sovereignty: Local Production
 - Greenhouses.
 - Chicken coops.
 - Less dependence on outside supply, ice roads, air freight, barges.
 - Local cut-and-wrap facilities.
 - Catering and food preparation facilities.
 - Pristine and clean water sources.
- Conclusion:
 - Regaining control over land and re-building relationships to the land, important travel routes and harvest sites is key for food sovereignty.
 - Without gains in food sovereignty, food insecurity will not be improved but might just get worse as dependency on imported, processed, unhealthy, culturally meaningless food increases.
 - Decolonization of rules and restrictions that affect Indigenous land use has a long way to go and still very much biased in favour of settlers and settler institutions.
 - As long as food systems are controlled and regulated by settler states (including processing, butchering and distribution) Indigenous peoples will not be able to reconnect, regain control over their land and improve their status and well-being.

Q&A:

- **Q:** Question on the clam gardens. I work on the BC coast and I'm interested in the gardens as well. Our people haven't been using clam gardens for 100 years or more. Not sure how protected they are by the Heritage Conservation Act. Did you have any issues with the Heritage Branch that may have been governed by the province?
 - **A:** We had help from Simon Fraser University (SFU). They checked to help us with archaeological sites. They are the people who did that preliminary work. Joined Coastal Voices and we said we wanted to use clam gardens as well. They helped with different grants to get it started. SFU was really fantastic with helping us. We joined the group and went from there.
 - See it as a great opportunity for coastal nations to learn from each other. We have polluted beaches due to mills nearby. Have fish weirs but no memory of using them. Helps to get out on the land. It's a shame we haven't been using clam gardens. Hearing so many people from your community helped is

amazing.

- **Q:** I'm a member of NND, my question is regarding the project in BC. How did you determine the distribution of the salmon and other fish/seafood? How many salmon are delivered to each household, and how do you determine the distribution? You also save some for canning and drying—how do you determine that?
 - **A:** We're allocated fish every year—a certain poundage for each fish. So, if we get 6000 sockeye, we divide it among members. Some seasons we get a bigger allotment, so we divide that. Many members will do their own canning, but if we still have fish in our freezers and it isn't distributed we bring it to the cannery and ensure it isn't wasted. We leave some in Campbell River and bring some to Kyuquot. When we get the cans, they have a pull tab since so many folks who are unhoused access it and don't have an opener.
 - **Q:** What's the average for a household?
 - **A:** If there is five members and they're allocated 10 fish per person, over 50 fish per person in a year. It's processed and put into packages, or we can offer fish fresh. The fish is always made available in whatever way is best for members. We package a variety of fish and we will go to different towns and distribute it to members—divide it evenly. Everyone gets an equal number of fish.
 - **A:** Since effective date, every member gets fish as result of the Treaty
 - **Q:** Is the fish from commercial license or moderate livelihood?
 - **A:** It's from moderate livelihood. That's our "mosquito fleet". It provides livelihood to our fishers and food to our members.
 - **A:** It tracks how much fish is caught in our territory as well. And our allocation varies annually.
 - **A:** Some years a little higher or lower.
 - **A:** Also deal with clam digging for our buyback program. Goes to the community and outside of it. This week we have people doing prawns—put them into small containers and distribute. Get herring from Bella Bella—distribute it right away. Also keep fish on hand for events such as potlatch, celebration, funerals, etc.
- **Q:** Could you elaborate on some additional challenges and opportunities of addressing food sovereignty?
 - **A:** Finding a model that works for the community, such as a small commercial fishery and buy back program, and to distribute more locally, and have more storage of fish. There can be a lack of fish in the community. There's a challenge of

getting people back on the land when they have jobs and the cost of fuel and time to get out there.

- **A:** For some challenges, a major one is climate change. When it's very hot we can't distribute fish—this didn't used to be an issue. And now the rivers are low as well. And dealing with fires for where we get our fish.
- **A:** Climate for sure—tough to predict each season. Trying to give people the opportunity to connect to traditional economies when they are in a wage model is very difficult—it's tough to break that cycle when people are trapped in it. There's a shortage of capacity, time, and energy. Regulations on wild meat are very difficult to deal with. Ch. 13 of NND's final agreement is on land use and still hasn't been implemented in over 30 years. There have been many irresponsible projects allowed to occur.
- **A:** A lot of us have issues with dealing with government regulations. In KCFN we only get two elk-per-year. They fly in a helicopter to count elk while they're hiding amongst the trees.
- **A:** Trying to build a database and speaking to community members who have tracked their catch with nets in previous years. Presented with elders to a high school and the teachers were very interested in the data and observation rather than textbooks from somewhere else—they want to continue elements of our research. They can continue it into the long term through the high school with the Délı̨nę Lands department. In Nunavut, we equip Inuit hunters to collect their own data to share as they wish.
- **A:** The school should be able to be all of the things—change the curriculum to integrate elements of culture and land.
- **Q:** In our community, it was a really big chum salmon year—more than we could use. The previous year we had to purchase salmon. Many people have forgotten teachings. This year we are going to raffle off smokehouses. The carpentry program is building them. I wanted to share that as an idea in getting people more active in preparation of food. Our people are getting complacent. We're doing distribution as well and some people don't want to get their own food. This can be blamed directly on residential schools and inter-generational trauma. It's very difficult with colonialism. And the cost is very prohibitive to have the boats and trucks necessary for gathering
 - **A:** So true. That's been lost. Ration boxes distributed that lost value of traditional food. How do we get that back?
 - **A:** If you have grandchildren, keep them in the kitchen with you even if they make a mess of the fish. Let them learn and know what the fish feels and looks like before it's eaten.
 - **A:** Part of it is fostering a sense of community. At times, there's not enough

people. Sometimes we are struggling to get people out. As a kid during culture nights, I watched my mom. She would set up chairs and tables, then cook the food, then dance. It was her whole day. She believed in community. There's no community in Victoria, but when you go home to culture everyone is like family. It's important to connect kids back to that—give the youth something to look forward to. When we served kids, they got right into it and were covered in blood and blubber. We're going to serve the food to everyone—that's what it's about. In feast, we serve to our whole community and other communities as well. It feels good to be serving those people and providing that food—to feel that sense of community.