Toward Foodsheds: Reimagining Food Systems in the Lake Superior Watershed

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ABSTRACT

The Lake Superior watershed is nested within multiple Indigenous territories, two settler-colonial nation-states, and a globalized capitalist economic system. While water flows freely, the pursuit of social and ecological transformation is constrained by the physical and psychological enforcement of human-constructed boundaries. Despite these realities, watersheds are sites of great potential. Grounded in specific places while water flows through to others, watersheds enable multiple streams toward justice and entry points into food systems transformations. Foodsheds, named after watersheds, are overlapping webs of food relationships. They offer alternatives to the place-less and relation-less imaginaries of industrial food systems by grounding food communities in the places and relationships they nourish.

This thesis shares findings from a phenomenological study of individuals engaged in place-based and justice-oriented food work across the Lake Superior watershed. The research question asks: How do those engaged in place-based food work across the Lake Superior watershed envision a Lake Superior foodshed? The research involved eight key informant interviews using the Lake Superior watershed as a case setting, social constructivist and radical food geographies approaches and mobile and in situ methods, a place-based and situated form of data collection that brings place into the research encounter. The findings were organized around three main themes, material, relational, and ethereal, charting the path from the boundaries that limit change, the relationships with place and community that ground actions, and how said grounding allows visions of socially and ecologically just food futures to flow outwards.

Watersheds and foodsheds are both living networks connecting social and ecological health. I argue that mapping visions of a foodshed over the ecological space of a watershed enables movement towards justice-oriented food networks not limited by human-constructed boundaries and systems. Foodsheds reorient food systems thinking towards ecologically grounded understandings of interdependence and collective wellbeing. Imagining alternatives does not negate the limitations of existing boundaries but provides a foundation from which to work around and/or through them. As generative rather than reactive approaches, foodshed imaginaries nurture place- and context-specific solutions by mapping where we want our food systems to go, rather than simply tracking where our food comes from and existing problems in food systems. This research establishes the foundations for future studies pursuing transformation through ecological scales and contributes to the academic literature on food systems, relational ecologies, and place-based engagements.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem and Possibility Context

Food systems intimately connect the entire ecological community[1] by highlighting the fundamental interconnectivity between social and ecological health – we all must eat, and we rely on each other and healthy ecosystems to do so (Gilson, 2015; Kloppenburg et al., 1996; Levkoe, 2011). Despite this interdependence, the dominant, industrial food system prioritizes capital accumulation over social and ecological wellbeing, seen through diverse examples ranging from large-scale mono-cropping, the use of chemical inputs ranging from fertilizers to antibiotics, extractive land- and water-based practices, corporate consolidation and oligarchical governance, and precarious labour practices (Ballantyne, 2014; Born & Purcell, 2006; Levkoe, 2011). This economy-first prioritization is no accident, rather "the ongoing outcome of a set of policies that serve multiple interests" (Syring, 2012, p. 11). Prioritizing profits over people and planet has led to a global industrial food system characterized by physical, social, and economic distancing between consumers, harvesters, and the lands and waters on which food is

[1] There are diverse approaches to naming the ecological community. In this thesis, I prefer the language of multispecies beings and ecological communities to non-human, other-than-human, or more-than-human. An ecological community is inclusive of lands, waters, flora, fauna, fungi, and beyond, and highlights the interdependent nature of collective existence in place. While differences must be highlighted, this is my attempt to use terminology that both conceptualizes multispecies beings as beings with agency rather than solely as 'others' to human beings, and to situate humans as members within multispecies ecological communities, rather than separate from the ecologies we live in. This is described further in the literature review.

produced and harvested (Gilson, 2015; Kloppenburg et al., 1996). The industrial food system has myriad negative social and ecological impacts on diverse places, and by obscuring the knowledge of where these injustices happen, food production becomes "placeless," and food itself is imagined as nothing more than a commodity (Kloppenburg et al., 1996; Levkoe et al., 2020; McMichael, 2009).

In the Lake Superior watershed (Figure 1.1), this distancing is particularly notable through the Canada/United States international border that bisects the watershed and the provincial and state jurisdictions contained within them. These imaginaries and scales contribute to restricted action and reaction – for instance, understanding community as something restricted to the nation-state (e.g., municipalities and provincial/national identity). Despite water, fish, and pollution flowing freely, the red line bisecting the lake on the map has concrete implications for limiting the development of community networks grounded in ecological contexts and rhythms. This distancing disempowers transformative change – the pursuit of equitable and sustainable food systems for all – by giving us "no real sense of connection to the land or those on whose behalf we ought to

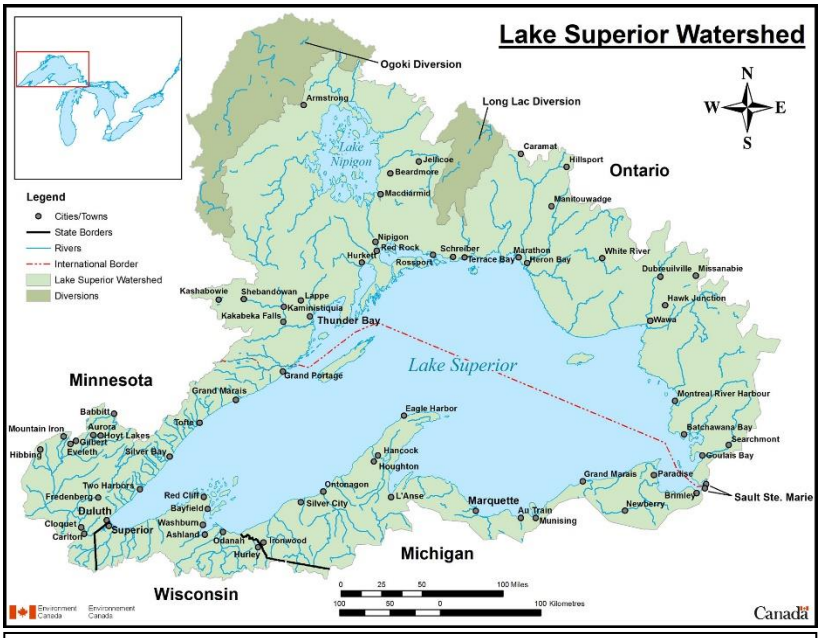

Figure 1.1: The Lake Superior Watershed
Source: (Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, n.d.)

act" (Kloppenburg et al., 1996, p. 36). Addressing social and ecological injustices in food systems requires rebuilding relationships among those that eat, workers across the food chain, the multispecies beings that we cultivate and co-manage with, and the lands and waters food grows on.

An alternative to the dominant, industrial food system is a foodshed, adapted from the watershed concept. Watersheds, beyond their technical definitions as basins between heights of land, are social-ecological settings for human health and wellbeing, providing a "place-based unit within which to understand and manage interactions between social systems, ecosystems and health" (Parkes et al., 2010, p.696). Foodsheds, as defined by Kloppenburg et al. (1996), are "commensal communities that encompass sustainable relationships both between people (those who eat together) and between people and the land (obtaining food without damage)" (p.37). Like watersheds, foodsheds are nested socio-geographic spaces that are "socially, economically, ethically, and physically embedded in particular places" (ibid., p.39). While foodsheds and watersheds are not interchangeable, notions of plurality and fluidity are important for both – there are no independent foodsheds or watersheds, rather, they are intimately connected, nested, and overlapping. In place-based systems such as foodsheds, social, ecological, and health (in)justices are inseparable from the places in which they occur. In this sense, I understand foodsheds as overlapping webs of food-based relationships – imaginaries rooted in relational care (Sheikh et al., 2023).

1.2 Research Relevance and Objectives

1.2.1 Objectives

This project uses the Lake Superior watershed as the research case and context and focuses on existing and emerging expressions of localized food justice as the foundation for envisioning Lake Superior foodsheds. Instead of reproducing the assumed permanence of colonial boundaries, this research foregrounds the watershed as the study context. Through this, my intention is to root the research explicitly in place while pushing back against the dominance of universalizing and colonial imaginaries and highlighting interdependence and connection between places otherwise seen as distinct.

This research explores place-based relationships pursuing social and ecological justice throughout the Superior watershed as emergent expressions of foodsheds, seeking to identify how those engaged in place-based food work[2] envision socially and ecologically just food futures in the places they call home. The way we engage as actors in the food system is constrained by what we imagine to be possible. The project of imagining foodshed(s) has the potential to shift understandings of the attainability of justice-oriented food systems change for food activists and practitioners across the watershed and beyond. It invites those engaged with food systems (i.e., everyone) to engage with their food and food-based communities on ecological grounds, nurturing the thought that food, place, community, and wellbeing are intrinsically connected. This

[2] I understand place-based food work as the intimate, meditative, and embodied acts of engaging with food and food systems in specific places, rather than abstract theorizing.

thesis will contribute to the growing literature focusing on relational ecologies, place-based and bioregional approaches, and food systems.

1.2.2 Relevance

The majority of foodshed studies focus on bounded and localized scales for regional supply chain sustainability rather than their aspirational and action-oriented potential (Horst & Gaolach, 2015; Schreiber et al., 2021; Vicente-Vicente et al., 2022). To fill this gap, I am interested in assessing the aspirational potential of foodsheds as place-based and justice-oriented approaches to food systems beyond human constructed boundaries and scales. As a result, I do not focus on potential agricultural capacity, as many other foodshed studies do, nor the biophysical aspects of watersheds that are critical to nourishing food systems and human communities. This project focuses on the potential of using foodsheds and watersheds as ecological framings to adjust how we perceive and understand possibilities for change. Analyzing emergent expressions of foodsheds through a watershed context connects social and ecological pursuits of justice to place itself, rather than the boundaries humans have mapped over the landscape. Just as water flows through watersheds, so must our solidarities – the pursuit of justice cannot stop at the socially constructed borders of the local scale, nor the nation-state.

1.2.3 Research Question

This project involved traveling around the Lake Superior watershed in July 2022 and interviewing individuals engaged in place-based food work. The overarching question posed by this research is: How do those engaged in place-based food work across the Lake Superior watershed envision a Lake Superior foodshed? A subsequent question is: How might such visions inform food system transformation in the region, and beyond?

1.4 Thesis Overview

Chapter one, the introduction, provided a background to the research context and question. Chapter two outlines the relevant literature that sets the context for this thesis, investigating the theoretical underpinnings of imaginaries, place-based engagements, relational ecologies, and affinity politics. Chapter three discusses the methodologies and methods that framed the research process. The methodologies describe the approach I took to understanding and analysing knowledge, whereas the methods describe my attempt to undertake a situated and place-based approach to data collection. Chapter four summarizes the main findings for this research, divided into the three overarching themes of 1) Material: Borders and Boundaries, 2) Relational: Place and Community, and 3) Ethereal: Cultivating Possibility. The first two themes flow through to the third, which notes how deepening relationships with place and community supports the cultivation of

political possibility (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.106), helping to turn away from the material borders and boundaries that limit action and understandings and toward place- and context-based alternatives. In Chapter five, the discussion, I put the findings in conversation with the literature to tell a different story about food systems and foodsheds, highlighting the importance of ecological scales and metaphors in resisting the placeless-ness and relationless-ness of colonial and capitalist imaginaries. In conclusion, chapter six includes final reflections, recommendations for future research, and ongoing questions not answered by this relatively contained project.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Scope

This literature review outlines the relevant material required to investigate the potential contribution of place-based relationships to the pursuit of social and ecological justice in localized environments, and how these relationships can scale up to justice-oriented movements that address the entire ecological community in diverse environments. This research is grounded in four highly interdisciplinary and interconnected bodies of literature, which I group as storied spatial imaginaries, place-based engagements, relational ecologies, and affinity politics. Despite their shared political and ethical foundations, these are distinct and diverse bodies of literature and assessed as such. This research builds on the literature by connecting them through a grounding in ecological language and contexts for the purpose of reimagining approaches to food system transformation. As this project considers food as a vector to community engagement, the places, relationships, and communities formed in and through food are foregrounded above the food systems literature itself. Relevant literature from food systems, food justice, and place-based food work is integrated throughout the bodies of literature considered below. Literature specific to foodshed analysis is discussed in section 3.1.2, and a description of the watershed research setting as it relates to this study is discussed in sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.

2.2 Storied Spatial Imaginaries

Spatial imaginaries are "socially held stories," representational and performative discourses that structure relationships to, and understandings of, place and knowledge (Watkins, 2015, p. 509). Simply put, they are "the taken-for-granted assumptions about reality that help people to discursively construct, organize, and interpret their experiences and give meaning to their everyday worlds" (Stokowski et al., 2021, p. 244). Understandings of place, community, and relationships are both structured and mediated by the stories and narratives propagated and enforced about them. As Blomley (2004) described, landscapes are "not just made of bricks and mortar, but of representations" (p. 33). Acting in response to these imaginaries – performing them – is how stories, as argued by Watkins (2015), materialize into geographies (p. 509). The dissemination and entrenchment of power through stories or imaginaries can be seen through the construction and enforcement of specific narratives and the impacts of colonialism, capitalism, and bordering on discourses around space, place, and scale. The potentials of ecologically grounded alternatives are discussed in section 2.5.3.

2.2.1 Stories and Power

Narrative construction is a fundamental aspect of existence, "a creative human act in which people seek to make sense of the world by making stories about it" (Attwood, p.2). Stories are not neutral, nor limited to the page, rather they are "culturally nuanced ways of knowing, produced within networks of relational meaning-making" (Hunt,

2014a, p. 27). Further, as Cameron (2016) argues, stories are "not simply *about* people or places [but] are themselves composed of networks of relations between people, places, and things" (p. 21). As stories transmit power, it is politically expedient for those that hold more power to promote specific narratives upholding the status quo.

Power is both discursive and material (Kurtz, 2003, p. 893); despite a multiplicity of stories, the imaginaries reproduced and entrenched are often singular, constructed in service of maintaining power and control at the expense of interdependence and connection. Sheikh et al. (2023) understand these as linear, growth-driven narratives that undertake positivist approaches and "permit the depletion of non-human life-forms" (p.648) throughout diverse ecologies. Discursive formations, when produced in service of power, legitimize and constrain various systems of knowledge and action (Coulthard, 2014, p. 103; Trouillot, 1995). Knowledge production, in this sense, is implicated in epistemic violence, defined by Hunt (2014a) as "the work of discourse in creating and sustaining boundaries around what is considered real and, by extension, what is unable to be seen as real (or to be seen at all)" (p.29). In this sense, the pursuit of justice is not just about eroding the power of capitalism and colonialism, but of challenging the language and cultural imaginaries that rend them seemingly 'absolute' and 'uncontestable'.

2.2.2 Capitalism and Colonialism

The Lake Superior watershed is currently situated within the context of two settler-colonial nation-states, Canada and the United States. The creation of these two countries mapped colonialism over Indigenous relationships and the landscape, along

with singular approaches to relating to one another, knowledges, lands and waters, and multispecies beings (Hunt, 2014b; Coulthard, 2014; Macklem, 2015). *Terra nullius* is a foundational imaginary of settler colonialism on these lands, a relationless enactment of "symbolic boundaries" that emboldened settlers to dispossess Indigenous peoples from the land through both discursive and physical violence (Moore, 2017a, p. 620; McClintock, 2018, p. 5; Hunt, 2014b). As national narratives and mythologies are "centrally concerned with cultural legitimacy," settler-colonial societies imagine their political communities around national mythologies that obscure the violent and devastating realities of the Doctrines of Discovery and Dispossession and other colonial imaginaries (Bruner, 1991, p. 9). Woelfle-Erskine (2015, p. 76) extends colonial imaginaries to the management of waterways in the United States, noting:

> Shasta Dam's construction was a manifestation of frontierist expansion policies – Manifest Destiny inscribed upon rivers – instrumental to westward expansion in the US. This doctrine is sedimented into our dams and waterworks, and is implicit in the way we regulate water and in the institutions that have developed to send water from place to place. And these ideas manifest as injustices in the distribution of water, in water quality, and also in injustices to everything not-human in the world.

These narratives presumed, and enforced, propertied relationships to nonhuman natures (and 'Cheapened' humans [Moore, 2017b]) and are kept alive through ongoing enactment of pioneer imaginaries – a romanticization of racialized space and exclusion of the Other (McClintock, 2018, p. 4). Hunt (2014b) describes these representations as colonialscapes, which "create the appearance that a colonial spatio-legal perspective of 'Canada' is somehow 'true' [and] cover over other spatial relations and representations." (p. 72)

Inextricably tied to colonialism, the extractive nature of capitalism is deeply implicated in the displacement of Indigenous peoples and denigration of land-based relationships (Ballantyne, 2014; Simpson, 2017; Coulthard, 2014). Gislason et al. (2018), in their study of storytelling as counter-narratives within watersheds, note how "master-settler narratives of northern BC assert that the region is built and livelihoods must depend upon primary resource extraction. Within this narrative, job generation is framed to outweigh the forced displacement (and dispossession) of First Nations' residents" (p. 194). Applicable throughout Turtle Island, Indigenous peoples have been, and continue to be, displaced from their lands while narratives surrounding employment in capitalist wage economies are put forth as the justification for extraction and denigration of their lands, waters, and foodscapes.

Gibson-Graham (2006), describe the "discursive dominance of capitalism" as a cultural imaginary that immobilizes, paralysing thought and action outside of the socialization of capitalism (p.3). This extends, as they describe, to the notion that despite the existence of alternative economic relations, the enactment of this possibility is "shadowy and negative," whereas the borders, or "foreclosures" of capitalist imaginaries have "shape and stability" (ibid., p.49). Conceptual bordering extends to the addition of value to geographic scale, seen in food systems through the promotion of the local scale as a solution to various injustices, or the notion that watersheds or hydrologic boundaries are inherently more participatory than national or municipal scales (Cohen & Davidson, 2011). This cognitive boundary assumes that justice-oriented solutions are inherent at smaller scales, despite scales having no inherent value (Born & Purcell, 2006; Cohen & Davidson, 2011; Horst & Gaolach, 2015).

2.2.3 Borders and Distancing

Watkins (2015) describes the modern understanding of geography as shaped through borders and bordering (p.513). The construction and enforcement of political borders in settler-colonial contexts contribute to material and symbolic violences, dispossessing Indigenous peoples from the land while narrating their inevitability (Blomley, 2003; Cameron, 2016; Simpson, 2017). This narration of inevitability extends beyond the physical boundaries of borders to conceptual and imagined boundaries, seen through distancing, alienation, and the geographies of inclusion and exclusion that contribute to the 'otherings' of places, peoples, multispecies beings, and alternative understandings of socio-economic relations (Blomley, 2004; Coulthard, 2014; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Pitt, 2018). These geographies of exclusion can be seen through Hunt's (2014b) discussion of the spatialization of violence in Canadian law that functions to "transport 'Indians' to a space in which justice is hard to come by" (p. 73).

Capitalism's rise in the 1450s rested on the exploitation and appropriation of non-valued labour, which itself relied on the removal of humans from Nature, and of most humans from the category of Humanity (Moore, 2017a). The separation of humanity from nature is an abstraction that enables capitalism's "praxis of cheapening the lives and works of many humans and non-human natures," violent through its acceptance as "given conditions of reality rather than historically constructed" (Moore, 2017a, p. 601). Dehumanized (or less-than-human [Büscher, 2022]) categories include non-human humans (BIPOC, women) and non-human others (plants, animals, land – 'ecosystem services') (Moore, 2017a; 2017b). These categories, while in constant flux, act as both expressions and instruments of alienation and 'othering' – putting 'borders' on people,

animals and plants, lands and waters, and our capacity to envision alternative ways of relating.

The placeless and relationless imaginaries of industrial food systems are not problems caused by individuals but rather structural ones, with their roots in the commodification of food and collective alienation from the production of food and governance of food systems (Levkoe, 2011; Kloppenburg et al., 1996; Gilson, 2015). As described by Kloppenburg & Lezberg (1996, p. 95):

> The distance from which our food comes represents our separation from the knowledge of how and by whom what we consume is produced, processed, and transported. If the production, processing, and transport of what we eat is destructive of the land and of human community – as it very often is – how can we understand the implications of our own participation in the global food system when those processes are located elsewhere and are so obscured from us? How can we act responsibly and effectively for change if we do not understand how the food system works and our own role within it?

Despite pre-existing issues with food systems, the rise of capitalism entrenched the dominant understanding of food as a commodity rather than a relational entity (Kloppenburg et al., 1996; Gilson, 2015). The injustices and violences of the capitalist food system have been well documented, with wide-ranging impacts from social and ecological injustices and exploitation (Born & Purcell, 2006; Gilson, 2015; Levkoe, 2011), externalization of economic, ecological, and psychological costs (Gilson, 2015; Hammelman et al., 2020), dispossession of Indigenous peoples from the land and denigration of their sovereignty, cultivation practices, and legal systems (Coulthard, 2014; Daigle, 2019; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015), and concentration of power and decision-making (Levkoe, 2011; Syring, 2012).

2.3 Place-Based Engagements

While there are as many understandings of place as there are places, place as a concept can be broadly understood across four dimensions: *locale* as setting, *locality* as setting in relation to political and economic scales, *sense of place* as attachments and meanings of specific places, (Larsen & Johnson, 2012, p. 633), and *memoryscapes* as intangible places, common in Indigenous and diasporic communities who have enduring attachments to places that may no longer exist as a result of colonization and extractive capitalism (Kearney, 2018, p. 2). Dowling et al. (2017) extend understandings of place and Country to include "land, sea and rivers, as well as animals, tides, waters, winds, insects, rocks, plants, languages, emotions, songs and ancestors" (p. 827). Place can further be understood as "a complex and dynamic social-ecological construct" (Galway, 2019, p. 69), both a location of becoming and politics (Gibson-Graham, 2006), and a feeling of belonging that comes through practices shaping livelihoods, relationships and identity (Altamirano-Jimenez & Parker, 2016, p. 89). As Agnew (2011) differentiates, *space* refers to physical landscapes whereas *place* refers to the symbolic relationships held with space; place being the "setting for social rootedness and landscape continuity" (p. 319). This thesis is primarily concerned with place, not space, yet a focus on Kearney's (2018) socio-sedimentary layers – "the rich layers of cultural practice and habit that define place and people's actions within place" (p. 5) – highlights the connection between physical and cultural, ensuring place and space are considered as parts of a complex whole, not distinct and separately bounded.

2.3.1 Ideological Power of Place

Larsen and Johnson (2012) describe the ideological power of place as "the taken-for-granted geographies of inclusion and exclusion that simultaneously highlight strategies for emancipatory politics" (p. 633), noting the potential for the desocialization and depoliticization of space and social location to inadvertently foreground alternative ways of being and knowing through embodied reactions to abstraction (Blomley, 2003). Coulthard (2014) describes engagements with place as generating "relational practices and forms of knowledge [that] guide forms of resistance against other rationalizations of the world that threaten to erase or destroy our senses of place" (16). A bioregional understanding of place, rather than one defined by human-constructed and imagined boundaries like colonial borders, highlights the interconnections and interdependence between social, ecological, and health justice (Gislason et al., 2018, p. 192). As noted by Kloppenburg et al. (1996), "while a system can be anywhere, the foodshed is a continuous reminder that we are standing in a particular place; not anywhere, but here" (p. 41). A deep understanding of and engagement with place highlights that the lands and waters on which we stand and swim are not solely locations, but rather rich social worlds (Bawaka Country et al., 2016), helping to counter the disembodiment and placelessness of abstracted systems.

Western cartography and private property boundary enforcement have controlled and designified land (Johnson et al., 2015), reducing it to simple geometry by, as Blomley (2003) describes, "conceptually separate[ing] a bounded space from the things and relations that inform it, thus imagining the space as a purely abstract and empty site that has meaning only in terms of the logic of private property" (p. 129). Through acts of

renaming, reframing, and controlling, these forms of "geographic violence" serve colonial and capitalist goals by naturalizing occupation, extraction, and ownership (Johnson et al., 2015; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). This is particularly notable through settler-colonial renaming, which normalizes and entrenches colonial imaginaries as the "taken-for-granted order of the discursive universe," erasing pre-existing Indigenous relationships (Rose-Redwood, 2016, p. 194; Te Punga Somerville, 2017). This is seen in that Superior, not Anishinaabe Gitchigami, is relied on as the accepted place name for the watershed.

The impact of capitalocentric or colonial imaginaries on place cannot be understated – petrocapitalism, as described by Ballantyne (2014), reorients relationships between people and places to people and *product* (p.70), and the cheapening of nature 'forgets' the erasure and devaluing of ecological abundance, reorienting place to a "passive substrate, a place where humans leave footprints" (Moore, 2017b, p. 11). As knowledge is produced in and through specific places and their contexts (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; de Leeuw & Hunt, 2018; Johnson, 2012), a deep attention to and grounding in place can assist in a transition towards justice-oriented futures (Kloppenburg et al., 1996, p. 41) and shift the focus from the "nowhere" to "now here," re-imbuing relationality into place (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. xxi).

2.3.2 Layers of Place

Deep engagements with place can assist in understanding and addressing the layered historical and ongoing realities lived in place. These socio-sedimentary layers are

both social and cultural – spatial environments are not simply physical locations, but are ecologically-, socially-, and culturally-embedded places that generate knowledges and political or ethical systems. This is seen through Coulthard's (2014) grounded normativity, understood as the place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought, experientially-informed practices, and knowledges "that inform and structure [Indigenous] ethical engagements" with multispecies communities and ecologies (p. 13). Simpson (2017) extends this concept through her writings on land as pedagogy and how the internationalism of Anishinaabe political orders, through their "complex ways of relating to the plant nations, animal nations, and the spiritual realm," highlights the ability to be both rooted in place and international in scope (p. 56).

Colonial borders have mapped over the deep relationships and nested sovereignties present in the socio-sedimentary layers of the Lake Superior watershed; in this place, engagement cannot be unentangled from settler colonialism and its disruptions. Settler desires to engage with place, and broader place-based pursuits of social-ecological justice, must attend to land as it relates to Indigenous sovereignty. Without attending to these layers, settlers pursuing food and broader questions of justice on Indigenous lands risk, at best, impeding the pursuit of justice by appropriating Indigenous teachings (Bohunicky et al., 2021; McClintock, 2018), and at worse, uncritically obscuring or standing in the way of Indigenous resurgence (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Coulthard, 2014; Daigle, 2019). Despite the prevalence of theorizing on the importance of 'returning the commons,' these approaches to land-based relationships are inappropriate in the context of settler-colonial occupation, as Coulthard (2014, p.12) notes:

> in liberal settler states such as Canada, the "commons" not only belongs to somebody – *the First Peoples of this land* – they also deeply inform and sustain Indigenous modes of thought and behavior that harbor profound insights into the maintenance of relationships within and between human beings and the natural world built on principles of reciprocity, nonexploitation and respectful coexistence.

Settler approaches to re-theorizing place and food must foreground Indigenous land-based relationships and legal orders rather than an approach that flattens history, obscuring the socio-sedimentary layers of landscapes. This requires differentiating between nativism and belonging: place-based engagements cannot be rooted in a problematic desire to become *native* to place that naturalizes settlement and Indigenous erasure, rather, *belonging* to place that recognizes difference while upholding the responsibilities we have to the places we call home, including the layered and ongoing realities of occupation, dispossession, and resurgence. Or, as Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue, we must organize "around commitments to Indigenous sovereignty, refusal, and the non-abstraction of land – not as peripheral points or extra considerations, but as foundational to its praxis" (p.149). Doing this requires critically and *care*fully integrating the diverse and "concrete experiences of communities grounded in shared histories, stories and challenges" into the storied landscapes of place (Johnson, 2012, p. 829), ensuring that proposed scales and settings around which to converge do not obscure existing relationships.

2.3.3 Place as Potential

As food is intimately connected to land and water, the knowledge that there can be no justice on stolen land must be foregrounded in discussions of place-based food systems. As a place-based approach to food justice, foodshed perspectives must not further the dis*place*ment of Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities nor the denigration of their foodways. Centering the role of place and relationship in food systems can grant insight into their roles in resisting injustice (Hammelman et al., 2020, p. 220), meaning foodshed perspectives must approach change through transformative relationships grounded in specific places (Gilson, 2015; Horst & Gaolach, 2015; Kloppenburg et al., 1996). Just as scale must be a strategy and not an end goal (Born & Purcell, 2006), so must food justice: community-driven food justice movements have the potential to empower their members to move beyond food to broader fights for social, ecological, racial, and economic justice at the nested scales of local to global, personal to collective (Klinke & Korkor Samar, 2021; McClintock, 2018; Sbicca, 2012).

The problem of scale is longstanding in social movement and food studies – while localized engagement may empower action (Goralnik et al., 2014; Larsen & Johnson, 2012) many injustices experienced locally cannot be solved, nor understood, through siloed local scales (Born & Purcell, 2006; Kurtz, 2003). However, understanding scale as relational, and relationships as multi-scalar, assists in transcending the bounded levels of local, regional, national, and global by opening up "renewed possibilities for negotiation, engagement, power sharing and solidarity building amongst diverse sovereign actors and institutions at multiple levels" (Daigle, 2019, p. 302). As put by Ferreyra et al. (2008), "scales for collaboration and integration cannot be imposed but should be emergent"

(p.318). Place-based engagements open the possibilities for political intervention across scales, reducing the hopelessness associated with global problems by creating meaningful localized differences (Galway, 2019; Goralnik et al., 2014; Ojala, 2012). Larsen and Johnson (2012) note that "global inequality and social oppression can be engaged and challenged in and through actual sites and their connections, not on some abstract level of their operation or arrangement" (p. 641) by creating tangible inroads to change. Place-based engagements counter the distancing of the industrial food system by building accountability and reciprocity through (re)conceptualizing the ecological community as subject/being (Ballantyne, 2014; Larsen & Johnson, 2012), as seen in the Bawaka human and more-than-human collective's transformative approach to place-based research and citational politics (Bawaka Country et al., 2016). These deep relationships can be leveraged to inspire meaningful and sustained pursuits of emancipatory politics (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Gilson, 2015; Poe et al., 2014).

Place-based engagements provide opportunities to divest from oppressive imaginaries through refusing the abstraction of land and place (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Ballantyne (2014), in describing the impacts of Dechinta's land-based programming, describes reciprocal land-based relationships as a practice of destroying capitalism and colonialism through a fundamental shift in values – if settler capitalism relies on deterritorialization for its maintenance, strong relationships of reciprocity with place can result in its crumbling (p. 76). This is extended through Goralnik et al.'s (2014) discussion of place-based approaches to experiential environmental learning on Isle Royale in Lake Superior, where they note that attending to social and ecological interdependence within place "re-connects students to place as a personal and specific

entity central to the learning process, identity, and relationship formation, thus providing the emotional connection necessary to extend these feelings to other places" (p.183). This potential of relationships with place to contribute to hope and transformation is further highlighted through the ideological power of grounding in the home, as described by Freire (1997, p. 8):

> The land that people love, talk about, and make reference to always has a backyard, a street, a street corner, a ground smell, a cutting cold, a suffocating heat, something for which we fight, we have specific needs, and we have a language that is spoken with different intonations. This is a homeland for which we sometimes lose sleep, a distant land that causes us some unquietness that has to do with one's backyard, one's street corners, and one's dreams. In certain moments, our love for our backyard is extended to other places and, it ends up fixing itself in a large place where we make our home, we plant our seed, our city. Before I could become a citizen of the world I was and am first a citizen of Recife. The more rooted I am in my location, the more I extend myself to other places so as to become a citizen of the world. No one becomes local from a universal location. The existential road is in the reverse.

Freire's view of the home as a rooted imaginary highlights the potential of deep relationships with place to flow to other places, noting the importance of beginning in the places that carry specific meaning, and flowing outwards from there. This commitment to deep relationships and engagement with place is evidenced through the original title of his text, *A Sombra Desta Mangueria,* translated to "under the shade of this mango tree," highlighting the text as place-based in its conception, content, and intent (Freire, 1997).

2.4 Relational Ecologies

Blending political ecology and relational geography, relational ecologies push both fields to explicitly acknowledge the relationships between people, place, and multispecies beings, recognizing specific places as co-constituted through relationships with the entire ecological community (Dowling et al., 2017; Poe et al., 2014). This subfield is grounded in ecofeminist care ethics (Goralnik et al., 2014) and Indigenous ontological acknowledgments of place as animate and kincentric, along with the geographic sub-fields of animal-, more-than-human-, and place-based geographies and ethics – academic language used to speak to knowledges long encoded in Indigenous theorizing (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Coulthard, 2014; Kearney, 2018). This approach roots engagement in scalar relationships; acknowledging that humans are "nested within a relational sphere that is populated by a vast number of co-presences" and that "harms done to one part of the nested ecology send shock waves through another" (Kearney, 2018, pp. 11, 13). In this context, ecological justice is a relational pursuit of justice that recognizes the interdependence of environmental and social struggles (Stevis, 2000; Yaka, 2019).

2.4.1 Relationships and Alienation

Responsibility for responding to social and ecological crises is eroded when interlocking systems of oppression prioritize individual capacity for capital accumulation (Ballantyne, 2014; McClintock, 2018) over relationships of interdependence (Kloppenburg et al., 1996; Coulthard, 2014). These systems of oppression include, but

are not limited to, capitalism, settler-colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy. As Borrows (1997) describes "increasing alienation from our natural and social environments has nearly overwhelmed our ability to effectively function in the places we choose to live" (p. 420). If we accept Simpson's (2017) claim that relationships are the basis of social meaning, then we must also accept her assertion that "the act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning" (p.75). By deconstructing the stories and social actions that embody meaning, individuals are further alienated from their pre-existing and potential relationships, communities, and broader understandings of ecological interdependence. Relational ecologies respond to these denials of interconnection and interdependency by rooting in place-based ethics of care grounded in relationality, vulnerability, and dependency to "reverse anti-ecological separatism," (Pitt, 2018, p.456) resisting the threat of individualism through community (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Gilson, 2015; Kearney, 2018; Gibson-Graham, 2006).

Moore (2017a) notes how "nature operates not only outside and inside our bodies (from global climate to the micro-biome) but also *through* our bodies, including our embodied minds," (p. 603) seen through the existence of foodsheds across scales from gut to globe (Kloppenburg et al., 1996). This lends support to Davis et al.'s (2019) claim that "ecological care, multispecies kinship, and social justice" are all key to a praxis of wellbeing (p. 11). These relational spheres of interdependence are enacted through commensal communities – communities who eat together without causing harm – key principles of foodsheds (Kloppenburg et al., 1996). Woelfle-Erskine (2015) extends these ideas into watersheds through her understanding of 'watershed entanglements,' positioning water as moving through intra-actions with the entire ecological community.

Through this, she extends watershed governance beyond exclusive human control by arguing that beavers, salmon, and redwood trees work in entangled and symbiotic collaborations with humans to co-manage watersheds (ibid., p.3). The relational aspect of place highlights how both place and foodsheds are deeply embedded in relational ecologies: just as place cannot be separated from relationship, experience, and embodiment, a foodshed cannot be separated from human relationships with place, the ecological community, and context-specific knowledges (Johnson, 2012; Kloppenburg et al., 1996; Larsen & Johnson, 2012).

Gray et al. (2001) understand community-based ecosystem management as a systems-based approach that does not focus solely on watershed, forestry, agricultural, or natural resource management, but employs a holistic and interdependent approach that "integrates ecological, social, and economic considerations at various scales across the landscape and over time" (p.30). The four principles they propose not only foreground inclusive, accessible and transparent community-based processes and the flow of benefits from the land to the local community to beyond, but explicitly situate the land as part of the social community and the social community as part of the landscape (ibid.). When considered in relation to Woelfle-Erskine (2015) and Sheikh et al.'s (2023) understandings of multispecies co-management, community-based ecosystem management – whether in relation to watersheds, foodsheds, or other ecologies – must incorporate multispecies beings and lands and waters into the communities that co-manage landscapes.

2.4.2 Ethics of Care and Co-Becoming

The ecological community is an extension of the commensal community that extends beyond Western boundaries to include humans, multispecies beings, and the lands, waters, and other non-organic entities that call the same places home (Sheikh et al., 2023). This extends through scales to microbiota, understood by Elton (2021) as ecological determinants of health and key to commensalism. This understanding of health speaks to the interdependence between human and nonhuman natures – as Borrows (1997) notes, human "society is a subset of the ecosphere" (p.421) and we intimately depend on diverse ecosystems to thrive (Elton, 2021, p.1006). This can be seen through Jordan and Benson's (2015, p. 6) discussion of watershed epidemiology, where they position watershed scales as ideal units through which to apply an ecological public health paradigm. Foodsheds, as commensal communities, enact relational ecologies by upholding "food as a relational entity" and rejecting commodification (Gilson, 2015, p. 12). This rejection can be seen through shared, at times appropriated, affinities with Indigenous political and land-based orders that highlight ethical obligations to, and agency of, lands, waters, animals, and plants (Coulthard, 2014).

Honouring ecological interdependence leads to a praxis of compassion that can foster ecological citizenship (Larsen & Johnson, 2012; Pitt, 2018), as seen in Poe et al.'s (2014) study of urban foraging in Seattle, Washington. Despite the state-centred implications of 'citizen,' these approaches have the potential to shift allegiances away from human- and state-centred obligations and individual responsibility to holistic and collective response-ability, as an explicit reframing of abstract objectives into tangible action (Foley et al., 2020; Klinke & Korkor Samar, 2021; Poe et al., 2014). As noted by

Büscher (2022), “it is precisely because we live in increasingly alienated entanglements that re-emphasizing our (human) bonds with and dependence on the rest of life becomes important” (p. 60). Simpson (2017) describes the opposite of dispossession and extractivism as attachment and reciprocity (pp. 43,75), noting that deep relationships and attachment to place are foundational to creating alternatives. Relationality and co-constitution respond to alienating and individualizing discourses with pluralist imaginaries that “proliferate rather than foreclose possibility” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 126).

2.4.3 Relational Ecologies of Food

Food justice is a comprehensive and liberatory approach to food systems and social change (Levkoe, 2011) that focuses on “the right of historically disenfranchised communities to have healthy, culturally appropriate food, which is also justly and sustainably grown” (Sbicca, 2012, p. 456). Critical approaches to food justice seek to dismantle systems of domination (Bohunicky et al., 2021; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015) by grounding action in self-determination and resilience (Hammelman et al., 2020), and ecological interdependence (Gilson, 2015; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015; Sbicca, 2012). Reflexivity is key to food justice – without problematizing structures of domination, even the most well-meaning can reify white supremacy and Indigenous erasure (Daigle, 2019; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015; McClintock, 2018), neoliberal consumer identities (Levkoe, 2011), and biopolitical projects of mastery (Gilson, 2015).

Foods' centrality to life makes it a key entry point into discussions around justice (Kloppenburg & Lezberg, 1996; Levkoe, 2011; Sbicca, 2012), particularly the interdependence of social and ecological justice. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) describe this interdependence in relation to Enrique Salmón's practice of eating the landscape (p.137):

> Food is the entrée to land, land that is brought into fullness through a combination of stories – some recent, others passed across generations. The stories are often stories of surprising connections between (human) individuals, histories that make themselves known in contemporary time, mistakes made by outsiders just learning to tend to the landscape, and stories that affirm the roles of planting and picking in the cosmos.

Food not only highlights the interconnections between land, water, animals, plants, and people, but connections through time and space as well. These interconnections foreground the importance of learning, adapting from mistakes, and growing alongside place and community. The authors go on to note that food choices are choices to support processes, noting that "eating the landscape is an act of social reaffirmation, enervating kinship and social relationships shared across the (dinner) table" (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 138). Importantly, these relational ecologies acknowledge that humans are not the only ones who eat or drink from landscapes – as Woelfle-Erskine (2015) notes, "salmon are also food, not only for humans but for bears, otters, and trees, and they grow in rivers where humans have left some water to flow to the sea." (p.75).

2.5 Affinity Politics

To Larsen and Johnson (2012), affinity politics are "progressive place-based politics and thought" developed through "noncoercive, cooperative, and grounded relationships" based on practices of mutual aid (p. 633). These place-based relationships move beyond theory to action through embodied practices of love and care, forming relationships beyond the bounds of capitalism, colonialism, and the dominance of spatial orderings like nation-states (Ballantyne, 2014; Larsen & Johnson, 2012). Rather than the whiteness and saviourism that food justice movements are often criticized for (Bohunicky et al., 2021; Daigle, 2019; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015), affinity politics share political praxes with food sovereignty, namely "a shared ethical commitment to helping people develop the capacity to determine the conditions of their own existence" (Larsen & Johnson, 2012, p. 633). This is an approach to collective liberation that does not rely on individual liberators or inclusion in existing frameworks, but rather stepping back to see how current practices are implicated in harm and imagining alternative pathways to move forward ethically and collectively (Freire, 1997; Larsen & Johnson, 2012; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015). Decentralized governance and community engagement are important components affinity networks, which overlap with the understanding of watershed approaches and integrated water resource management as forms of community-based ecosystem management (Gray et al., 2001; Mountjoy et al., 2016).

2.5.1 Imagination and Embodiment

Imagination, as noted by Hayes et al. (2014), is an act of social generation. Despite significant restrictions on the imagination, capitalist food systems and other systems of domination are not immovable or inevitable (Born & Purcell, 2006; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015). Progress towards alternatives requires belief in their possibility; this cultivation of potential comes through imagining and embodying change grounded in places and relationships (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Larsen & Johnson, 2012; Hayes et al., 2014; Poe et al., 2014). While knowledge of overarching systems is required to prevent ahistorical understandings of issues or pursuits of change, it is critical to move beyond simply focusing on the problem (Bohunicky et al., 2021; Hammelman et al., 2020; Kloppenburg et al., 1996; McClintock, 2018). As Kelley (2002, p. xii) reminds us:

> Without new visions we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us.

Moving toward alternatives requires transformative visioning. Belief in the attainability of alternative possibilities comes through acceptance of their viability, with Levkoe (2011) noting how alternative food initiatives "challenge the industrial food system by presenting an alternative political food narrative and by developing viable alternatives (p.689). In this sense, foodsheds are a starting point for action (Horst & Gaolach, 2015), a "conceptual vocabulary" (Kloppenburg et al., 1996, p. 36) that ties affinities together. By providing a *for* to orient ourselves towards, scope changes to generative or affirmative, rather than just reacting *against* the harms of the industrial food system.

Embodied engagements with place enable hope by grounding imagination in the places that nourish (Davis et al., 2019; Freire, 1997). Nguyen et al. (2016) ground watershed approaches in coupled social-ecological watershed systems in the concept of 'heart-ware' as collective organizing through affinities, understood as "community-based shared values and sense of identity and belonging" (p.318). For Freire (1997), this comes from a grounding in the home, as he notes, "my homeland holds my dream of freedom" (p.10). In this sense, the home can be understood as a rooted imaginary, or positive abstraction – a set of relationships mapped over places that can instill hope, love, and a desire to act. Relationships and embodied engagement resists abstractions, with Bawaka Country et al. (2016) describing the act of engaging with sand as a means to attune to knowledge held by the land, noting that "embodied engagement fosters knowing – specifically, a form of knowing that is based on a recognition (perhaps conceptual, perhaps sensory) of more-than-human agency" (p. 463). This physical movement enables conceptual understanding of invisibilized forms of knowledge.

2.5.2 The Creation and Understanding of Alternatives

Dominant capitalist and settler-colonial worldviews are rooted in positivism, rationalism, and reductionism (Rose, 2021, p. 947) and conceive of human social worlds as organized around human-constructed scales and imaginaries divorced from land- and water-based contexts (Borrows, 1997; Daigle, 2019; Moore, 2017a). These narratives restrict action and reaction to the scales of the nation-state or accepted community through individualizing stories of singular economic and civic realities. As Hunt (2014b)

notes, “rather than speaking of a bend in the river as connected to a particular ancestor or story, that place where land meets water became merely one part of the larger whole of Canadian lands opened up for ownership, exploration and settlement.” (p. 74). This extends to food sovereignty, with Daigle (2019) problematizing state-centred discourses that approach food sovereignty within nation-state boundaries as discounting the ongoing enactment of multiple sovereignties lived “according to a relational politics that is based on kinship relations and interdependent ecologies that expand beyond these boundaries,” (p. 300), which Woelfle-Erskine (2015) extends to multispecies food sovereignty.

As capitalist narratives have been, and are, *made* by human labour, they require human labour to *unmake* them (Büscher, 2022, p. 60). Freire (1997) resists the fatalistic acceptance of oppressive imaginaries, noting that humans are conditioned not determined (p.7), and that justice-oriented futures will only arrive if we tell their stories as we build them (p.11). Kelley (2002) speaks to the necessity of reframing and reorienting by asking us to think like poets – “to envision and make visible a new society, a peaceful, cooperative, loving world without poverty and oppression, limited only by our imaginations” (p.196). Affinities connect networks through shared praxes, visions, and grounded experiences, rather than through proximity or the intangibility of nationalism. Bioregional approaches can be understood as affinity tactics –they decrease the power of existing scalar constructions by divesting from them while reorienting toward alternative, ecologically-grounded scales (Larsen & Johnson, 2012). These practices, and foodsheds themselves, are rhizomatic, or Oceanic – connecting diverse goals and members in dynamic systems with no hierarchical point of origin, yet place-based in their diversity (Hayes et al., 2014, pp. 38, 41; Te Punga Somerville, 2017).

Ferreyra et al. (2008) situate integrated water resource management as an approach where “local actors belonging to different “communities of interest” are subsumed into geographically bounded watershed “communities of place”,” (p. 306) understanding effective ecological management as coming through a grounding in deep relationships with place. This conception of place-based governance and politics requires an approach to space and place that is fluid and flexible with overlapping sovereignties and jurisdictions. This highlights the importance of movement, both physical and conceptual, as ways to resist the immobility or calcification of dominant narratives (Fanon, 1952; Simpson, 2017). However, as Coulthard (2014) demonstrates, targeted restriction of movement can also assist in transcending dominant narratives. Speaking of the importance of direct action, he notes that blockades “are the affirmative *enactment* of another modality of being, a different way of relating to and with the world” (p.169). This shift from reactive to generative and affirmative is key – rather than solely responding to harm, we need to create alternatives and bring them into being. As Simpson (2017) instructs: “we must not just ask what is the alternative: we need to do the alternatives over and over until we get it right” (p. 227).

2.5.3 Ecologically Grounded Alternatives

Despite the power inherent in dominant stories, “the production of dominance is not inevitable,” and space must – and can – be made for counter-narratives (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015, p. 102). Gislason et al. (2018) describe the potential for storytelling grounded in ecologically meaningful places such as watersheds to “recentre marginalized narratives,”

(p. 193) refusing the restrictions placed on imagination by singular imaginaries. Sheikh et al. (2023) contrast linear imaginaries grounded in growth-driven narratives with spiral imaginaries rooted in bioregional narratives, noting bioregional approaches can result in governance that values the ecological contexts and communities of place (p. 648). Through this, the authors call for multispecies approaches to biodiversity conservation in place (ibid., p.651). Simpson (2017) explicitly notes that "if we accept colonial permanence, then our rebellion can only take place within settler colonial thought and reality" (p. 153). Watersheds, as social-ecological settings nested within ecological scales, offer alternative settings through which to refuse the permanence of colonial structures through social-ecological embeddedness (Parkes et al., 2010, p. 696).

Hayes et al. (2014) describe myths as fundamentally place-based – *emplaced* – where knowledge and story "emerge from within a particular geography, while creating the place as it could be" (p. 42). Myths, in this sense, carry the potential to create alternative imaginaries that help to construct the worlds we want to see. As they describe: "it is the potential to generate new mythologies that offer the promise of a world that is abundant, just, and connected" (ibid.), mirrored in Kelley's (2002) understanding of Sun Ra's vision of alter/destiny, where creating new myths generates "the power to redirect our future" (p. 31). Myths, as place-based and aspirational imaginaries, have the potential to reconnect and re-embed stories and actions in the places and contexts from which they stem, resisting the separation of dominant imaginaries.

Watersheds and foodsheds are ecologically grounded imaginaries; by grounding in landscapes rather than political or health jurisdictions, they resituate health within intimate contexts, increasing the participatory potential of community-oriented wellness

(Bunch et al., 2011; Gislason et al., 2018). The appeal of the foodshed as a term is connected in part to its relationship to the watershed, with Kloppenburg et al. (1996, p.34) noting:

> The replacement of "water" with "food" does something very important: it connects the cultural ("food") to the natural ("…shed"). The term "foodshed" thus becomes a unifying and organizing metaphor for conceptual development that starts from a premise of the unity of place and people, of nature and society.

This connection between foodsheds and watersheds is important to highlight. Morrison et al. (2012, p.31) note that food security policy must consider the nexus of food, watersheds, and health to create accessible and holistic social-ecological policy. Metaphors of the water cycle and the flow of water through a watershed highlight the interconnectivity of places, people, and justice-seeking movements. As noted by Jordan & Benson (2015), the negative impacts resulting from agricultural runoff in watersheds are not only felt locally but stretch from "headwaters to estuaries and coastal waters" (p. 2). This flow of water and pollution calls for an extension of solidarity through place as a means to transcend the "place-based militant particularism" described by Kurtz (2003, p. 892), highlighting the notion that solidarity cannot end at the border of the local – otherwise put, "no community's solution should become another community's problem" (ibid., p. 891).

Gibson-Graham (2006), in discussing potentials for new political imaginaries, note that "reframing can create the fertile ontological ground for a politics of possibility, opening the field from which the unexpected can emerge, while increasing our space of decision and room to move as political subjects" (p. xxx). Coming to understand the

watershed as a metaphor or way of being teaches an expansive approach to community and justice, as described by Hayes et al. (2014, p. 45):

> "Being" the river – and over time, a watershed – teaches us to first view things whole and act accordingly, despite what may not be easily understood in the moment. It does not allow me to cut myself, or anything, or anyone, out. The river teaches ways to be response/able over merely re/acting to/with a broken up, reductive, disposable, and compartmentalized world. Creating an ability to respond is an emerging life-sustaining worldview.

This ability to respond requires a reframing, reorienting, away from capitalocentric discourses and towards imaginaries of plural and diverse possibility. Nguyen et al. (2016) posit an ecological reframing through watersheds, suggesting inland fisheries be managed as social-ecological watershed systems, noting that "while inland fishes do not recognize socio-political jurisdictions, they do respect watershed boundaries" (p.313). As they note, grounding in ecological scales opens up possibilities to move forward through multispecies planning processes.

2.6 Literature Review Summary

'Imaginaries' describe how stories form the basis of collective realities and spatial understandings. Dominant discourses are often isolationist and disconnected, partially resulting from the ongoing impacts of colonialism and capitalism on the landscape and social worlds contained within it. Despite the restrictions caused by these stories, there is power in reframing and telling stories that highlight the socio-sedimentary layers of place and the ethics of care preserved within said layers.

‘Place-based Engagements’ describe various understandings of place, largely framing it as the symbolic and social relationships held with space(s). Dominant imaginaries have radically altered relations with place, including the impact of colonial and extractive place names that desubjectify the ecological community and pre-existing relationships with place. Foodsheds, as place-based approaches to food systems, connect human society to the ecological realities of place and highlight the importance of approaching food systems transformation through intimate and embodied engagements with place. In understanding scale as relation rather than hierarchy, the home is highlighted as a key entry point to food systems change, as rooting in meaningful places can assist in shifting perceptions around the attainability of systems change.

‘Relational Ecologies’ highlights the co-constitution and interdependence of humans, multispecies beings, and the lands and waters on which we live. Situating humans as part of ecologies highlights the importance of reciprocal responsibilities to place and our ecologies, including multispecies approaches to ecological co-management. Food connects humans to place through its deep connections to land, water, and communities. This foregrounds the importance of these relationships to reorient towards hope and the attainability of change.

‘Affinity Politics’ are place-based approaches to generating networks and political engagement that are non-hierarchical, understood through metaphors of rhizomes or oceans. These approaches further highlight the role of imagination in contributing to attainability of change and resisting fatalism through the potential of stories to shift focus towards food sovereignty beyond the bounds of the state or various geographies of exclusion. Bioregions, the flow of water, and understanding myths as place-based

imaginaries are highlighted as conceptual tactics to change approaches to food system (and other) transformation.

This project focuses on the need for place- and context-specific stories and engagements to structure pathways forward. Rather than focusing on the gaps in the literature, I hope to build on – and rethink – the diverse and varied forms of knowledge that are already out there, while acknowledging that there are countless possible inroads to this topic that I have not encountered. This research builds on the existing literature in imaginaries, place-based engagements, relational ecologies, and affinities by putting them in conversation with each other while grounding them in ecological scales and language. Utilizing a social-ecological scale instead of the boundaries of settler-states is essential both in theory and methodology, as it investigates the potential of justice grounded in relationships across an ecological community not bound to colonial borders. Finally, the impact of relationships on fostering social-ecological justice represents a gap that has the potential to contribute to meaningful change across the watershed and within academic literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

3.1 Situating in place

Situating in place involves understanding the specific contexts and needs of the topic at hand. Knowledge is generated in relationship to place and its layered contexts and realities, meaning researchers must be attentive to the intersecting impacts of settler-colonialism, capitalism, and personal positionality and biases on the places from which they write (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; de Leeuw & Hunt, 2018; Gibson-Graham, 2006). Before describing the methodologies and methods that structured this research, it is important to attend to the above. This section describes my personal positionality, the methodological context underpinning the framing of the research, and a description of the research settings.

3.1.1 Positionality

I come to this research as a settler and treaty partner born of Slovak, French, and English descent, born and raised on the north shore of Gitchigami, Lake Superior, in Robinson-Superior treaty lands. Growing up on the shores of Lake Superior has given me a deeply rooted attachment to place, deepening my desire to contribute to social and ecological justice throughout the watershed and beyond. I spent the better part of the last decade on unceded xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (*Musqueam*) land engaged in food justice networks,

community building, and deep (un)learning about my roles and responsibilities as a settler pursuing justice on Indigenous lands. I returned to the Superior watershed to use the skills I have to engage with the people and places that I call home. As a settler researcher pursuing food and climate justice on Indigenous lands, I take up Hunt's (2022) call to unsettle climate action by pursuing research close to home and aiming to support Indigenous scholars and communities in the work they are already doing, both through my thesis and beyond (p. 136). The discursive category of settler is too often called upon without critical intention to pursue settler innocence, and I recognize that it is simply a starting point as I commit to actively recognize my privilege and work to "dismantle the unjust systems that keep [me] in that privileged space" (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 258). I come to this research with a deep understanding of the importance of food for well-being and a passion for using food to build socially and environmentally resilient communities.

This research is, ultimately, rooted in a love of home, and an expansive understanding of home. I have deeply personal, intimate, and embodied connections to this topic. Born and raised on the shores of Lake Superior, I shared the deep reverence and attachment to the Lake felt by many of my participants and others I met throughout this experience. In Thunder Bay, my hometown, our drinking water comes directly from Lake Superior. As I learned at a young age, the self is 60-70% water. As our drinking water comes directly from Superior, I myself am mostly Lake Superior. What happens to the watershed happens to me, and what the lake experiences will also be felt by all places and beings who encounter the water as it flows through its cycle. This research has allowed me to root deeper into the lands and water that nourish me, while flowing through places and understanding interconnected impacts.

3.1.2 Foodshed Analysis

Foodsheds are an approach to place-based food systems that understand food as social and cultural portals to the lands and water(sheds) from which it grows (Kloppenburg et al., 1996). Foodsheds can be analysed spatially, analytically, or through their potential to generate action (Horst & Gaolach, 2015). Most modern foodshed studies focus on the spatial dimension, assessing the status of regional food supply chains and the agricultural space required to supply urban centres (Schreiber et al., 2020; Vicente-Vicente et al., 2021). Of these, the majority employ quantitative approaches to determine current and potential pathways for food supply chain (re)localization (Horst & Gaolach, 2015; Schreiber et al., 2020; Vicente-Vicente et al., 2021) and propose specific boundaries within which lays the foodshed of a particular urban centre, such as Vicente-Vicente et al. (2021)'s study of foodsheds in Vienna and Bristol. Despite acknowledging that foodsheds could be understood as spatially interchangeable with bioregions, the authors primarily employed existing administrative and political boundaries as the borders of the foodsheds (ibid., pp.409, 404).

Stark et al.'s (2009) foodshed assessment of the western Lake Superior region is the closest to utilizing a bioregional or watershed scale, yet falls short by focusing exclusively on Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. This project, along with the Minnesota Foodshed initiative through the Minnesota Farmers Union, both seek to support agricultural capacity and infrastructure throughout the southwestern shores of Lake Superior through network generation, relationship building and agricultural capacity and infrastructure (Minnesota Farmers Union, n.d.; Stark et al., 2009; Syring, 2012). Despite the important work of building and maintaining resilient regional supply chains,

the restriction to political and adminsitrative jurisdictions and their groundings in spatial and analytic rather than action-oriented and aspirational approaches limits their relevance in the context of this study. Resituating foodsheds within (and throughout) watersheds opens up alternative pathways to reenvision food system transformation.

Beyond simply analysing the flow of food, foodsheds can be understood as a "framework for envisioning alternative food systems" (Peters et al., 2008, pp. 1-2) and approaches to foodshed analysis will be as variable as the foodsheds themselves (Kloppenburg et al., 1996, p. 40). Aspirational and action-oriented foodshed analysis calls for a re-establishing of community relationships through expansive approaches to social and ecological justice (Kloppenburg et al. 1996, p.34; Peters et al., 2008). It does so by assessing the transition to justice-oriented food systems on five emergent principles: (1) moral economy, (2) commensal community, (3) self-protection, secession, and succession, (4) proximity, and (5) nature as measure (Kloppenburg et al., 1996, pp.36-39). As these five principles were positioned as key to the enactment of alternative food systems, they structured the initial interview guide and theme development. The foodshed concept offers a "conceptual vocabulary" through which to (re)establish place-based connections, commensal communities, and social and ecological justice (Ibid., p.34). Foodsheds are not isolated entities, rather socio-geographic spaces grounded in the natural boundaries of particular places (Ibid., p.38). In this view, foodsheds are bioregional approaches to food sovereignty, not simply geographic zones mapping flows of food resources.

Despite the existence of many foodshed studies and analyses since the mid 1990s, very few, if any, have undertaken an aspirational or action-oriented framework. As a

result, this study does not look at potential agricultural capacity, or food supply flows. My approach to foodshed analysis follows Kloppenburg et al.'s (1996) aspirational and action-oriented approach and is more linked to the 'shed' than it is to the 'food' in that it foregrounds fluid understandings of place and relationships over assessing existing and potential food supply chains. I am interested in bringing foodsheds 'home' – to the personal connections to the ecological home we share.

In this research, I looked at the potential for justice-oriented change through how individuals engaged in place-based food justice work envisioned alternative food systems around the watershed. This understanding of a foodshed analysis is key to my understanding of the study context and approach to the research, including study design and interview guides. The foodshed concept has been critiqued for its fetishization of the local, or its failure to define the scale and scope of localization (Horst & Gaolach, 2015; Peters et al., 2008). Rather than specifying a determined boundary for local foods within the Lake Superior watershed, or approaches to relocalizing the watershed food system, re-grounding foodsheds in watersheds is an attempt to (re)think the local by asking how the flow of water through watersheds impacts or challenges our conceptions of what local is and could be, and how we approach the 'relocalization' of food systems in the pursuit of justice.

3.1.3 Watershed Framing

Watersheds, otherwise known as catchments or basins, are areas between heights of land to which all water flows and made up of both land and water (Bunch et al. 2011; Parkes et al., 2008). Beyond their technical definition, watersheds are places of connection, a social and ecological concept that connects both people and ecosystems (Bunch et al., 2011; Morrison et al., 2012; Parkes et al., 2010). If health, social, and climate justice cannot be separated, the wellbeing of the watershed cannot be separated from the wellbeing of the ecological community that lives and eats there (Bunch et al., 2011; Morrison et al., 2012). Further, as alternatives to the grid-like Cartesian boundaries used for political and health jurisdictions (Gislason et al., 2018, p.192), watershed framings offer bioregional approaches to justice-oriented change, rather than ones confined within settler-colonial boundaries. This study uses the watershed as a case setting, meaning I focus on the relationships people hold to place rather than the biological connections between agricultural capacity and watersheds as ecological zones.

Watersheds resituate health within intimate contexts by foregrounding the implications of water and watershed health for both human and ecological wellbeing (Bunch et al., 2011; Gislason et al., 2018; Parkes et al., 2008). As watersheds are rooted in ecological scales rather than human-constructed and enforced ones, they highlight the importance and potential of grounding in specific places and contexts, allowing for a diversity of pathways forward. In this sense, the watershed is a social and ecological aspiration, not solely a drainage basin.

Despite interviews occurring in multiple locations around the lake, the watershed is foregrounded as setting over the specific communities. The choice to ground this research explicitly on a watershed level instead of at the community level was threefold:

Practical: I, the researcher, live in Thunder Bay Ontario on the shores of Lake Superior. My proximity to the watershed, and my connection to the Lake Superior Living Labs Network (LSLLN)[3], granted me access to a network of community members across the watershed to sample from for the purpose of conducting research. This is not only practical but personal – van Manen (1997) describes research as a "caring act" through which we seek to learn about the nature of our loved ones (p.5). As I note above, I include the watershed in my understanding of loved ones.

Methodological: Foregrounding ecological spaces avoids reproducing the 'inevitability' of colonialism and colonial boundaries in academic research (de Leeuw & Hunt, 2018, p. 9). Understanding the watershed as a scale in and of itself, separate from human-constructed borders and boundaries, helps to facilitate a transition away from separation to understandings of connecting 'lake neighbours' across transboundary regions, as discussed in Chapter 4, the findings.

Metaphorical: The flow of the water cycle, and water through a watershed more broadly, is a metaphorical connection to the focus on fluidity and interconnection required for this understanding of foodsheds. The use of an ecological scale further focuses on the need to incorporate ecological metaphors to assist in divesting from colonial and capitalist language and imaginaries. Watersheds are much more than metaphors, intimately

[3] The LSLLN is a network of academic and community partners collaborating on place-based projects addressing social and ecological justice across the Lake Superior watershed. See www.livinglabsnetwork.org

connected to place-based food systems in diverse and important ways. However, as my participants foregrounded this metaphorical connection through our conversations, that is my focus here.

3.1.4 Lake Superior Watershed

This project focuses on the watershed as *place* (emotional and symbolic attachment to space) rather than *space* itself (physical environments). As a result, this case summary focuses on the symbolic connections to the watershed necessary to situate my findings rather than detailing the current and potential food landscape of the Lake Superior watershed.

Lake Superior is the world's largest lake by surface area, containing 12 percent of the world's surface fresh water, yet has a relatively small watershed compared to its size (Matsumoto et al., 2019; ECCC & USEPA, 2022). Superior has a diverse food web dominated by native and self-sustaining species and is the only one of the five Laurentian Great Lakes considered to be in 'good' environmental condition; yet its status as pristine is only relative to the poorer quality of the other lakes (Matsumoto et al., 2019). Despite producing the "greatest lake-effect snows on earth" (ECCC & USEPA, 2022, p. 5), Lake Superior is warming at a considerable rate, which is impacting the availability of many traditional forest and freshwater foods (Huff & Thomas, 2014). Increasing pollutants from extractive industries and the warming of the lake are all reducing the availability of many traditional forest and freshwater foods, including moose, wild rice, and many forageables.

In speaking of the 'Pacific' Ocean, Alice Te Punga Somerville (2017) noted "Oceans cannot be named, and yet we name them" (p. 30). Waterways cannot name themselves, they are labelled by humans, and these choices of language not only gesture, but produce, realities about waters and lands (ibid., p.25). Superior, as a beloved 'inland ocean,' similarly has as many names as there have been communities who have called the watershed home. Pre-colonization, the watershed was referred to as Gichigami by the Anishinaabe, and was understood as a whole, not a sum of its parts (ECCC & USEPA, 2022, p. 7):

> *Gichigami* and its connected lakes, rivers and streams are not simply the sum of their constituent parts, or the property of a state, nation, or person. Instead, they are integral parts of the web of life that supports the continuation of *Anishinaabe* ways of life and provides life-giving benefits to all who now call the region home.

The mapping of colonial boundaries bisected the waterways while restricting movement across imagined and enforced boundaries, denigrating Indigenous worldviews, restricting Indigenous spaces and mobility to small pockets of land, and separating Gichigami into individually, often partially, managed waterways. For the Anishinaabe, the watershed was important as the site where Manoomin – *wild rice /* "the food that grows on the water" – was found, importantly connecting the regional food system with the watershed (ibid). There are five treaties between Indigenous Nations and the colonial states around the Lake Superior watershed, many of which use the heights of land around the watershed as treaty boundaries, seen in Figure 3.1 on the following page:

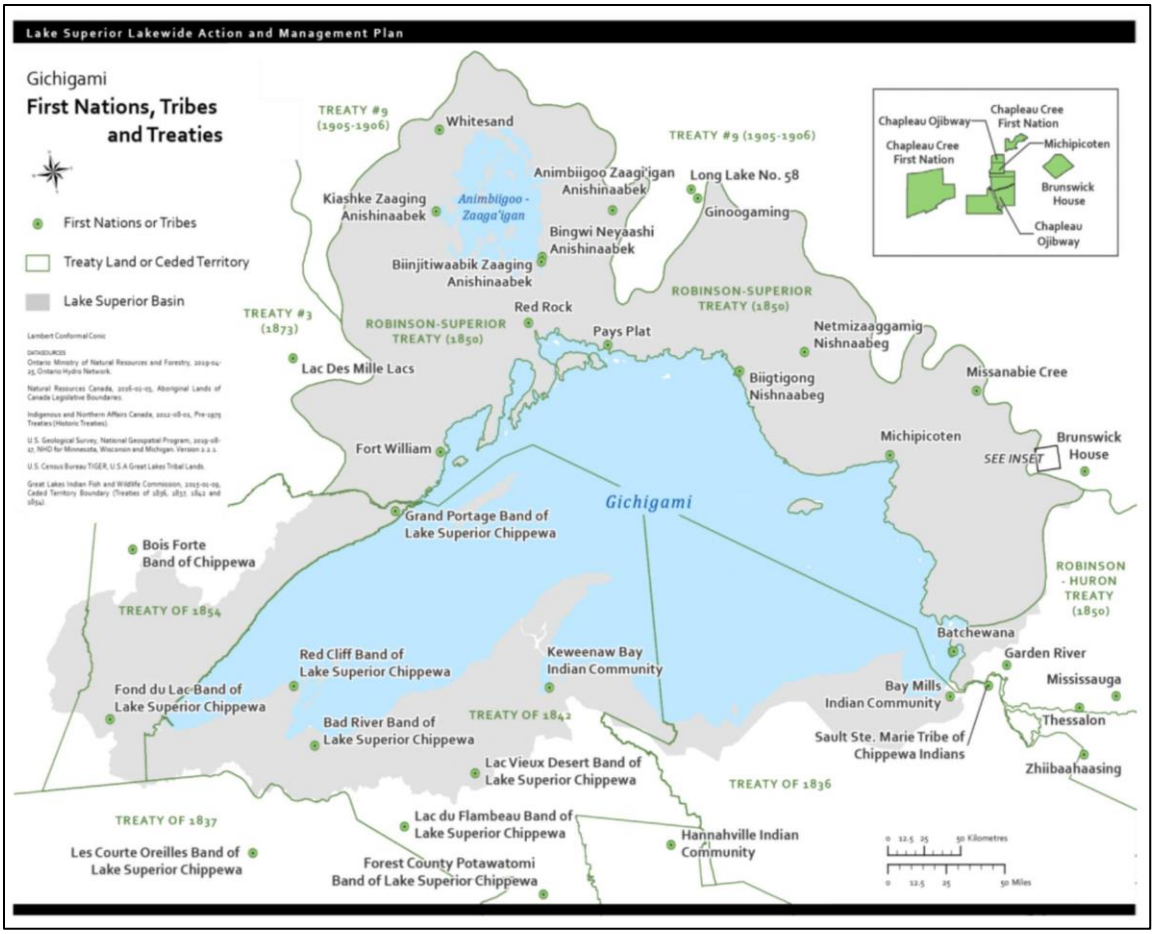

Figure 3.1: Gichigami Treaty Map
Source: ECCC& USEPA, 2022, p.6

Much of the Lake Superior watershed was colonially claimed through resource extraction. Galway (2019) describes the "history, landscape, and culture of Thunder Bay [as] largely shaped by resource booms," (p.70) which can be further applied to communities around the watershed (Hanson, 2016). Mining has been present in the watershed since the mid 1840s, and there are still ongoing and newly proposed mining operations to this day (ECCC & USEPA, 2022, p. 7). As a result, many places around the watershed are named after what was extracted from it.

3.2 Methodology

The methodological underpinnings of this research not only establish the framework through which I undertook the data collection and analysis phases, but also contextualize my understandings of knowledge generation and validity. Social constructivism, phenomenology, and radical food geographies all form the basis of my understanding of knowledge as situated, lived, and embodied, and contextualize my choice to ground the research in mobile and *in situ* methods.

3.2.1 Social Constructivism

This research employed critical and social constructivist approaches to qualitative research. Social constructivism understands "knowledge and practice as socially situated and mediated by power relations" (Eakin, 2015, p. 108), and resists the idea of an 'objective truth' in favour of knowledge that is place, position, and context dependent (Johnson, 2012). By relying on participants' views and lived experiences as sources of knowledge, it is possible to collectively identify needs, assets, and community-generated solutions (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 24). As knowledge is understood to stem from lived experience and place, the researcher has a responsibility to all those participating in the research (de Leeuw & Hunt, 2018; Larsen & Johnson, 2012; van Manen, 1997), which must extend to place and the broader ecological community (Bawaka Country, et al., 2016). For this reason, the research employed "relational accountability," where the researcher shares and receives feedback on the research from the community partners and

participants and seeks to safeguard the "self-determination and autonomy" of participants along with their capacity to "make choices regarding their involvement, anonymity, and participation" (Carlson, 2016, pp. 11, 7). This involved ensuring participants had the ability to amend their transcripts to ensure they are properly represented and will involve sharing the research back with the participants once it is completed through the thesis and a presentation. Further examples of reciprocity in the research process are discussed below in section 3.2.4, however, these are just the first steps in ongoing processes of accountability and relationship building.

3.2.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of how people experience a phenomenon based on their individual and collective lived experience (van Manen, 1997). This approach understands the researcher as connected to the topic and highlights the importance of reflecting on one's own biases and reasons for coming to this research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenology is, as van Manen (1997) describes, a "poetizing project" (p. 13) – rather than seeking a defined and universally applicable conclusion, phenomenological projects speak to place- and context- specific lived experience through particular relationships (Groenewald, 2004, p. 50).

This project was a phenomenological study investigating the role of place-attachment and community on social-ecological justice utilizing the Lake Superior watershed as the case region and the food-based relationships in the watershed as context. Speaking of the relationships that participants hold with the multispecies ecologies they

live amongst can produce stories highlighting the interconnections between and progress towards social and ecological justice in place. As described by Larsen & Johnson (2012) "the phenomenology of place – the quality of existence as placed – is often taken for granted and not rendered explicit" (p. 636). Since the phenomenon in question influences the methods and methodologies chosen (Groenewald, 2004, p. 45), this study required a praxis connecting places, relationships, and the justice-seeking movements that grow from them (Hammelman et al., 2020, p. 219; Larsen & Johnson, 2012; Bawaka Country et al., 2016). In this case, this included both radical food geographies and mobile and *in situ* methods, an approach that spans both methodology and method to bring place into the research experience as more than a desubjectified setting to be managed.

3.2.3 Radical Food Geographies

Radical food geographies are grounded explicitly in place, utilizing a geographic lens to approach "the role of place and place-based networks in both constructing food systems and relationships with food, but also in resisting injustices in those systems" (Hammelman et al., 2020, p. 220). This is a critical approach to food systems change that focuses on moving beyond simply understanding historical and structural issues toward transforming them (Levkoe et al., 2020, p. 295). Radical food geographies employ a relational approach that considers the unequal and changing production of relationships between people, multispecies beings and lands and waters, and "insists that action is grounded in relationships forged over time" (Hammelman et al., 2020, p. 219). This attention to relationship requires questioning power dynamics in knowledge

dissemination and the privileging of Euro-western approaches to knowledge through foregrounding the origins of knowledge, ensuring it is properly attributed, and avoiding appropriating Indigenous or place-specific knowledges (ibid). In the context of this research, radical food geographies underpinned the construction of the interview guide – while understanding historical and ongoing structures is key, this project is an attempt to radically reimagine food geographies and futures. As noted above, to move beyond understanding issues toward transforming them.

3.2.4 Mobile and in situ methods

This research employed a place-based methodology that sought to support an ethic of care for the ecological community, and place-based approaches to justice and wellbeing (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 828; Foley et al., 2020, p. 515). This was done using mobile and *in situ* methods: participants were asked to identify specific places and methods of mobility they felt best reflected their encounters with food and community in the Lake Superior watershed and interview data was collected as researcher and participants "experience and move through settings that form the context of the research question together" (Foley et al., 2020, p. 515). For this specific project, it also involved asking participants to reflect on their relationships with place as a community member or teacher. Locations and methods of mobility reflected preference, safety, and accessibility for both participants and researcher. The use of *in situ* methods brings the broader ecological community into the research experience as a third participant, "co-constituting (rather than necessarily disrupting) the research encounter" through visual, physical,

auditory, and affective encounters, generating knowledge at the intersections of health and wellbeing in and through place (ibid., p. 517). This place-based approach to research and data collection was an attempt to ensure that the content was grounded in the context. Summaries of each interview location and activity are in section 3.3.4.

In practice, the use of mobile and *in situ* methods allowed for a deeper relationship between participants and researcher, connection to place and food communities, and understandings of connections and the local environments. As a result, these methods increased the impact of the interview questions and the connection between theory and practice for the interviews. The impact of reciprocity on the interviews cannot be understated. By assisting participants with their chores, such as weeding with Julie and seed cleaning with Evalisa, I was able to 'give back' to the participants who were in the process of sharing their knowledge with me. This supports what Sbicca (2015) describes as the important role of sweat equity in constructing the researcher as ally. Providing labour in exchange for knowledge has the double dividend of increasing comfort and conviviality between researcher and participant. Further, two participants, Evalisa and Karena, shared gifts with me in return – Evalisa sending me home with a box full of produce she grew, and Karena gifting me a packet of milkweed seeds she had saved from the year before.

Despite the successes, this method also had challenges. Overall, the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic led to not as much interaction as otherwise intended, as desires to stay moderately distanced restricted choices of locations and actions. Choice of activities were also impacted by the heat, resulting in many last-minute changes to prioritise shade and shelter over active movement. Further, as we were engaged in a

variety of embodied practices, it was difficult, if not inappropriate, to have my field notebook out at the same time as I was weeding or eating. As I did not have pre-existing relationships with the participants, and as these are not conventional approaches to interviews, I feel that there may have been a disconnect between the intended application of the methods and participants' understandings or availability to participate in them.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Recruitment

Recruitment for this project was done through a mix of targeted and snowball sampling of individuals engaged in land- and water-based food initiatives, particularly ones with a focus on community support and justice. My goal was to conduct six to ten key informant interviews across the Lake Superior watershed, and in total I conducted eight. The first round of participants were identified through targeted sampling of the Lake Superior Living Labs Network (LSLLN) membership in coordination with the LSLLN Steering Committee. The LSLLN is a network connecting academics and community groups around the Lake Superior watershed to collaborate on initiatives at the intersection of just sustainabilities and social-ecological health and wellbeing (see Figure 3.2). The Steering Committee is composed of individuals from each hub.

To begin, I met with the LSLLN hub leads for three of the four hubs, and collected a list of twenty-one organizations and individuals that they knew of doing work related to my topic.

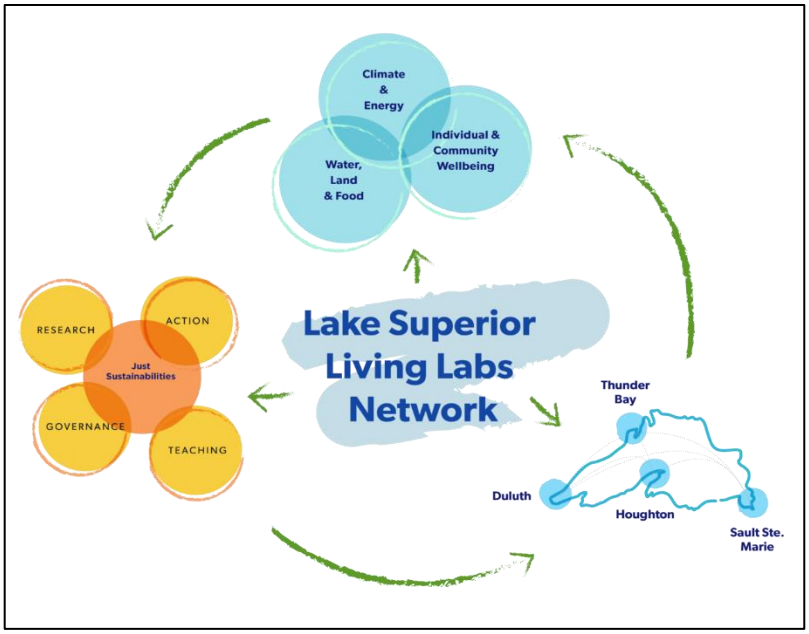

Figure 3.2: Lake Superior Living Labs Network
Source: (Lake Superior Living Labs Network, n.d.)

As this work centres relationship building, working with existing network relationships allowed for an easier introduction to the topic, and ensured that I was able to hear about organizations and initiatives that did not have online presences. I then contacted those organizations and individuals directly for interviews using the recruitment text in Appendix A and continued by snowball sampling from their networks as several participants forwarded my recruitment message through their networks. Additional participants were identified based on my own research utilizing key words from my project description along with geographic identifiers around the watershed. In total, I directly contacted nearly 30 individuals and organizations. Descriptions of the recruitment process in each hub is detailed below:

Duluth: The hub lead connected me with four organizations, and I contacted two others directly for a total of six prospective participants. I scheduled two interviews and completed one. The cancelled interview in Duluth was with an urban Indigenous

organization, and the organizations I did not hear back from included youth- and BIPOC-led food organizations and Tribal Nations, representing a gap in the research.

Houghton: I reached out directly to seven organizations and individuals, three of whom were referred to me from the initial individuals I contacted. I scheduled four interviews and completed three. The cancelled interview was with an urban planner involved in food policy work, representing another gap.

Sault Ste. Marie: The hub lead connected me directly with one individual, and I reached out directly to four others for a total of five. I heard back from two, both of which were scheduled and completed. The organizations I did not hear back from included a soup kitchen and the farm that supplied them, representing an ongoing justice-oriented partnership that would have provided interesting insight to this topic.

Thunder Bay: I reached out directly to four individuals and heard back from two and completed both interviews. While I could have reached out to an additional two in Thunder Bay after my other interviews were cancelled, my data collection timeline was coming to an end and I had begun to note repeated themes in the interviews suggesting data saturation.

Despite the focus of this research being the importance of deepening relationships around the watershed and the importance of diverse, intersectional representation, enacting this in practice was complicated by challenges around capacity, lack of pre-existing relationships, and wariness around ‘well-intentioned’ outsiders coming in to extract knowledge from communities and individuals. As a result, despite there being many BIPOC organizations and initiatives across the watershed, this research spoke to

predominantly settler organizations and individuals. While I did reach out to many such organizations, in many cases I did not hear back. Participants that I did speak to brought up their relationships with some of these organizations, noting that while they do incredibly important work, they can be difficult to contact due to capacity concerns in their organizations. This speaks to the imbalance of support – financial, labour, generational, and otherwise – facing BIPOC organizations compared to white-led ones.

3.3.2 Participant Identification

Participants were given several options for how they wanted to be identified. This was explained when they received the information letter (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C), during their interview (Appendix D), and when they were sent their transcript for review. The options were:

1) *Full identification:* name, location, place of work, and any relevant demographic indicators they disclosed (age, gender, pronouns, racial identification, etc.)

2) *Partial identification:* participants' choice of including their personal information on any of the categories above and de-identifying all others.

3) *Fully de-identified:* no identifying factors from their interviews to be shared – I would either assign them a gender-neutral pseudonym or not include a name at all, and not reference their location, place of work, or any other details.

All participants consented to be fully identified, other than select quotes that were de-identified or not used upon request. Although the intention was for each interview to

include several demographic questions at the end, as the conversations progressed, it became evident that it was not always appropriate or necessary to ask for additional personal information. While most participants were forthcoming with their identification, some participants left certain details out. Despite this, all participants gave a detailed description of how they related to place, community, and the food systems they were involved in. Information that participants consented to share is included in section 3.3.4. All participants were offered a $50 CAD honorarium in exchange for their participation.

3.3.3 Data collection

Data collection occurred between July 12th, 2022, and September 15th, 2022. Aside from the Thunder Bay and Zoom-based interviews, all others took place while I drove around Lake Superior between July 12th and August 2nd, starting and ending in Thunder Bay. Two forms of data, key informant interviews and field notes, were collected throughout this process.

Key informant interviews: Data was collected through eight 45- to 60-minute *in situ* interviews with participants across the Lake Superior watershed. The guide used for these interviews is included in Appendix D, and asked participants about their relationships to place, community, ideas of justice, and visions of justice-oriented food futures. I also asked participants to describe the needs and assets that can be mobilized to pursue this transformation, along with their interpretations of interconnectedness throughout the watershed and beyond.

Reflective Field Notes: There were two forms of field notes taken: 1) interview reflections, and 2) self-reflection. The initial goal was to take detailed field notes after each interview, and, whenever possible, during the interview itself as a phenomenological exercise of bracketing out researcher beliefs and opinions from those expressed by the participants. As mentioned above, limited field notes were taken during the interviews. Reflective field notes were taken during the various stops I made throughout the drive around Lake Superior and were loosely structured around the four lifeworlds proposed by van Manen (1990) as an approach to phenomenological self-reflection (Pool, 2018, p. 248):

1) *Corporeality:* physical responses and embodied sensations
2) *Spatiality:* emotional and spiritual reactions to place, space, and the environment
3) *Temporality:* when sensations and impressions occur and how descriptions change over time
4) *Relationality:* the characteristics of human connection during these bio-psycho-social-spiritual processes.

Two additional 'lifeworlds' (setting and action) were added to explicitly connect the reflections to the use of mobile and *in situ* methods. While lifeworld-based writing does not need to be divided into clear sections, I started my notes that way to facilitate reflection. These field notes allowed me to ground myself in the places and methodologies underpinning this research, serving as an embodied exercise connecting researcher to watershed (Dowling et al., 2017, p. 826). For both forms of field notes, a wide margin was left empty to facilitate reflective notes at later dates, which I added to as

I transcribed each interview and reflected on my experiences throughout the trip. These notes continued throughout the entire process, from data collection to writing, and informed the final themes and analysis of the data. An additional form of reflective field note involved me recording myself responding to my own interview questions at the beginning and end of the trip, allowing me to reflect on how I would respond to the questions myself and whether that changed throughout the experience of driving around the watershed. While these reflections were not used in the coding or analysis process, they helped me to bracket out my own views from those of the participants. Further, they proved instrumental in nurturing a deeper relationship and sense of place-attachment between myself and the watershed.

This trip also involved five nights of camping at various state and national parks around the watershed. Nights camping were typically after interviews, allowing me time to reflect on the content of the conversations in and around the water. As each campground was directly on the lake shore, I was able to spend time connecting with the various landscapes of the watershed while dwelling with the topic and research – dwelling both *on* and *with* place. Dwelling with, as described by Pool (2018), is a key component of self-reflection – a phenomenological technique referring to "extended engagement with the data while purposefully avoiding writing" (p. 249). Dwelling on and with place is key to self-reflection and immersion in a place-based phenomenological study. Van Manen (1997) noted that phenomenological questions must not only be "understood, but also "lived" by the researcher" (p. 44). The process of traveling around the watershed and interacting across all shores brought me as researcher deeper into the topic and immersed all reflection and research in the content and context of the research.

3.3.4 Participant and Interview Summaries

Place-based interviews are numbered in purple in Figure 3.3 and described below.

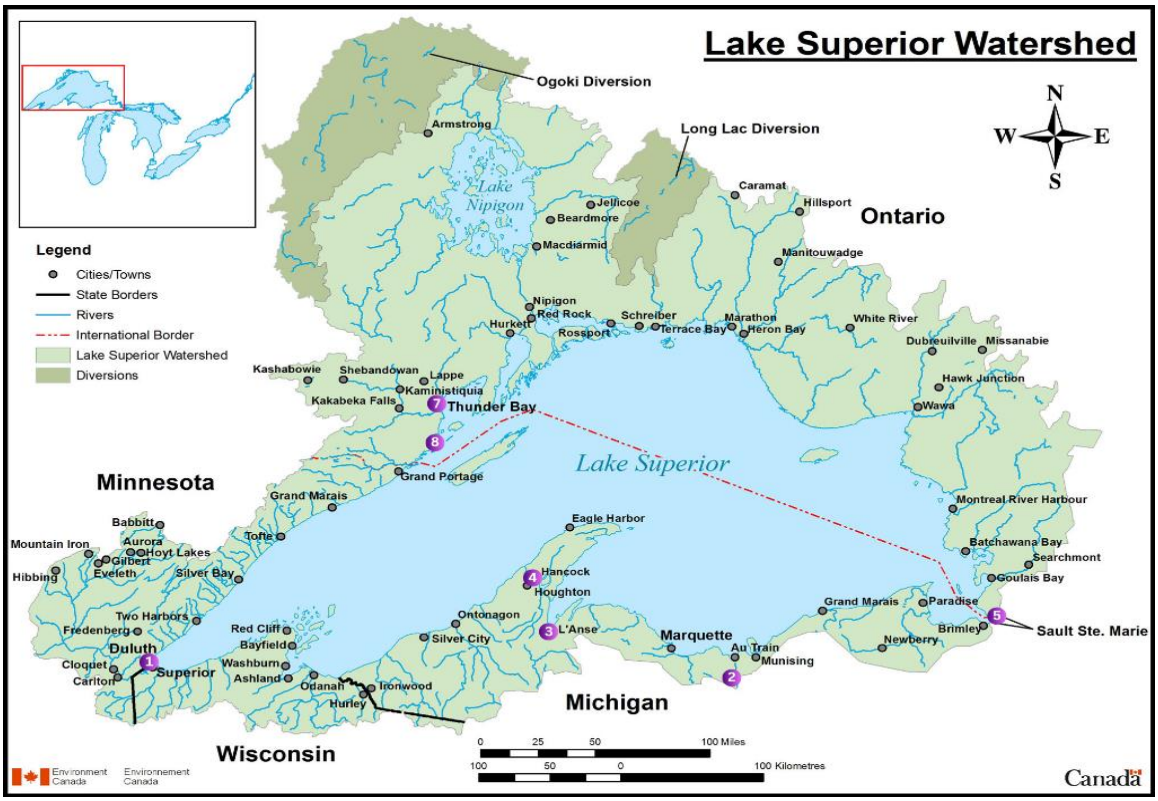

Figure 3.3: Lake Superior Interview Locations
Source: (Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, n.d.) – numbering my own.

Through the recruitment process there was more diversity of community identifiers rather than of personal identifiers, and not all participants offered detailed demographic information making it difficult to determine personal diversity. Further, some of the participants who cancelled interviews had personal identifiers that, after cancellation, represented a gap in participant diversity, as discussed above in section 3.3.1. The summaries below include all personal information that participants consented to share.

1. ***Julie Allen – Duluth, MN:***

Julie is a white settler woman in her mid-30s living near Duluth, Minnesota. She works as the chapter coordinator of the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association, a non-profit focused on creating sustainable food systems in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Originally from Chicago, she moved to Duluth for love – of both her partner and the landscape. Our interview took place on July 13, 2022, at "Amariah's Farm," with Julie, her two-year-old Amariah, and their dog Luba. The interview was conducted while touring the gardens, weeding throughout the various rows, and eating berries and freshly harvested greens. Julie holds knowledge as a local farmer herself, but also as an individual actively involved in creating and supporting resilient community networks through farmer-to-farmer education and reciprocity initiatives between the people, plants, animals, lands, and waters involved in the regional food system.

2. ***Abbey Palmer – Chatham, MI:***

At the time of our interview, Abbey worked for Michigan State University Extension as a Community Food Systems Educator in the village of Chatham, Michigan. Through this position, Abbey led place-based educational initiatives for youth and educators to connect them to regional agriculture, interactions with local watersheds, and seed system resilience. She has since returned to academia to complete her PhD in agricultural education. Our interview took place July 17, 2022, at Michigan State University's Upper Peninsula Research Extension Centre North Farm, a Land Grant University located in Chatham. Our interview was intended to happen in her seed saving garden, but due to the heat we spent our conversation under the shade of Abbey's

favourite 150-year-old maple tree near the banks of the Slapneck creek, eating lunch while listening to the Kestrels and other birds that call the tree home.

3. The Debweyendan Indigenous Gardens (Karena Schmidt) – L'Anse, MI:

The Debweyendan Indigenous Gardens, known as the 'DIGs', is a community garden located in L'Anse, Michigan run by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. Debweyendan in Ojibwe means "*believe in it*," and the DIGs believe in the power of food sovereignty and are actively working towards a food sovereign future for their community and beyond (Gagnon et al., 2020). I spoke with Karena Schmidt, a caretaker of the DIGs, who works as an ecologist for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's Natural Resources Department. Karena explicitly wanted her contributions to be overshadowed by those of the DIGs, noting that she is but a representative of the DIGs, and the gardens are the being she speaks for. This form of identification highlights a political imperative to foreground place as key contributor to knowledge and community generation. While seemingly unconventional, this is not unheard of in academic literature. This choice mirrors Bawaka Collectives' (2016) foregrounding of place as lead author for their publications, noting "it is not only possible but an ethical imperative to include place/space as lead author […] We cannot definitely separate the contributions of the humans from the contributions of Bawaka Country" (p. 456). For this reason, the DIGs are highlighted as contributor here before Karena. Our interview took place July 18, 2022, inside the DIG's learning building to take shelter from the heat, drinking raspberry and nettle tea harvested from the gardens. After the interview, Karena and I toured the gardens and the newly built fish and wild meat processing facility.

4. ***Lauren Jescovitch – Hancock, MI:***

Lauren is an avid recreational fisherperson working as an Extension Educator with Michigan State University Extension and Michigan Sea Grant in the Houghton/Hancock area of Michigan. She has a PhD in fisheries and aquaculture and works across the Great Lakes to support local and tribal fisherfolk, including recreational, commercial, and farming, and to facilitate connections between researchers, industry, and regional fisheries. Our interview took place July 20, 2022, at Patterson's Fish Market, a well-loved local Indigenous-owned fish market in Hancock, MI. Lauren and I spoke about our shared love of water-based food systems while eating fresh-caught white fish.

5. ***Marissa Ditoro – Sault Ste. Marie, ON:***

Marissa works for the Algoma University Student Union in Sault Ste. Marie, ON, as the Equity Centre Director. Through this work she oversees the People's Garden, a community garden on campus that provides an immersive food experience to students and community members and redistributes food to the campus food pantry and food access initiatives in Sault Ste. Marie. Originally from Nebraska, she moved to Sault Ste. Marie for her undergraduate degree, and stayed after falling in love with Lake Superior. Our interview took place July 25, 2022, at the People's Garden at Algoma University. As the People's Garden is a healing garden on land that was previously a residential school, Marissa and I spoke about the importance of knowing the context of the places where you stand.

6. Carson Beauregard – Virtual:

Carson grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, ON, and returned recently to pursue farming. At the time of our interview, he worked as the Food Production and Operations Manager for Harvest Algoma, a food access organization run by the United Way that works directly with other initiatives supporting food access and vulnerabilized populations throughout the Algoma district by distributing surplus food, along with providing educational experiences for youth on their urban farm. Our interview, meant to occur in the Harvest Algoma greenhouse in Sault Ste. Marie, ON, was rescheduled to Zoom on August 4, 2022. While Carson and I had a great discussion, there were challenges conducting an interview focusing on relationships to place through a place-less platform like Zoom, including technical difficulties like lagging and poor video quality.

7. Evalisa McIllfaterick – Cloud Bay, ON:

Evalisa is a farmer and seed saver in South Gillies, Ontario. She has been farming for fifteen years and operates Root Cellar Gardens, one of two organic farms in the Thunder Bay District. She is also the only commercial seed saver in the region and works closely with the Superior Seed Producers, a Thunder Bay-based collective that works to grow and save locally-adapted and open-pollinated seeds for use in Northwestern Ontario. Evalisa is an avid paddler and has crossed through countless heights of land on her travels, but Lake Superior remains her favourite body of water to paddle on. Our interview took place in her basement in Cloud Bay on September 9, 2022, sorting through tomatoes and cleaning their seeds for storage. Through our conversation I not only learned about her visions of foodsheds, but about how to prepare seeds and reduce food waste.

8. Shelby Gagnon – Thunder Bay, ON:

Shelby is an artist, hide tanner and language learner from Aroland First Nation working for the Indigenous Food Circle, a Thunder Bay based organization working to support Indigenous food sovereignty. Shelby is also involved in climate justice advocacy at the provincial and international levels. She currently lives in Thunder Bay and dreams of supporting food sovereignty and land-based camps for Indigenous youth. My interview with Shelby took place in the Sustainable Food Systems Lab at Lakehead University on September 15, 2022. While we had hoped to conduct the interview outdoors, inclement weather had us relocate indoors, where we shared some wild blueberries that my mother had picked a few days before. We spoke of the importance of wild foods, deep listening, and the difference between 'the land' and 'the city'.

3.3.5 Analysis

I began analysis in September 2022 by manually transcribing all interviews and any relevant field notes. The interview questions (Appendix D) were broken into the general themes of place, community, and justice, including visions of socially and ecologically just food systems across the Lake Superior watershed. Throughout the transcription process I added to the margins of the original field notes for each interview, adding additional context, clarifying questions, and noting repeated topics or connections to the literature. These questions and connections helped to organize the data into loose codes, representing Braun & Clarke's (2006) phase one of thematic analysis research – deep immersion in the data. Once each transcription was finished, I sent them out for

participant to assess both the “accuracy and credibility” of their statements and the meanings I extracted from them (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 261). Each participant was given a two-week window to review, and only a few required following up. Despite the challenges of delayed feedback, this additional time allowed me to immerse myself with the data. Deep immersion with the data through repeated readings and reading the entire data set before beginning to code was key to form a baseline understanding of possible patterns before beginning to code in earnest (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

Once input and approval had been received from the community, I began coding using NVivo software. Phase two of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) involved coding all transcripts according to the initial list of interesting and repeated data points identified in phase one. My field notes were not coded as data to bracket out my personal thoughts and reflections from those of the participants as much as possible. This first round of coding used themes emerging from the research process representing an inductive (data driven or bottom-up) approach to analysis, meaning codes were not fit into pre-existing frameworks but emerged from within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.83). As recommended for thematic analysis, I coded for as many potential themes and patterns as possible, resulting in over 200 initial coded data points that were refined through an active and iterative process of recoding and analysing to create broad themes based on repeated patterns. This initial round of coding also utilized a deductive, or theoretical approach to analysis (ibid., p.84) by coding for select themes from the literature, specifically Kloppenburg et al. (1996)’s five emergent principles of a foodshed: 1) moral economy, 2) commensal community, 3) self-protection, secession, and succession, 4) proximity, and 5) nature as measure (pp. 36-39). As the authors positioned

these principles as important to the realization of foodsheds, I was interested to see how they would map onto participant understandings of place, community, and justice as they relate to foodsheds and place-based food systems. As the principles all overlapped with the emergent codes, they were merged within them. The initial emergent themes followed repeated ideas, notably the impacts of boundaries and 'false divides', love of community and place-attachment, the importance of accessibility, inclusion, and education, metaphors for change, and ideas of 'reverberations' – whether it be of inspiration, the impacts of collective knowledge, or of the flow of ideas and tangible items/beings through space.

Repeated issues with my NVivo file crashing meant I had to restart my coding multiple times. This allowed me to let go of any preconceived ideas of the findings and dive deeper each time I returned to ensure a truly data-driven approach to thematic analysis. As phase three of thematic analysis involves refocusing the longer list of codes into potential themes and their interrelationships (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.89), this process allowed me to repeatedly refocus the potential themes, leaving me with a more fulsome analysis than otherwise possible. This analysis took a constructionist approach, focusing on the impact and implications of discourses and imaginaries on meaning and lived experience (ibid., p.81).

In phase four, transcripts were recoded according to the candidate themes. While the research question asked how folks envisioned a foodshed in the watershed, their visions of foodsheds could not be understood separate from the limitations they face(d), and the impacts of their relationships. The final themes condensed the emergent and literature-derived themes into those discussed in detail in the following chapter. This

represented phase five, where a story is constructed out of the thematic map of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). This story traces the path from the material borders and boundaries that immobilize transformative thought and action, the relationships with place and community that nourish folks and provide a sense of hope and optimism, and how grounding in these relationships cultivates feelings of possibility to enact transformative change, turning away from existing limitations to focus on generative rather than reactive approaches to community generation and food system transformation. A summary of themes and sub-themes can be found in Appendix F.

3.3.6 Ethics

Ethics approval for this project was obtained through the Lakehead University Research Ethics Review Board, and all stipulations of the approval were followed throughout the course of the research. This included the successful completion of the TCPS 2 – the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Appendix E). Potential benefits and risks to both participants and researcher throughout the course of this research are described below, along with the alternative plans addressing potential COVID-19 complications.

Benefits to Participants: Through seeking to identify the potentially radical contribution of place-based relationships to foster justice, this research sought to deepen relationships across the watershed, benefitting participants by deepening their engagement with the LSLLN, thereby introducing them to other individuals pursuing similar aims. Further, I

hope that sharing the analysis from this research with the participants will support them in continuing the work they are doing by highlighting the importance of their actions.

Benefits to Researcher: I gained experience in conducting place-based research and built my personal community networks across the watershed. Further, the travel portion of this research reconnected me with the watershed, deepening my existing engagement with this place.

Risks to Participants: While this research focused on the positive aspects of localized change, as I asked about connection to the watershed there was a risk of triggering negative emotions connected to climate anxiety. Further, as I asked questions relating to experience building community networks, there was a risk that participants may have felt uncomfortable disclosing any information that may threaten their positions or relationships. Risks were mitigated by ensuring participants were aware that they could (1) stop the interview, (2) refuse to answer any question, (3) ask questions of the researcher, (4) retract any statements, and (5) decide to be de-identified. The above five options were available to participants up until they approved their transcript.

Risks to Researcher: There were potential personal safety and vehicular risks as I traveled around the watershed. Risks were mitigated by (1) ensuring I had access to a cellular phone that functioned in both countries, (2) equipping the vehicle with an up to date first aid and vehicle safety kit, (3) ensuring emergency contacts and the research supervisor received detailed travel plans in advance, and (4) updating emergency contacts and the research supervisor of my current location at regular intervals. Other than one flat tire, there were no issues throughout the trip.

As it was impossible to predict what the current COVID-19 situation would be in advance of the data collection phase, it was assumed that there may be potential COVID-19 risks during the research. The nature of outdoor data collection meant that COVID-19 transmission is low, but not negated. As necessary, detailed COVID-19 safety plans were created and followed that reflected current public health and Lakehead University guidelines. There were four alternative research plans to address possible COVID-19 restrictions at the time data is collected. The plans were:

Plan A: Conduct research in-person at each of the four hub cities.

Plan B: Conduct research in-person, outdoors, in the two Canadian hub cities of Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay to avoid crossing international borders.

Plan C: Conduct research in-person, outdoors, in Thunder Bay, to avoid any travel.

Plan D: Conduct research virtually.

The plans were ranked in order of preference and were selected based on COVID-19 restrictions at the time of research. Plan A was preferred as it provided the most profound engagement with the topic, methodologies, and watershed. Despite plan D allowing for more hub cities to participate than plans B and C, it was not ideal as the placelessness of virtual data collection would impact the methodologies and resulting data. As the risk of COVID-19 transmission was low at the time of data collection, plan A was chosen, other than the single virtual interview due to participant rescheduling.

3.3.7 Financing

This research was partially funded by a $5,000 microgrant from the Lake Superior Living Labs Network (LSLLN). As a result, this research took place primarily in the four hub cities of the LSLLN: Duluth, Minnesota and Houghton, Michigan, in the United States, and Sault St. Marie and Thunder Bay in Ontario, Canada. A total of $3,878.75 of the grant was spent during the trip to cover mileage, accommodation, food, and cellular costs.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This project involved interviews with eight key-informants with the intention of answering the question: How do those engaged in place-based food work across the Lake Superior watershed envision a Lake Superior foodshed? I asked participants about their understandings of place, community, the relationships they held, and social-ecological justice in both the places they call home and beyond. The guide used for these interviews is included in Appendix D - while the questions were not always asked in the same order, all participants provided an answer for each question. As many participants were unfamiliar with foodshed terminology, I provided a brief explanation of the history of foodshed approaches as spatial flows of food and situated the aspirational approach to foodsheds as place-based food systems grounded in social-ecological justice and wellbeing.

My participants represented diverse and overlapping sectors (including community food access workers, farmers, hide tanners, youth educators, fisheries workers, Indigenous food sovereignty actionists, and regional food network representatives) and had diverse opinions around the future of food systems and community networks around the watershed. These diverse approaches converged in notable ways, and participants understood foodsheds to be bioregional spaces rooted in ecological ethics rather than human-constructed limitations. Throughout these conversations, there were many

references to existing boundaries, borders, and limitations that made it difficult to imagine otherwise. Participants overwhelmingly asserted the importance of collective action, education, and support to the visioning and building of alternatives. As the story of the research emerged, it appeared that relationships with place and community provided a foundation from which to turn away from simply reacting to the boundaries toward generating alternatives. This supported the phenomenon of study that nurturing relationships with place and expansive understandings of community could assist in cultivating feelings of possibility toward transformative food system change. Participants grounded their visions of foodsheds, or social-ecological food justice in the watershed, as coming through care-based collective engagement to co-create justice-oriented futures.

These findings move through three overarching themes of the material to the ethereal, with movement grounded through the relational. The ‘material’ refers to the physical and psychological boundaries that affect understandings of place, community, and justice. The ‘relational’ refers to the interwoven webs of relationships individuals hold with their homes, communities, and understandings of justice and brighter futures. Finally, the ‘ethereal’ refers to the intangible dreams, aspirations, and visions held by the participants that cultivate the possibility of socially and ecologically just communities through food. A brief description of these themes and subthemes is included in Appendix F and is described in detail below.

4.2 Material – Borders and Boundaries

The material refers to the boundaries experienced by place-based food workers and how they impact understandings of place, community, and justice. When asked to envision a Lake Superior foodshed, most participants first spoke of the boundaries that limit just transitions. While existing in many forms, I have divided them into physical, social, and epistemic limitations. Such boundaries restrict movement and distance individuals from each other, the lands and waters, multispecies beings, and from the future and potential of their imagination. The participants I spoke with have and continue to experience and resist these boundaries in several ways. There is significant overlap between the three sub-themes – as with the foundation of this thesis itself; these are not fixed boundaries, but ways of understanding the various limitations faced by those envisioning alternative food systems.

4.2.1 Physical Borders

Political jurisdictions are socially constructed but have material implications. Many participants noted the border as a barrier to change, whether through explicit legal restrictions or limitations on mobility and community networks. For Shelby, the border serves to change water from a connector through living and fluid watersheds, to dividers through militarized zones. Detailing that pre-colonization, borders were not historically enforced in such ways and that Indigenous communities often traded without restrictions, she lamented the restrictions now in place:

> Borders infuriate me. Even just going to Pigeon River, and thinking that this river 'separates' us, but we can see people from the States on the other side and wave to them. It's so close but it feels so far away. I hate saying I'm from Canada, you know? I like to say I'm from Turtle Island, and when you think of Turtle Island there are no borders.

By pushing Shelby to identify as being from Canada for legibility purposes, even though that identifier represents a scale not representative of her community, the border serves as more than simply a physical manifestation of the restrictions of colonialism. In this sense, the border limits relationships and interactions with place and the broader ecological community. Evalisa echoed this connector to divider dichotomy in relation to her experience paddling through watersheds. As she described, enforcement of the border not only affects our understanding of water is, but also has implications for community safety and support as respect for the border holds greater importance than personal or collective safety when interacting with multijurisdictional waterways.

Beyond the restrictions of the border, there are further challenges in relation to building food networks and sustaining resilient communities. Carson highlighted the challenges of exchanging produce across the border, noting that it occurred mostly on an institutional level rather than farmer-to-farmer or farmer-to-organization. Evalisa also spoke to the challenges of building and maintaining knowledge sharing relationships with her counterparts across the border, as although they belong to the same ecological zone, they are not part of each other's communities. Further, Lauren noted that the lack of a Memorandum of Understanding between tribal and state processors results in situations where Indigenous fishers are considered to "import" their fish into the state system, despite fishing alongside non-Indigenous fisherfolk.

These physical boundaries extend beyond the larger-scale political jurisdictions to the smaller, more intimate scale regarding ownership and division. Carson spoke of his desire to improve the land he was farming on yet being unable to as he was renting and could not make significant adjustments to the soil. Despite healthy soil being key to growing food, soil health projects often cannot compete with the desires of capital, as Karena echoed when describing the experience of creating the DIGs. The Tribal Nation purchased the land from an individual buyer, who at the last minute decided to scrape all the soil off the land to make extra money, leaving the Nation with a plot of soil-less land to build a garden on. The challenges of the ownership model are reinforced through the creation and delivery of farming support programs, as noted by a participant:

> They are all based on individual ownership of land. It's like, we'll be collective under the auspices of a paternalistic organization until you can go out on your own and start your own family farm. Instead of just all farming together.

This framework is mirrored to living beings as well, with Lauren noting that fish are considered *resources* held and managed in trust by the state, rather than *beings* with their own agency to swim across state lines.

A prominent concern held by participants is how borders restrict access – to nature, the broader ecological community, Lake Superior, food, and food production. Most participants defined justice as access, noting that having access to a place, participation, or skill set is critical to one's ability to care about communities and places, as engagement is necessary to form relationships. Evalisa, in describing the connection between systemic problems and the lack of lived experience folks have with and on the Lake, noted:

> If people knew that Lake Superior was so awesome and that it's right there and knew how amazing it felt to be on or in the water, and that felt like something that they could be connected to, then there would be more motivation to care for it.

Justice requires access: access nurtures engagement, engagement builds relationships, and relationships are integral to moving forward. These concerns go beyond inspiring folks to act and extends to basic access to necessities. In particular, the connection between local fisheries and food security. Across the watershed, there are few jurisdictions where fresh, local fish is accessible to much of the community. Lauren noted that only around 1 in 9 Michigan residents have a recreational license, meaning the State's transition toward recreationally managed fisheries contributes to the inaccessibility of local fish for most residents. As she describes:

> Sure, you could say 'well, a license if you're a Michigan resident is only like $25, that's not that bad.' But you're also assuming that everyone knows how to fish, has the capacity or ability to, has a boat or even just access to get to water, and the time with two jobs and four kids to go and catch dinner and then provide for their family.

These accessibility concerns impact food security – once fisheries are managed for the purposes of tourism and recreational activities, their ability to feed and employ residents of the watershed are impacted, feeding social tensions between recreational, commercial, and Tribal fisherfolk in the region.

4.2.2 Social Boundaries

Social boundaries refer to restricted ideas of belonging and community. Although these can be enforced physically, I refer here to how socially entrenched narratives

exclude or separate, particularly through judgement and hierarchization. This is seen through hierarchies of place-attachment and engagement, but most notably through the idea of 'deservedness' based on perceived socio-economic status. Certain participants noted frustration with those who appeared well-off acquiring food from community food programs**.** This frustration was, in large part, due to the funding constraints of said organizations and the need to triage support by quantifying need. Yet it also stemmed from perceived need – an externally imposed form of judgement that hierarchizes others because of how they are understood to present socio-economically. This judgement, despite the varied places from which it stems, impacts abilities to form supportive community networks as it demonizes without input. Marissa explicitly spoke against hierarchies of the 'deserving' and 'underserving' poor and the related forms of judgement in food distribution as something that would need to change in the pursuit of foodsheds:

> That's a problem associated with a lot of these food resources, first deciding who deserves it and who doesn't deserve it and then quantifying why you deserve it, based on how much money you might have in your bank account. Is that really what makes you deserving of this free loaf of bread? Versus the person that needs food but they're scraping by and can pay their rent?

Marissa argued that it is not up to her to cast judgement, and her priority is to bring people into community through food, regardless of their perceived or actual need.

The economy-centred nature of our society has further implications for the resilience of community networks in how certain folks are either excluded outright from having their voices heard or are included yet not compensated. While food policy councils and networks exist around the watershed, many are mostly (or solely) populated

by those who are paid to participate. Evalisa and Abbey both spoke to this imbalance of compensation and representation, with Evalisa noting:

> I've been really reticent to get involved with those kinds of networks because I don't have time in the summer, and in the winter… there's something about it that feels a little bit self-depreciating, when you show up at a meeting and everyone else who is sitting at the table is getting paid, whereas I'm just here because you need to hear from a farmer. I feel like there is so much potential for networks, and the stronger the networks the stronger the community. But we need to find out how to build those networks in a sustainable way and avoid the imbalance of compensation.

While often unintentional or due to larger bureaucratic limitations, this hierarchization ensures that much of food policy or food systems transformation discourse is done without intersecting voices present. As highlighted by Abbey and Evalisa, this excludes the critical voices of those experiencing food insecurity, farmers and food labourers, and other food workers, who are either not invited, unable to join due to work obligations, or are invited yet remain the only unpaid members at the table. Most participants recognized this exclusion and expressed a desire to expand their relationships and community networks. The benefits ranged from practical, including collective support around farmer education or marketing for those in similar ecological regions, to the political, such as the necessity of including diverse voices to ensure programs meet the needs of the entire community.

Despite the desire to include diverse voices, it was recognized how difficult it can be to move beyond the gaps resulting from both personal and institutional blinders – as Carson quipped, "you don't know what you don't know, right?" These gaps are detrimental to the food system's overall resilience and contribute to distrust and difficulties forming relationships throughout the community. Lauren described how she

learned to be protective of her relationships, noting that respectful relationships are slow to build, and can become extractive quickly, despite good intentions. Lauren, Abbey and Julie all spoke to the notion that while certain folks have the personal and professional capacity to nurture healthy and respectful relationships with those who have been structurally excluded, many do not. These social barriers can form a cycle of exclusion that can only be broken through slow relationship building – a process that is often not compatible with funding timelines and staff turnover.

These hierarchies of belonging and exclusion extend through the ecological community through the perpetration of invasive discourses. These are seen ecologically through narratives around invasive species and weeds, extending to 'aliens,' 'others,' and 'savages' in respect to humans. In essence, mapping borders onto human and multispecies mobility. Abbey noted that putting borders on plants and other nonhumans, deeming them illegal follows the same exclusionary logics of political borders. By doing so, the focus is placed on demonizing and excluding the 'other,' rather than recognizing potential gifts to be shared or reasons for migration in the first place, as well as ignoring our complicities in causing the migration or movement of 'undesirable others.' Those deemed 'invasive,' be they human or otherwise, are considered threats to property and undeserving of belonging in certain places or communities. However, as noted by many participants, these categories are never so simple, and experience in place-based food systems lends a complexity to this categorization. Karena, through her meditation on the presence of 'weeds' in the DIGs, took this a step further:

> What is the justice we can do to these plants that have been introduced, how can we adopt them and use them respectfully? When one thinks of European colonization and the displacement of the Indigenous people here. Say in an

> agricultural system, we want to grow corn, bean and squash and so the colonists say 'ok, we want to be here and have our little farms and our tidy little houses and our little industries and make roads and all of that'. That came at the incredible expense of displacing the people that are of this place. … We are displacing or trying to eradicate all these plants that we have deemed weeds, is that a parallel to that displacement? Could we think of it in that pure of a sense, that what we're calling weeds are really a displaced species because they don't fit in with this agricultural model? How can we work with that? I don't know. It is great to have these ideas, but then one wants to have a functional garden, to feed people.

As she notes, many 'weeds' or 'invasives' are important medicinal plants that were shared for important cultural purposes. While participants had varied opinions on the benefits or harms of 'invasives,' most spoke to the limitations of categorization and the importance of not demonizing based on judgement.

4.2.3 Epistemic Borders

Epistemic borders are those that prevent us from acting, distance us from our food systems and the broader ecologies we live in and prioritize individualism over collective wellbeing and support. These limitations often result in feeling blind to the alternatives or powerless to pursue them, making it difficult to imagine otherwise.

Throughout the watershed, participants acknowledged that despite diverse visions for change and appetite for networks and communities working towards justice-oriented futures, the capacity to support this was lacking. As noted by Evalisa, "I'll bring the watermelon to the table, but the table needs to be there to start." A lack of capacity threatens the future of these visions, whether they be for individual places and projects, or larger-scale forms of collective action and mutual support. As Karena described, visions

are only as great as the potential to bring them to life. Carson and Marissa both described how the goal of putting food banks out of business feels unattainable, with Carson stating, “it feels like an impossible goal without significant cultural and legislative change.” Many participants expressed similar sentiments, desiring larger-scale systemic change while feeling like they did not have the capacity or ability to pursue it. Personal capacity restrictions contribute to physical and social distancing in food systems, with Karena noting that those in the neighbouring community of Baraga, located three miles away, had criticized the DIGs for being inaccessible. While three miles sounds negligible, for many, it is not. The conceptual divide of being in a different community, along with decreased mobility can make such a divide feel unpassable. As a result, Karena was left wondering whether the lack of an additional garden was an injustice or failure on her part, despite contributing to the building of a thriving garden with limited human resources and capacity.

Impacts of distancing can be seen through the reluctance, or inability, for folks to pay the ‘true’ cost of local foods. Julie, in speaking to the challenges of selling her produce at true costs, noted:

> Let me tell you why all that produce grown in California is so cheap – it’s because it’s grown by immigrant labourers who are not paid, have no protections at all, and it’s brought here on refrigerated trucks because fuel is subsidized. Everyone complains about how expensive food is when it’s so incredibly cheap and does not at all even cover the expenses of it, let alone the externalities of it.

Beyond imported foods, this is an issue facing the watershed in relation to the ongoing histories of colonialism and capitalism, particularly the tendency to extract from a place

and then forget about it. This is evidenced through the impacts of language choices, with both Karena and Lauren speaking to the impacts of copper mining around the watershed:

> Many people refer to this area as Copper Country, but the Creator put the copper deep in the earth. Why are we exhuming it and bringing it up to the surface? It's not where the Creator intended it to be. Copper is very harmful, it's a heavy metal, a toxin that is harming the waters where the fish spawn, contaminating the soils. Along the Superior shoreline where the copper waste has been left there are stampsands. The mining companies bear no responsibility, so the people who are most impacted, that have the fewest means and the least knowledge around what to do about it are most vulnerable to the harmful effects that come from ingesting heavy metals.
> – *Karena*

> Buffalo Reef is one of three breeding grounds for white fish in Lake Superior and it is covered by mine tailings. There's no living thing living there anymore. They're trying to restore it, but the problem is finding out who will have the money to even do that. It's really just being responsible for things that we've done. Ok, so we've provided the country with electricity – now can you maybe come back and help us clean it up and right the wrong?
> – *Lauren*

From the stamp sands from mining tailings to the impact of extractive industries on lands, waters, and traditional food sources, the effects of extraction reverberates throughout the watershed, impacting abilities to move towards justice-oriented food systems.

Beyond individual place names, the use of Lake Superior in name and imagery contributed to the epistemological limitations facing the watershed. Many participants were involved with organizations that either directly took their name from Lake Superior or had the Lake as the scope or scale of their work, such as the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association and the Superior Seed Producers. However, none of these organizations operated across the watershed, instead focusing on subsections specific to the political jurisdiction they were situated in. While many noted a desire to expand their

work to encompass the whole watershed, there were various limitations to doing so. Some understood this as an explicit capacity concern – Lauren noted that thinking on a watershed scale or in systems can be overwhelming when considering how difficult it can be to get folks to think about their own backyards. Despite the challenges, appropriation of ecological scales for smaller-scale usage erases the interconnectivity of the watershed. As Julie noted, the enormity of Superior makes it easier to claim as one's own – without seeing the other shores, it is easy to forget the myriad places and communities connected by the watershed.

4.3 Relational – Place and Community

Many of the boundaries referenced above have their roots in colonial and capitalist frameworks and hierarchical individualism – the prioritization of capital and the individuals who control it above all else. Cultivating relationships with places and the broader ecological community can allow folks to transcend the boundaries that limit their thoughts, relationships, and actions, moving towards their 'hopes and dreams' for food systems in the places they call home – what I understand as the 'ethereal'. Just as watersheds and foodsheds flow through places while intimately interacting with them, broad relationships allow ethics of care to flow from the self and the insular community to the larger interdependent spheres of interaction. This theme is divided into three sub-

themes spanning the interwoven scales of the self, the home, and then beyond to the broader community.

4.3.1 The Self

The self refers to who the participants are as individuals and community members, including how they understand their relationships with place, community, justice, and the role of their work in building something bigger or better. By this, how a love of community and place manifests in their work. Overall, feelings of gratitude, reciprocity and responsibility permeated discussions around place and the ecological community. In articulating how they understand community or who they are responsible to, I saw an expansive and intimate connection to place and the broader ecological community. While many answers started with their community being those they shared food with, many continued to speak of the role of seeds, plants, animals, and specific places as important community members and teachers. As Abbey described:

> My intimate community are the people that I cook and eat with. The people that I harvest blueberries with, that I make meals with or go out in the garden or the grocery store. Those with whom I eat are my closest community. There's a Robin who is raising a second brood in my backyard, they are also a part of my community and I try to protect the babies from cats. Community is the people with whom you can organize.

Abbey went on to describe her seeds as part of her community – both in and of themselves and as representations of the loved ones who shared them with her. Abbey's seeds represented the webs of relationships that connect her to her community through

space and time, lending an additional, ethereal dimension to the potential held by seeds to grow new life and possibilities and connect to meaningful places.

While my participants had different roles and relationships with place-based food work, many got involved out of a shared love of food and a desire to not only reduce their negative downstream impacts, but go beyond, and work towards having positive localized and downstream impacts. Evalisa, when describing her choice to start farming, said:

> I want to do the least amount of harm, but I want to do more than that, I want to do good. I wanted to go out into the world and start doing something that I felt would be, as best as I could answer, the right thing to do. Something that would help address these issues, knowing they're all really interconnected.

These positive impacts were understood through both the external acts of sharing food with one another or stewarding land and water, and the internal acts of ensuring you are "feeding your soul" by living in accordance with your values, as Julie noted. It was understood that small, inspirational acts had the potential to ripple outwards, having larger impacts on themselves and broader community through space and time:

> It's just the nicest feeling in the world; this enthusiasm about something as small as a cherry tomato ripening just builds and builds and becomes contagious. – *Marissa*

> All big things take a long time. It's about the nudges, nudging in the right way. And hopefully those nudges lead somewhere over time. A bit of it is working in the shadows and filling in the cracks, claiming the space that we can and hopefully, in time, claiming more and more space for these kinds of projects. Eventually, there will be so much space claimed that everyone will see what's going on and they'll realize how much better it is and want to get involved. – *Evalisa*

There was a focus on intergenerational support and education around place-based food systems. Many spoke to the importance of introducing youth to food systems and ensuring they create vibrant and well-supported foodscapes for those who want to stay, who hope to return, and for those who are yet to come. Every participant spoke of the importance of exposure to food systems – both in relation to youth and the general psychoaffective impacts (social, emotional, mental) of having relationships with the lands, waters, and foods of where you live. Abbey had a strong focus on ensuring youth are empowered to enact their own visions of place – ensuring their homes reflect their hopes and dreams for the future. However, this vision was powerfully put into practice through my conversation with Julie. Despite feeling that the work to be done was overwhelming, she firmly believed in the importance of exposing youth to food systems and of raising her toddler Amariah as a 'farm kid':

> So many young people have had zero experience working with their bodies, with plants, with food. Of course, it's not their fault, it's the culture's fault, but being able to provide that to other people, that feels like the most good I can do in the world. I feel very strongly about that, and about raising him to have that kind of knowledge. Most of the people in the world live in cities now and the connection to land and plants and food is decreasing, which is really scary to me. So, anything we can do to help change that. Because that's resilience, you know? That's personal health and community resilience.

While it seemed at times that she felt her impact was small, she described her belief in the power of exposing youth to place-based food systems while sitting in a berry patch, alternating between breastfeeding her son and congratulating him for correctly identifying edible plants.

4.3.2 Home

The most intimate home is the body (the self), but beyond are the places that nourish and sustain us. Rooting in a love of the home and intimate relationships with the ecological community can alleviate some pressure of combatting global and interconnected systems. Like the watershed, these relationships flow outward and return cyclically. A sense of home encompasses the home as landscape, as community, and as potential.

Home as landscape refers to the deep, almost spiritual connection individuals have with the lands and waters within which they live. When asked specifically about Lake Superior, many spoke to the physical and psychoaffective nature of being near the lake. This 'awe' was particularly evident through Marissa's description of her first experience cycling to the shorefront and Shelby's description of meditating near the water:

> Lake Superior came into view and it was the most beautiful thing I think I've ever seen. I think that was the first moment I thought to myself that I want to stay here. After that point I kept doing whatever I could to get out to the lake. There's just something just so indescribable about the pull that I have to Lake Superior, it keeps drawing me back. – *Marissa*

> Growing up here, you feel the energy of this powerful lake. Whenever I've been hurting, I would always find myself at the shorelines, right beside the water. I'd put my tobacco in, and I'd just listen to the waves. There has to be some kind of connection with that noise and how we feel calmer when we're listening to it. We have the same percentage of water as the land does – with our bodies and with the land. It makes so much sense how we're so interconnected. – *Shelby*

The way participants spoke of a love or reverence for the waters and lands of the watershed signalled a shift from the capitalist commodification that underpins other

actions to a relational love of place. There was an understanding that we are rich because of our proximity to this landscape, through our ability to interact with and form relationships with places. Abbey, in describing her relationship to her home of Chatham, spoke to this deep sense of gratitude and love:

> My relationship to the land here has been one of deep fascination, enticed like a lover into this place, and then trying to make a living here. I've been very fortunate to have access to that, but it took 10 years of trying to get a job making as much money as I could've made years ago elsewhere. But that's… I mean it sounds pretentious, but that's barely worth mentioning. I stayed here because I wanted to. What I needed was a home, and this place gave it to me. I'll never forget that generosity.

These intimate relationships with Superior and the surrounding landscapes contributed to a desire to stay in the watershed, to plant deeper roots and cultivate resilient communities.

The idea of home as a landscape was extended beyond the physical through Evalisa's understanding of "lake neighbours," compared to Julie's view of Duluth 'owning' Superior. Evalisa's experience paddling through ecological zones changed her understanding of community – rather than being divided by the international border and state/provincial lines, she saw those on the shores as connected by the watershed. As she described:

> It's funny, thinking about how some people see the lake as belonging to one place, because I actually love thinking about all of these people and all of these different places that feel very far away but are connected by the same lake.

Abbey extended this through her understanding of foodsheds and watersheds as being composed of liminal spaces. As the map frames how we understand space, explicitly reframing to communities formed through ecologically bounded space allows for

different perspectives and priorities to come to light. In this case, home extends beyond physical locations to webs of relationships. As Marissa said, “it isn’t a physical home, but a feeling of home, and in the garden, I feel at home with those people.” This extends the home to the feelings of safety or belonging that come from being in community with others.

By grounding actions in the lands, waters, and communities that nourish you, people are better equipped to move to larger scale ‘fights.’ This can be seen through Julie’s understanding of the importance of raising ‘farm babies’ as described above – raising youth in connection to the land will hopefully instill a love of place and a desire to work towards social and ecological justice in the future. Feeling inspired by a love of home and community can provide the energy to work towards larger scales and issues. As Shelby said, “I always need to come back home to feel that groundedness, to remind myself of what I’m fighting for, or what is justice.”

4.3.3 The Beyond – Community

Supportive community networks provide a starting point from which ethics of care flow outwards, reducing the disempowerment that can come from facing complex globally interconnected problems. This flows in many directions, with many participants describing community benefits upstream and downstream through time and space using non-dominant scales to define their communities. Both Evalisa and Marissa described watersheds as more appropriate delineations of space and spoke to the importance of fluid boundaries:

> Watersheds are way more fascinating and connected and I think more appropriate geographical delineations of spaces and landscapes. Paddling through watersheds and seeing the shift between paddling upstream and downstream when you pass the height of land into a new watershed is a really meaningful, tangible thing that when you're on a canoe trip is really essential to your life. Wherever we have these political borders, at one point that was a really meaningful delineation for somebody. But it doesn't mean as much to us anymore. – *Evalisa*

> I used to ride my bike into Sault Michigan, get a coffee, and then come back to Sault Canada. It's pretty easy to cross, which makes the border almost seem fake. Especially given the nature of water because it's so fluid. Are we going to say that this drop of water came over to this side of the border? It's hard to draw the line. If they're literally dumping barrels of oil up there, it's not like you can just ignore what's happening upstream. – *Marissa*

The fluidity of watersheds requires an understanding of interdependence and cyclical impacts. This can be seen physically through understanding the impacts of actions on land and water and how they flow through to other places in relation to pollution, extraction, remediation, and farm inputs and outputs in Evalisa's case, but also conceptually, with Abbey's idea of 'seeping like water' to transcend boundaries. This connection with the watershed is tied to fluidity and metaphors of the water cycle – by rooting in place while acknowledging fluid impacts elsewhere; small actions can be understood to have larger impacts.

This potential also flows through time and space, and many participants spoke to the importance of planting seeds for future generations through intergenerational exchange and education. The notion of socio-sedimentary layers was echoed as an essential aspect of how place-attachment can flow towards larger impacts. Shelby spoke to this in relation to the connection between memory and harvesting yarrow, and how their smell brings her back to being a kid on the land in her community. She went on to

describe how her relationship with harvesting yarrow throughout her life impacts her understanding of changing landscapes, wondering whether her descendants will be able to live on the land and cultivate similar relationships with yarrow or other plants.

Socio-sedimentary layers of place contain the care-full layering of love into a landscape, seen through the collective creation of fertile soil at the DIGs. When the nation was faced with the prospect of building a community garden on land with no soil their extended community banded together, bringing bags of mulch and lawn trimmings to be slowly composted into fertile soil. As Karena described, the "long continuum of working that clay and tilling in the leaves" has left the DIGs with very good soil that the community cares deeply for, to the point where now many garden plots are 'no till' to support healthy soil and microorganism communities. If the most essential ingredient in a recipe is love, then the DIGs rests on a foundation of love that has been nurtured into the soil over the decade or so of their operations. Now that the gardens are flourishing, the DIGs have expanded to saving seeds to do restoration work on the lands and waters that have been impacted by years of colonial-capitalist extraction and pollution. Conducting restoration work with seeds you have adapted yourself not only works to repair the harm done to the landscape but ensures cycles of love and care are imbued into the socio-sedimentary layers of place through biocultural restoration.

An attention to layered realities can further be seen through the example of the People's Garden at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie – a healing garden located on land that was once a residential school. Marissa noted:

> When it was a residential school, they had a farm here that they made the youth work at. Having this here now, being able to grow things for the students and the food pantry and reclaim that knowledge and culture and be

> able to share it with the community is so important. Sometimes I think it gets brushed aside because we're like 'oh I just need to plant my cucumbers' but the work is so much bigger than that. When the Elders come in and share knowledge and hold ceremony here you really feel the weight of it and how important it is that these things continue. Not just so that we have cucumbers at the food pantry, but to reclaim for bigger purposes.

This place, which was intended as a site of intergenerational and intercultural exchange, was irrevocably changed by the violences of colonialism and Indigenous genocide. The People's Garden seeks to heal the harms perpetrated against peoples and places by bringing the circle back towards the initial vision of healing and health.

Potential further flows through impact and intent. Change may feel slow, but hindsight shows progress, as echoed by many participants. Shelby used the analogy of a seed, saying "I'm just one person, just like you're maybe one seed. But it's that planting, the growing of the seed and the nourishing of it that's powerful." In this, we see how one small thing – be it human, seed, or other – has the potential to grow to support a flourishing community. Small actions grow and ripple outwards, having much larger impacts than one might see if analysed in isolation. Karena used the example of dryland farming at the DIGs as evidence of small actions grounded in care reverberating with larger consequences. Disrupting the evapotranspiration of soil results in healthier plants that require significantly less water. As she noted, "that little bit of scratching the surface is protecting that gift of water, which will then bless our plants and help them grow." Small acts of scratching the surface can make a big difference, even though running your fingers across the soil may not feel revolutionary.

4.4 Ethereal – Cultivating Possibility

A grounding in relationships can provide the inspiration to move beyond the borders and boundaries that limit action and understanding. Deepening relationships with place and community can provide a foundation from which to approach the 'ethereal' – the dreams and aspirations held by individuals and communities for the future of food systems throughout the watershed and beyond. In this sense, the 'ethereal' is how folks turn away from boundaries, envisioning otherwise as an opportunity to be generative. While this could be simplified solely into hopes and dreams, it is an understanding of how we move towards socially and ecologically just futures and the role of food and food systems in getting (and staying) there. Beyond that, moving to the understanding that justice requires holism – the social and ecological are mutually constitutive and cannot be meaningfully attained in separation. To understand the 'ethereal', I have broken it down into rooted dreams, moral, caring and generative economies, and movement as a practice.

4.4.1 Rooted Dreams

In response to the placelessness and relationlessness of industrial and capitalist food systems, participants overwhelmingly echoed the importance of rootedness in visions of the future. Evalisa understood this as key to working towards the future you hope for:

> Being rooted in your place, having those connections to place and to people make you want to do more and care more about those places and people. Even if it doesn't solve the big systemic problem, it helps.

For Evalisa, even if individual actions cannot solve systemic problems on their own, rooting in place and forming resilient communities is a crucial first step toward transformative change. An overwhelming sentiment flowing through the desire to grow/foster alternatives was the necessity of rooting in 'love' – phrased differently, being 'for' rather than solely 'against' – echoed in many ways by different participants. Julie noted that plants 'saved her' and that without the intimate relationships she held with plants, she would not have the life she lived:

> I burnt out on protesting and being anti everything, and when I found plants and gardening and it was just like hallelujah, finally. I think so many people have all this rage and depression because of everything going on, and they don't even realize that their soul isn't being fed, ever.

Rage cannot sustain in the long run, but small acts of care for self and others can keep the pace consistent. Julie's relationship with the ecological community, mirrored in her love of her specific plots of land, has supported her to extend that work to the broader sustainable farming community throughout Minnesota's Superior shores. Karena echoed this love through her description of her role:

> When people have asked me 'what do you do' my previous answer was that I take care of the soil, I take care of the plants, I take care of the people. That's my job. Now I know that quite the opposite is true – the soil takes care of me, the plants take care of me, the people that I commune with take care of me.

As she described, the ecological community is abundant and generous, but it is our role to ensure we are not exploiting that generosity and are acting in accordance with principles of honourable harvest and reciprocity.

Participants' use of ecological metaphors often signaled a shift from capitalistic and individualist narratives to ecocentric and relational ones. These metaphors manifested in many ways and can be categorized into ecologically grounded stories, collective action and knowledge mobilization, and justice orientations in theory and practice. Using ecological scales and metaphors to share stories grounded in place and context brought place-attachment and the pursuit of justice-oriented alternatives beyond the theoretical through a divestment from human-constructed boundaries in exchange for ecologically grounded scales and identifiers. Two, the Bullhead Lily and Land of Dark Fruits, are critical here. When asked about home and relationship to place, Abbey related her experience to that of the Bullhead Lily:

> Lilies move by their roots breaking off and drifting about and then finding some mud on a bank. That was me when I was 17, I was breaking off and floating around. In growing here, and getting accepted into the soil, there's been a lot of reaching and a lot of… that water lily, it can get blown around in the water, but it's still attached.

Connecting both food and water, rooted and mobile, the lily flows through place until it finds a shore where the soil will accept it, welcoming them – both plant and person – home. This ecological imagery was used to explain the movement she has undertaken – both personally as a young woman searching for a home, and as an extension of her ancestor's movement as settlers on this land. The Bullhead Lily demonstrates how it is possible to cultivate a sense of home and belonging in places that are new to you. Karena, on the other hand, described her home as the Land of Dark Fruits, an answer she ties intimately with food sovereignty:

> When I think of all the foods that grow here, that belong here, that are native to this region, everyone is dark. We have blueberries, thimbleberries,

> blackberries, saskatoons, all these fruits are dark. People eat bananas, mangoes, and pineapples, but they are equatorial. Those are wonderful fruits, I have nothing against them, but fruits of the land where I am from are dark. I love to say that I live in the Land of Dark Fruits, rather than naming some city or calling it the Copper Country.

Karena explicitly divested from the colonial and capitalist nomenclature – rather than the United States/Michigan (colonial) or Copper Country/Iron Bay (capitalist/extractive), her home is defined by an attention to local foodscapes, to what nourishes her and her communities in place. Rather than human-state jurisdiction, she focuses on an ecological zone that provides a more intimate and foundational sense of nourishment. While Karena acknowledges the harm perpetrated from extractive language and imaginaries – both in terms of scars on the land and vulnerabilization of the people – the Land of Dark Fruits highlights the potential of the landscape to nourish and empowers those who live there to take food sovereignty into their own hands.

The use of ecological metaphors signalled a justice-orientation in both theory in practice through attention to the importance of grounded, relational language. Julie specifically corrected herself when stating 'fuel for,' reframing to 'compost'. While a seemingly small change, divesting from fossil fuels in language shows a conceptual reorientation, pushing thoughts and actions toward ecological ethics of care. Similarly, rather than 'network,' Abbey and Shelby both spoke of the spiderweb is a means of speaking to the power of decentralized yet interconnected communities and movements, reinforcing the notion that collective power results in resilient communities and movements. These ethics of care were extended to broader social and ecological communities through the parallels between companion planting and gardening as forms of collective support. While many are familiar with the idea of three sisters gardening,

Karena described the fourth sister as the sunflower, nicknamed Auntie Ester, who is planted in explicit recognition of the right to food for all – honouring her multispecies kin rather than seeking to expel them from the garden. Karena followed this with a description of companion gardeners, which she categorizes as seed keepers, growers, harvesters, and cooks, as a parallel to companion planting:

> I acknowledge that not everyone is going to be all four things, but I honour those four things and realize the necessity of all four. Just as we have companion planting with some of our crops, we need to have companion people within the garden itself to ensure that all needs are being met so that food that can be eaten is not destined for the compost but is instead destined to meet the needs of the community that hungers for these things.

The notion of companion gardeners, and the addition of the fourth sister, highlights the importance of working collectively. This ethic of care is a form of engagement that lightens the burden on individuals by returning generosity of multispecies communities. Further, diversity and intersectionality increase the likelihood of discovering creative solutions rather than just displacing the problem downstream through space or time.

4.4.2 Moral, Caring and Generative Economies

Participants overwhelmingly echoed the importance of centring actions around principles of reciprocity and intentionality. As Karena acknowledged, care in the garden goes both ways – we care for the land, and the land cares for us in return. By extension, we care for our community, and our community will care for us. This extends both socially and ecologically to the collective community of human and multispecies natures, as Julie noted:

> I really believe that if we uplift the people and beings on the bottom, so to speak, that we'll all do better. The rising tide will lift all boats. I think that means everybody, especially First Nations and African Americans. Socially, in that way, but I think lifting up those who have been on the bottom also applies environmentally. If we think about the ecosystem, what's good for the tiny itty-bitty microscopic flora and fauna is good for the entire ecosystem.

These cycles of care and support are crucial to moving toward. Whether in relation to the social or ecological community, abundance is a gift, not an expectation, as Karena noted. While capitalism asks for larger and larger yields, nature ebbs and flows – as will our personal and collective capacities for transformation.

Intentionality and a commitment to a reciprocal community economy can be seen through Evalisa's core practice, reflected in the name of her farm – Root Cellar Gardens. Living and growing in northern climates, Evalisa prioritizes growing food in surplus for the winter months, ensuring that the local community has access to locally adapted and organically grown food throughout the non-growing season months. Further, this ensures that she is not competing with growers who do not have winter infrastructure. Abbey echoed this as a core learning of her farm, which receives state and federal funding as a research institution that grows food. They previously sold their food for profit in the summer yet came to realize they were actively competing with other local farmers and growers who rely on those sales as key to their livelihoods. Despite their intentions of selling food to 'solve' the problem of regional food insecurity, they were complicit in creating another problem – taking income away from local food producers. Over an extended period of deliberation, her farm shifted to cold-storage crops, ensuring they no longer competed with local livelihoods in the growing season while still supplanting regional diets during the off-season.

These reorientations shift focus toward holistic, community-oriented views of intentions and impacts, and supports generative rather than reactive interventions. Marissa's goal of addressing systems through reframing the food pantry approaches this. As she notes:

> I don't want to operate a food pantry. It's an emergency thing, it's just a reaction to the systems in place. I don't want students to *have* to come there, I want them to come because they *want* to see what recipe we have for the week or come and share food together rather than coming for their carton of eggs because they can't afford it otherwise. I want to flip why people are coming to these things.

While it is 'easy' to focus your energy on wanting to reduce your harmful impacts, existing under violent and interconnected systems makes it difficult, if not impossible, not to be implicated in harm at some point. Reframing towards a desire to do the 'most good,' as seen through Marissa, Julie, Karena, and Evalisa's commitments to generative approaches, recognizes that even if may be impossible to fully divest from harm under current realities, we can reorient intentions towards care and benefit, creating alternatives while slowly eroding overarching systems of harm.

Transitioning to a community economy requires resisting enforced individualism. As mentioned by many participants, we are stronger when we work together, and individual pursuit of change too often results in burnout and an inability to enact the change that is envisioned. This can be seen through resistance to enforced individualism through explicitly collective forms of support, like companion planting and gardening, but also through ensuring all voices are heard. Shelby extended this beyond humans, noting:

> I'm just trying to speak for the land, for the spirits that call the land their home, for the animals, the blueberries, these medicines that I love. I love having that reciprocal relationship. I know I just need to speak up and find that courage and bravery for my voice to be able to speak on behalf, in a way, for the beings that don't have the gift that us humans have of having a voice.

As she noted, the voices of the ecological community are not heard or validated in dominant human knowledge systems, so it is up to folks to listen deeply and speak what they feel. Although justice is a colonial word used in a colonial legal framework, as Shelby described, there are means to blend aspects of animacy and reciprocity into existing structures to speak on behalf of those who have been objectified or silenced.

A key aspect of integrating intentionality and reciprocity into community economies comes through a practice of decentering human instrumental goals in favour of those that benefit the entire ecological web of life. Succinctly described by Karena, this is a commitment to nurturing, not amending. Rather than *amending* by forcing what you think a place should be, this involves taking the time to learn of and *nurture* local potential. As she notes, and echoed by Abbey and others, creating change takes time and community input. Missteps will happen, but working alongside community with vulnerability and a desire to move forward is how justice-oriented change comes into being.

A commitment to nurturing rather than amending includes the need to meet people where they are. Karena used the example of growing sweet corn compared to traditional Bear Island Flint corn:

> My thought is that if young people and other people come who just love corn that is wonderful and sweet, we can offer that corn to our community and then as we become more purely aligned with the food system that we want, then those other corns can come into play. But we need to meet people where

> they're at, and if people want sweet corn, by gosh they're going to get sweet corn.

Even if your goal is to have people love traditional corn, what is most important is getting them to the garden and nurturing a sense of love and excitement to build on. If sweet corn is what gets them there, there is nothing wrong with that, but policing how folks show up will not encourage them to stay.

Nurturing rather than amending can also be seen with the need to center ecological timelines and capacity rather than the requirements of capital. Evalisa noted that if she tries to run her farm on human rather than ecological timelines there will be clear and noticeable negative impacts:

> If I plow too soon when the ground is too wet, I'm going to see that next year and the year after and the year after in the clay lumps that I made, because I was on my timeline when I shouldn't have been.

As Evalisa describes, attuning to natural rhythms is vital – if we prioritize human timelines over ecological ones, we will trap ourselves in loops of destruction and degradation. Centring place- and context-based knowledge and looking to what benefits all who call that place home creates a far more robust system.

4.4.3 Movement as Practice

The beginning of the findings section separated the borders and boundaries faced by participants engaged in place-based food work around the watershed into the physical, social, and epistemic. There are many ways in which limitations are faced, but most

manifest through immobilization – the restriction of movement, be that movement of the body, of belonging, or of vision. While a shift towards ecologically grounded scales, metaphors and economies are a key component of this, transcending imposed boundaries requires a practice of movement. Through this, I reframe the physical, social, and epistemic challenges – or even more broadly, the material, relational, and ethereal – into movement through or of space, belonging, and vision.

Movement through space – material – refers to the movement of the body as an individual and more broadly, to the concept of a foodshed and the need to have fluid, living boundaries for systems and relationships. This movement through space changes understandings of place, seen through how Marissa and Evalisa's perceptions of borders changed as they physically moved their bodies through and across them. As Evalisa noted, physical, nation-state borders have remained too static to be as meaningful as they might have been during the nation-state creation and enforcement project. Through the physical act of moving her body through watersheds, her focus shifted towards 'lake neighbours' as a watershed-first understanding of ecological space, and to the importance of challenging borders through ecologically grounded community building.

Movement through space was seen as key to not only envisioning foodsheds but as constitutive of them. Participants noted that foodsheds need to be dynamic: not a static return to the past but a fluid and dynamic integration of changing landscapes, climates, foods and medicines, and needs of the ecological community. Both Abbey and Lauren spoke to the importance of fluidity and ensuring that visions of foodsheds change over time and ecological realities. Evalisa further spoke to the importance and potential of transcending borders through her vision of a Lake Superior foodshed:

> It would look like a free flow of food within the Lake Superior watershed, without having to worry about the political borders. I think it would inevitably shift thinking to that broader, more ecological approach to other elements of life. Thinking more of the world as a place of watersheds and foodsheds rather than other boundaries. More connected and tied to the land and its systems than it currently is. It would shift people's thinking to be a part of something like that.

For many of the participants, the understanding of foodsheds was that there is no singular foodshed – they would be overlapping, ecologically-grounded spaces, attentive to pre-existing Indigenous sovereignty and local foodscapes, with dynamic, fluid, and multilayered jurisdictions in comparison to the static, hierarchical state. However, this also extended to notions of time and the importance of laying the foundation for food systems that can support caring communities in the future.

Foodsheds, as fluid and bioregional scales, involve a decentralized focus on interconnected hubs rather than the division between urban centres and rural peripheries. Julie and Shelby spoke to the importance of integrating decentralized ethical interdependence into foodsheds:

> Michigan and Wisconsin can grow stuff that we can't really grow in northern Minnesota. I'd like to see a regional focus – each region focusing on a certain thing with diversity between but also within the regions, and then sharing and trading within them. – *Julie*

> I think about trading a lot. We all have our own gifts, and in our communities maybe we each have our own main animal that we hunt. My friend's community Eagle Lake, they're starting a Manoomin project. Seeing that project flourish and getting Manoomin, and then maybe trading with my community that likes to hunt Moose meat, and then there are folks who are berry pickers or growers. Finding out ways to trade those foodways within the Lake Superior region, or even beyond that. I think that would be a really cool way to balance our food diet. It's about how we're taking care of each other and getting different foods to people that need it. – *Shelby*

Separate yet interconnected, these visions of foodsheds are grounded in respectful trading throughout and across jurisdictions. As Shelby described, rather than focusing on each community needing to be entirely self-reliant, (re)establishing ethical, interdependent trade between regions shifts focus towards bioregional food sovereignty and resilience. This understanding of overlapping jurisdictions and regional interdependence is critical – Shelby noted that while the Superior watershed might be an applicable scale for some, others may resonate more with Lake Nipigon or their river watershed, or not using a watershed scale at all.

The secondary aspect of a practice of movement relates to the movement of belonging. In an increasingly individualized world, understandings of community, relationships, and interdependence are overly segmented and restricted, and participants believed in the need to cross arbitrary borders and divides to support each other. In speaking to the impact of foodsheds and ecological scales on belonging, Evalisa said:

> I like to think that it would feel like a broader community. I think I would feel way less isolated. I feel like it would look like growers in our area feeling less disconnected, being more connected. Maybe nobody would care, but I like to think that people would care, and would feel like they are a part of something really neat.

As noted by Evalisa and echoed by other participants, bioregional scales connect people through shared ecological lived experience, rather than nationalism as an intangible imaginary. Forming communities with those experiencing similar challenges and opportunities could help reduce feelings of disconnection among producers and community organizers.

Part of this movement of belonging relates to how individuals come to find a home and become accepted into it. As Abbey, Karena and Marissa noted, placing borders on human and nonhuman natures must be questioned – it is a means of restricting belonging and community through demonizing rather than understanding contributions to be shared. Invasive discourses used against humans are mirrored in their impacts on multispecies beings, with Karena stating:

> When the Europeans came, the Native peoples were regarded as savage. Right now, we want to grow this hybridized corn but there's garlic mustard in the fields – is the garlic mustard the savage? Is there that parallel where certain plants are being treated in a very negative, inhospitable way, without recognizing their gifts? I think part of justice is to recognize the Indigenous knowledge coming as a gift to all our garden systems, and some of these plants, whether they be the native plants or the introduced ones, some of them were brought over because of their healing gifts. … I am less inclined to pull some of those weeds. Maybe some of the grasses that really interfere, but some of the others may have a place. The result may be a lower yield, but then we have many things to choose from.

A movement of belonging requires resisting invasive discourses in your language and understanding of community. As Julie noted, some beings may be considered pests for humans yet are integral to the life cycle of others, highlighting that a decentering of the self is needed to understand the right to food for all. In discussing foodsheds, both Abbey and Evalisa spoke against invasive discourses and the need to open community boundaries, with Abbey specifically extending it to the ethical integration of native and introduced plants:

> We need to support Manoomin, because it was one of the foundations of the foodshed here before colonization. The Lake Superior foodshed – wow. … Our foodshed would be a really bountiful foodshed. Because we have the traditional foods of the Anishinaabe, and we have the introduced, or colonized foods that perform well here. We have a lot of options. And when

> we think of feeding more than people, the foodshed would also include those organisms.

Expansive understandings of community and belonging extend an ethic of care to all living and eating in the place you call home. As Evalisa said, "it's a beautiful thing to remember how big your community is, beyond just the people."

An expansion of belonging requires deep listening, rather than speaking for. This is intimately connected to the importance of access, relationship building, and intersectionality in networks and movements. Abbey and Julie both spoke to this:

> I am not hearing the voices of food insecure people; I am hearing from the people who represent, defend, and do work related to them. But not from them. I think a food policy council should have food insecure people on it and should compensate them for it. I wasn't aware of that a few years ago, it wouldn't have occurred to me. I would've thought that it was my job to be that person's voice. Luckily, I made that shift. – *Abbey*

> What I've been working on personally is the slow relationship building. It can't be [rushed], especially when it's cross cultural. I'm working on that so that we don't end up being like, 'we're doing this thing, do you want to join?' but so that it is genuine, so we can genuinely join forces to work on a priority that this other group deems the priority, as opposed to it coming from us. – *Julie*

Bringing a lens of criticality and intentionality to belonging and who is excluded from participation can be a means for non-Indigenous folks to challenge settler stories of belonging/erasure for a plurality of movements, gifts, and collective desire for a home and community.

The final aspect of a practice of movement is the movement through and of vision. Reorienting towards ecological scales and metaphors allows for visions of change and

justice to flow outwards rather than stagnate through individualized imaginaries. Instead of focusing on the challenges of firmly bounded spaces and systems, and the difficulties of resisting them, movement of vision shows an understanding of how change ripples outwards. Movement of vision requires an emphasis on potential, rather than immediate impact, which can be seen through a commitment to hope. As noted by Shelby:

> I need to be an optimist and I need to have hope for a better future. Because I wouldn't be doing all of this shit if I didn't have hope, or if I couldn't see a better future where we can all live here.

Change flows through inspiration and example. Many participants noted this about the importance of youth, their desires for the future, with Abbey specifically highlighting the importance of youth visions of the future. Shelby expanded on this through the idea of ripples or dominoes through space and time – a simple conversation that may not feel like much to you could have a foundational impact on a young person, inspiring them to raise their voice in the future. The chain of love and care grows larger as it flows outward.

Rather than focusing on firmly bounded spaces and problems, a focus on fluidity, and the larger impacts of small, manageable actions, resists the disempowerment of complex systems and the saviourism associated with the need to save the world all at once and alone. As noted earlier, justice and, by extension, food sovereignty are rooted in access. Even if the goal is health, attained through food security, none of that happens without access, and the deep ties between access and education. Shelby highlighted this through the importance of supporting knowledge transfers, ensuring that herself and other Indigenous people in and around their traditional territories are supported in reclaiming food-based knowledge. It is through education and collective knowledge transferring that

small, intimate visions flow outwards, seeping through space and time just as water does. All participants spoke of the importance of education to their work and their visions of the future. Many described this through a desire to bring community together to learn – be that through conferences, workshops, skill development with subject-matter experts, or building relationships through community-oriented experiential programs. However, others described it in a political sense through the necessity of abolishing private property, land ownership, capitalism, and borders writ large; shifting to unbounded visions not limiting by the boundaries faced today. A movement of vision requires a shifting of focus – turning to lead with love and inspiration rather than exclusion and a narrowed scope.

4.5 Conclusion

The first theme, material, discusses how boundaries restrict movement of individual and social body/ies and imaginations, limiting the pursuit of theoretical and tangible change. By 'bordering' understandings of the self and community through individualized imaginaries, collective responsibility to reintegrate and reorient is eroded. The second theme, relational, describes how lived experience and relationships with place and community can provide the foundation from which to pursue or envision alternative, justice-oriented food (and social-ecological) systems. The third theme, ethereal, summarizes and synthesises the first two themes by showing how grounding in

relationships can help to transcend physical and psychological boundaries, assisting folks to imagine alternatives beyond their current material limitations. Grounding in collective and ecologically attentive language can help to transcend the illusions of separation and move towards understandings of collective interdependence and wellbeing. The next chapter will put these findings in conversation with the literature to speak to the potential of foodsheds as ecologically grounded imaginaries that have the potential to contribute to food systems change and empower individual and collective pursuits of social and ecological justice.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The question guiding this research was: *How do those engaged in place-based food work around the Lake Superior watershed envision a foodshed?* Implied by this question is another - *why* envision a Lake Superior foodshed? What utility or contribution could visions of a foodshed have on understandings of social, ecological, and food justice across the Lake Superior watershed and beyond?

In response to the limitations of capitalist and colonial imaginaries and boundaries, visions of a foodshed make space for alternative stories and imaginaries that promote action-oriented and fluid ways of relating to place and community. This chapter puts participant views in conversation with the literature to propose an understanding of foodshed imaginaries as coming through both the theory and practice of stories, movement, and vision. As with the structure of the findings, each section of this chapter flows into the next, building on the path carved by the one before it. In the findings chapter, 'ethereal' summarized and synthesized the connections between the themes that came before it, material and relational. Movement, the final subtheme to 'ethereal,' brought all previous themes and subthemes together, setting the table with the Lake Superior watershed as the table around which everyone, lake neighbours by location and consumption, sits to eat. This story is mirrored here in the discussion – stories, movement, and vision are interconnected and overlapping. While separated for the

purpose of analysis, these are not distinct, and the compulsion to repeat is evidence of their interplay.

5.2 Stories – from Disconnection to (re)Connection

As Cameron (2015) described, stories are material and relational practices that order relationships between people, places, and their communities (p.11). Foodshed imaginaries can be understood as stories based on (re)connection, not responding to but refusing the disconnection that grows from borders, boundaries, and the impacts of capitalism and colonialism on the broader ecological community. The movement from stories of disconnection to (re)connection can be traced through the three themes of the findings, which summarize the story of this research, as seen in Figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1: Reconnection through Stories

5.2.1 Stories of Disconnection

Material borders and boundaries manifest through the enforcement of stories of disconnection, which restrict various forms of movement. Singular stories of how to relate to place, each other, food, and food systems entrench linear avenues of action and reaction, response and resistance. These stories of disconnection narrate their own inevitability, framing efforts for change through reactive stances. These boundaries, as discussed in Chapter 4, were experienced physically, socially, and epistemically.

Physically through the barriers presented by borders – from the international scale that limits the sharing of food and community between nation-states to the personal scale, where capitalism and private ownership impact abilities to access, pursue or enact change. Socially through invasive discourses, whether alien, savage, or weed, that exclude human and nonhuman 'others' from belonging in certain spaces – externally imposed judgement and hierarchies that transform into geographies of exclusion. Epistemically through how extractive place names, like Copper Harbour, Iron Bay, and Silver Islet, conceive of the watershed under capitalist frameworks, as a place to be extracted from rather than a place that sustains life. Concerns around access – from access to the watershed and its connected waterways and water bodies for recreating or food provisioning to participation in food networks and decision-making spheres – spanned the physical, social, and epistemic and furthered the disconnection between people, places, and the attainability of change.

5.2.2 Resisting Separation

The second theme, relational, described how relationships with place and community can help address the disempowerment resulting from the boundaries discussed in the first theme, material. Food here is understood as a medium of relationship that helps to connect individuals with both place and community, thereby resisting single stories, imaginaries, and approaches through understanding the importance of diverse place- and context-based tools. Embodied engagement with place-based food systems highlighted how care (and harm) can go both ways in the garden and in community. Shelby's relationship to yarrow shows the role of stories as living memories, keeping embodied relationships with place and the ecological community alive through time. The potential of relationships to refuse separation flowed through the scales of the self, the home, and the community. Intentional and ethical relationship building resists and refuses separation. The act of co-becoming with people and places creates new stories rooted in connection, which refuses the narratives of stories of disconnection. This was seen through explicit reframings – participants changed their language to resist separation, to reorient away from doing 'the least bad' towards 'the most good'. Particularly interesting here was Evalisa's understanding of 'lake neighbours' compared to Julie's perception of Lake Superior as belonging to Duluth. Lake neighbours is a generative counternarrative that gains its strength through a relational scale shift, embedding community connection into place, rather than the disconnection, or separation, that comes from bisecting the watershed through colonial jurisdictions. These generative reorientations allow for a focus on what change is attainable, rather than the complexity of the changes that still need to come.

5.2.3 Stories of (re)Connection

The ‘ethereal’ spoke to the impact of (re)connection through (re)embedding, resisting abstractions through intimate groundings in love of place and community. Many participants spoke of the ideas of foodsheds and watersheds as being more appropriate, tangible, and practical scales to relate to place and each other. The use of ecological language and metaphors, from the Bullhead Lily and Land of Dark Fruits to the various reframing like fuel to compost, signaled a shift toward stories that are not only place-based in their source and content, but that transmit a social-ecological ethic of care. Evalisa spoke specifically to the power of reframing, noting that reframing away from separation of borders and disparate food systems to interconnected and interdependent foodsheds has the potential to create momentum for projects that “remind people that we’re connected beyond just the cities that we live in.”

Watershed scales and frameworks highlighted the interconnectedness between peoples and places, social and ecological justice. The act of thinking like water asks us to reflect on the impacts that we have on places and people that we do not immediately see, nurturing alternative understandings of small visions and actions, seen through Abbey, Evalisa and Shelby’s understanding of how inspiration and change ripples, or ‘seeps’ outward. Further, attention to socio-sedimentary layers and impacts through time and space resisted separation from uncomfortable histories, as with the layers of colonialism and resurgence present within the People’s Garden. Feelings of inevitability with regards to resisting systemic issues, such as capitalism’s eternal drive forward, were refused

through an ecologically grounded understanding of ebbs and flows regarding both pursuits of change and individual or collective capacity.

5.2.4 Emerging from Within, not Inscribed Upon

In the capitalist and settler-colonial context of the Lake Superior watershed, stories of disconnection and dominance have materialized into geographies of exclusion, prioritizing human-constructed separation rather than care and connection. Gibson-Graham (2006), in discussing the difference between necessary and surplus labor, describe the boundary as "inscribed on the body rather than emerging within it" (p. 89). To borrow this language, imaginaries and stories that prioritize dominance, control, and the 'inevitability' of capitalism and colonialism have been *inscribed on* the landscape, they do not *emerge from within* it. This narration of inevitability is a practice that can be disrupted through the telling of other stories, of counternarratives, that refuse the abstractions that alienate from place and context in favour of rooted alternatives.

Hayes et al. (2014) describe myths as fundamentally place-based stories, noting that "knowledge and story *emerge from within* a particular geography, while creating those places as they could be" (p.42, emphasis my own). Foodshed imaginaries in this context can be understood as myths, or mythic representations, that, like the bullhead lily, are both rooted in and flowing through place. In this sense, foodsheds (and watersheds) matter as alternative stories that emerge from *within* place and context, rather than being inscribed *upon* them. The berries of the Land of Dark Fruits emerge from *within,* grow from place, and, as Karena noted, is a name rooted in food sovereignty. Despite the

intentional language of emergence here, it must be noted that ‘emerging from’ can be used as a passive form of language that obscures individual roles in selecting or constructing meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.80). Dark fruits were identified in this research, but a foodshed in this region could just as easily reference white fish, wild rice, or multitudes of other foods. As noted elsewhere, there are as many names for places and systems as there are individuals who interact with them.

Foodshed imaginaries resist the placelessness and relationlessness of dominant understandings of food systems by connecting us through shared social-ecological lived experience and move us from focusing on needs to amend, to assets that we can nurture. Ferreyra et al. (2008) note that scales for collaboration must emerge from the community that is working for change, rather than be imposed from outside actors (p. 318). This approach to foodsheds constructs scale within meaningful settings, such as the scale of the home, or ecologically resonant places like watersheds. Karena explicitly contrasted the Land of Dark Fruits with the existing extractive and colonial language – rather than Copper Country or the United States, language that defines the home through extraction or colonization, she relates to her home through food. Remythologizing relationships through food counters the disembodiment, dislocations, and oppressive tendencies of dominant structures, including colonialism, capitalism, and individualism. The Land of Dark Fruits is named after how this place nourishes those who call the lands and waters home, rather than after what was extracted or the individual(s) who colonized it. In this sense, the Land of Dark Fruits is key to foodshed imaginaries – an ecological scale delineated by local food systems that does not simply focus on what grows well here, but rather how landscapes, foodscapes, and communities are co-constituted.

These stories matter because the way we talk about and envision things have real consequences, serving to restrict or expand our understandings of possibility (Bruner, 1991; Coulthard, 2014; Hunt, 2014a). Stories each carry their own diverse vocabularies, and thereby diverse ways of relating. The use of ecological language allows for reconnection and (re)embedding in specific places and contexts, without using the language of separation to structure, or limit, understandings of change and possibility (Hayes et al., p.45). As noted by Cameron (2016) in relation to Qabluunaq (*settler*) stories – "our task is not simply to tell better stories about the North, but rather to intervene in the structures of dispossession and domination that are made sensible, legible, and possible by the stories we tell" (p. 40). Telling better stories requires attending to the socio-sedimentary layers of place, meaning Indigenous worldviews and pursuits of food sovereignty must be upheld above settler desires for sovereignty through ownership. Changing our language to that which uplifts hope, visions, and community will sustain us for longer and empower us to imagine better futures (Davis et al., 2019; Freire, 1997; Ojala, 2012). Beyond theory, I saw this through Julie, Abbey, and Evalisa all speaking to the benefits of dreaming of socially and ecologically just food futures, and the impact of connection through the watershed. Foodshed imaginaries, as stories of connection, can materialize into geographies of care and inclusion rather than separation. This potential of stories to help move from restrictive to expansive is traced in the next section, movement.

5.3 Movement – from Restrictive to Expansive

A commitment to the theory and practice of movement are key to this understanding of foodsheds, particularly when placed in conversation with watersheds, as attention to the flow of water through a watershed mirrors the necessity of food, people, and ideas flowing through a foodshed. Ideas of belonging, imagination, and food-based relationships flow concentrically through the scales of the self, the home, the larger ecological community, and back again. Rather than tracing the flow of food into a location, as with traditional foodshed studies, this approach to foodsheds maps movement beyond supply chains. This section is rooted in the final sub-section of the findings, movement as both theory and practice. Movement – through space, of belonging, and through/of imagination – brings us from restricted to expansive, moving from singular, alienated stories and relations to plural and ecologically grounded ones. This movement from restricted to expansive is mirrored in each of the three forms of movement as noted in Figure 5.2 below, and in the following sections.

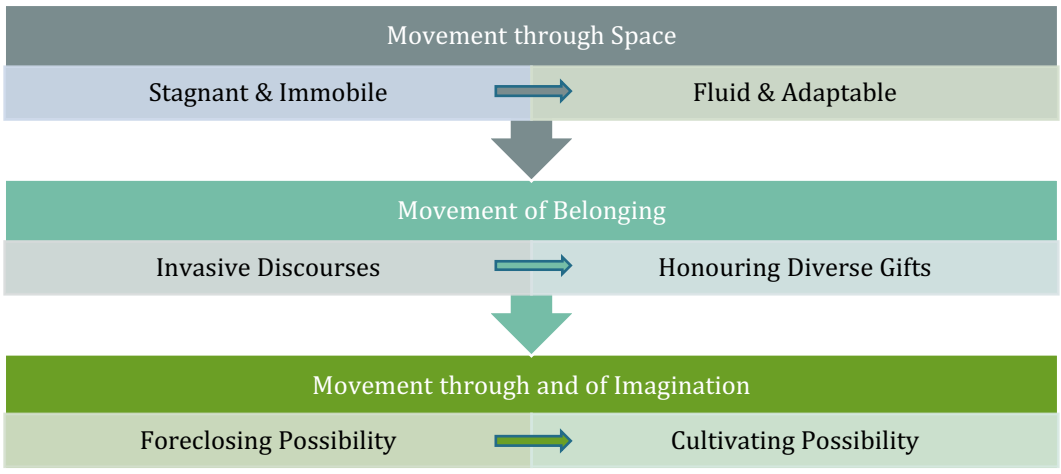

Figure 5.2: Movement through Space, Belonging, and Imagination

5.3.1 Movement through Space

Movement through space refers to movement of both individual and social bodies, and of the centrality of movement, or fluidity, to participants' conceptions of a foodshed. Key to this were dynamic and fluid understandings of place, including notions of ethical interdependence and regional trade. The Bullhead Lily, Abbey's description of how she found a home, speaks to the interplay between rootedness and fluidity, and the importance of both for foodsheds.

Stagnant stories – those that are static, not attentive to place and context, and that contain no movement towards change – place boundaries around movement. Lack of access, described as a significant limitation by many participants, is key to maintaining narratives of disconnection. Regardless of physical accessibility, when folks are made to feel unwelcome (or undervalued), they are less likely to seek access. The limitations of borders and stagnant approaches are particularly interesting through both Indigenous jurisdictions and fisheries. Despite Canada and the United States being constructed over Indigenous sovereignty and land-based relationships, and inherent rights to access upheld through Indigenous legal traditions and colonial treaties, significant restrictions have and continue to be placed on Indigenous mobility within these settler-colonial countries. As problematized by Lauren, differentiating fish by human jurisdictions, despite their ability to swim freely through transboundary regions like watersheds, ignores fluid ecological realities in favour of hierarchized understandings of ownership and division. The notion that, within Lake Superior, 'Michigan fish' are different from 'Ontario fish', engrains ideas that fish are separate commodities to be owned, managed, and accumulated, rather than communities living in a single body of water.

In this context, fluid and adaptable stories are those that incorporate the fluidity and circularity of water through watersheds to highlight ecological interdependence. Contrary to notions of linear progress, individual and collective realities are grounded in the water-based ecological knowledge of ebbs and flows. The ebbs and flows are echoed in the abundance of nature and the impacts of short steps and long visions – nurturing change is not a linear progress but a means of planting love and care and having it grow outwards. Abbey and Evalisa echoed this, noting that the pursuit of change and social-ecological justice must take the example of water – we need to seep outwards, through the cracks in overarching systems, from the place of the home to elsewhere. As they noted, boundaries and barriers cannot stop the flow of water, and eventually change will carve cracks through walls that have been reinforced over time. The barriers of the international border will not disappear, but supporting the work of individuals and networks that nurture communications across borders can ensure there is ongoing progress dismantling capacity, systemic, and bureaucratic boundaries. Both Shelby and Julie spoke to the importance of overlapping jurisdictions and the (re)establishment of regional trading networks as key to both supporting transitions to socially and ecologically just food systems, and in eroding the boundaries that limit change.

5.3.2 Movement of Belonging

Movement of belonging referred to expansive understandings of community and belonging. This was seen through the generative potential of bioregional scales compared

to nationalist imaginaries, and the importance of resisting invasive discourses through generous approaches to community contributions and mobility.

The use of invasive discourses through engrained ideas of individualism and entrenched Nature/Society dualism results in restrictions on who can or should belong in certain spaces (Kurtz, 2003; Hunt, 2014b; Moore, 2017a). These limitations can make it difficult to transcend social boundaries and create resilient and enduring social networks. As argued by Marissa, ideas of being 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of food are linked to the commodification of both food and the individual – without the capital imperative tied to food and individual worth, nobody would be seen as 'undeserving' of nourishment or community. Further, Abbey noted that putting borders on plants and other nonhumans, deeming them illegal, follows the same exclusionary logics of political borders. In this sense, these invasive discourses are enacted as a means of asserting control over the environment and categorizing the 'worthiness' of individuals and communities through their perceived impact on human (or capital's) instrumental goals.

Rather than premising your ability to belong in a space on the exclusion of others, an open sense of belonging can bring a sense of accountability and response/ability to your relationship with place and community (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Foley et al., 2020; Gilson, 2015). People are only (un)deserving of food if we approach eating and nourishment under capitalism. If we approach food through ethics of care, food becomes a right, a necessary and intimate connector between the whole web of life and a bridge through which to link diverse communities. As seen through Marissa's desire to reframe the purpose of the food pantry, honouring diverse reasons for seeking food expands the power and potential of food access resources. Participants spoke of the importance of

collectively sharing the burden of action, noting that while no one person can do this work in isolation, all have different skills and tools that can be used for the collective benefit, or, in Julie's words, everyone has tools to add to the collective toolbox. Having shared communities or hubs to rely on ensures that individuals can rest when their capacity is at a max and that support can flow from all sides. It is only through sharing the burden and the gifts that we can move towards socially and ecologically just communities. Importantly, communities that recognize the fundamental importance of interdependence between diverse social and ecological communities (Pitt, 2018). While certain beings and worldviews can be truly 'invasive' and harmful in specific places, the gift they offer is the knowledge of when, and how, to turn away and reprioritize the values and communities specific to the places and contexts we live in.

5.3.3 Movement through and of vision

Movement of vision spoke of the importance of resisting immobility in the imagination of alternatives, and the importance of hope and optimism to envisioning change. Further, it described participants' view of how change and inspiration ripple outwards, and how small actions, including shifts in language, carry deep potential for larger impacts. The language here, foreclosing and cultivating possibility, are borrowed from Gibson-Graham (2006), and used intentionally. As we move through and with inspiration, we shift away from *foreclosing* as capitalist language, associated with taking away someone's home because of their inability to meet capital requirements, to *cultivating* as ecologically grounded language, associated with the care-full growing and nurturing a love of the home.

Hierarchies of power can foreclose the desire to act by imagining and enforcing a world in which individual action cannot create change, and that the existence of systems of domination and harm is inevitable. This climate contributes to disempowerment and capacity concerns for those who work within or against systems of power, as the thought of having to fix globally interconnected systems all at once, and alone, shrinks the realm of the possible and attainable (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Ojala, 2012), seen through Carson and Marissa's comments on the challenges of transforming – or moving beyond – food banks. The economy-first nature of our society prioritizes fast and cheap over ethical and sustainable, supported through the mass availability of cheap foods and the undervaluing of human labour, restricting ability to pay the true costs (Gilson, 2015; Moore, 2017a; 2017b), supported through Julie's discussion around externalization of 'true costs' in mass-produced and imported foods. Further, the language used to describe places around the watershed reinforce epistemological boundaries around their worth and purpose. Particularly, the use of place names that reflect what has been extracted, such as Iron Bay, Copper Harbour, Silver Islet. The use of extractive place names conceives of the watershed not as a place that sustains life itself, but as a place to extract wealth from for the benefit of other places. If the watershed is both a physical location and a story, the use of extractive place names and colonial jurisdictions restricts the watershed to capitalist and colonial imaginaries, rather than attending to the plurality of place-, community- and context-specific realities that structure engagement around the lake.

Building – and believing – in alternatives is a practice that we cultivate through time, community engagement, and shifts to our language and approaches. When speaking of foodsheds or how to bolster community, Abbey and Shelby both related the spiderweb

as a means of connecting disparate places, communities, and movements. The spiderweb is intimately tied to the idea that interconnected struggles cannot be resisted in isolation, and no one person carries all the knowledge or tools needed to move beyond the current realities. In this sense, the spiderweb is both a means of explaining place-attachment and describing the power and necessity of collective action and knowledge mobilization. Social and ecological justice is context, community, and place-specific, and informed by individual and collective social locations and biases. A one-size-fits-all or top-down approach cannot achieve true justice, and the same goes for the pursuit of foodsheds – these realities will look different across places and collective experiences.

5.3.4 Being both Rooted and Fluid

Freedom to move – whether it be physically through space, through different relationships, or shifting and growing imaginations – is key to resisting the narration of inevitability and path-dependency that comes with restricted stories. This movement, as discussed above, moves us from restrictive to expansive – from singular approaches to change and the inevitability of failure, to a plurality of approaches and the necessity of learning through experience. I ground my understanding of the importance of movement in Abbey's understanding of how the Bullhead Lily can both root in place and flow through them, and discuss it through the importance of shifting focus, alternative scales, and extending circles of care.

Borders and boundaries are manifestations of imaginaries; even if they are human constructed, they also have concrete implications that shape human activity in and

through place. Maps, whether cartographic or discursive, change our understandings of space, place, and structure both individual and collective behaviour in specific settings. Capitalism and colonialism have shaped landscapes, as noted by Ballantyne (2014), "capitalism is not something that just changes people's way of relating to the land, it changes how people *think* about land, and how our bodies *behave* with each other through land" (p. 81). The shaping of landscapes is not only done through bordering, but through the shift from nature to resource, and how, to many, soil is more valuable in a bag than on the land (Hanson, 2016; Moore, 2017a), seen through the creation of the DIGs. These stories of disconnection limit movement within specific bounded places and imaginaries.

The use of ecological scales and metaphors re-roots stories in place, resisting the placelessness and relationlessness of dominant social and spatial imaginaries. Further, it calls to the importance of plurality in theory and praxis, seen here in the use of foodsheds and watersheds as bioregional settings for health and wellbeing (Bunch et al., 2011; Gislason et al., 2018; Morrison et al., 2015) and action-oriented conceptual vocabularies (Horst & Gaolach, 2015; Kloppenburg et al., 1996). As in foodsheds and watersheds, relationships flow from the self to the home and beyond through nested spirals with no clear start and end; attention to the intimate relationships and interdependence between the three scales helps to avoid getting stuck in any one place.

The importance of being rooted and fluid is highlighted through both tangible and conceptual connections to the flow of water through watersheds. Watersheds provide the source and access to what Bunch et al. (2011) describe as "non-negotiable determinants of human health and well-being" (p.2). Not only do human communities rely on their watersheds and all who live within it for their own survival, but they rely on the

stewardship of those who live upstream. Participants echoed Kimmerer (2015) and Kurtz' (2003) interconnected understandings of impact, respectively noting that as "everyone lives downstream" (p. 97) from somewhere, we all have responsibilities to ensure that "no community's solution [becomes] another community's problem" (p. 891). Understandings of interdependence further highlight the need to attend to externalities both in and through place – rather than local food being the presumed solution, ensuring that decisions are made rooted in specific ethics is key. This cycles back to the places we live as well – as the lily teaches, it is not just about finding a place to call home but having that home welcome you into the soil in return. In this, both reciprocity and accountability are necessary to root in place.

While limited capacity may result in the need to prioritize need, overarching goals should be to extend the borders of community whenever possible, to think of how to grow the circle of care. The spiderweb is a means of speaking to the power of decentralized yet interconnected communities and movements, reinforcing the notion that collective power results in resilient, rhizomatic (or Oceanic) communities and movements (Hayes et al., 2014); Te Punga Somerville, 2017). This was extended to the broader ecological community through the role of the fourth sister, the sunflower, in ensuring there is a harvest for nonhumans. Rather than demonizing the nonhuman community for eating human food sources or finding ways to expel them from the garden, the sunflower is planted in explicit recognition of the right to food for all, including our multispecies kin. A four sisters garden shows a multispecies and relational approach to community-based ecosystem and food system management.

These varied forms of movement are important as they allow us to attend to the interconnected impacts of changes to systems, shifting perspectives around the attainability of change (Ojala, 2012; Yaka, 2019). The relationship between movement and fostering hope comes through a practice of empowerment that damages rigid structures through understanding the importance of small steps: individuals cannot change systems alone, but this is no reason to decide your actions are not 'enough' – starting points reverberate outwards, and attention to ripples and reverberations ensures actions are seen through their full potential rather than through their limited immediate impacts (Freire, 1997). This growth is seen through Shelby's analogy of the movement from a seed to a garden, a person to a movement, and ideas to new worlds. These forms of movement nurture hope and generative solutions rather than amending or reacting to ongoing problems and needs. The connections between place-based stories, practices of movement and generative change are discussed in the following section, vision.

5.4 Vision – from Reactive to Generative

Most studies on foodsheds trace the flow of food into specific regions (Horst & Gaolach, 2015; Kloppenburg et al., 1996; Kloppenburg & Lezberg, 1996; Peters et al., 2008). While a focus on food flows is important to know, it only creates a map of where our food comes *from*, not where we want our food systems to *go*. An alternative focus on telling different stories, (re)storying place and community through food, allows for a deeper reimagining of what is possible within our food systems and how we relate to one

another. By refusing the limitations of capitalist and colonial imaginaries and boundaries, visions of a foodshed make space for alternative stories, scales, and imaginaries as action-oriented ways of relating to place and community. Visions can be empowering through the practice of 'imagining otherwise' to enact new futures – as Julie noted, "To really imagine a Lake Superior foodshed is really cool. It feels good in my brain to think about."

5.4.1 Visions of Foodsheds

The participants in this project understood and envisioned foodsheds in the Lake Superior watershed in diverse yet interconnected ways. Their visions of foodsheds could be broken into three broad categories:

1) *Movement/Fluidity* – of borders, belonging, food, ideas, etc., The flow of water through a watershed as highlighting the importance and necessity of fluidity in all things, compared to the stagnant/restricted stories.
2) *Ethical Relationships* – community care over capital, understanding place as a community member, and seeing the benefits of interdependence from the ground up – from the microbiome to the globe.
3) *Place and Context-Driven* – necessity of all things being both grounded in place and flowing through to others/self-replicating according to context. Seen through ecological metaphors like the Bullhead Lily and Land of Dark Fruits.

All three categories have been described in the sections above and summarize visions that signal a shift from reactive to generative approaches.

In food studies, and otherwise, we often focus on the systems that need to change for us to get to justice. While these systems do need to change, approaching change through the limitations or frameworks of the systems that cause harm often results in becoming trapped under their weight. Reactive approaches such as these trap responses and pursuits of change under the systems that cause harm. Reorienting toward generative approaches requires a (re)visioning of possibility. Generative approaches are in service of acting *for* rather than *against*, as despite the need to destroy certain elements, we must build new and caring responses to move beyond violence (FitzGerald, 2022). As much space has been devoted to restricted visions throughout this thesis, this section will focus primarily on the importance of shifting to generative focuses – of nurturing, rather than amending. As Brown (2021) notes, "what we pay attention to grows" (p. 34). Participant visions of foodsheds as they relate to industrial food systems are summarized in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: Comparing Industrial Food Systems and Foodsheds

	Industrial Food System	**Foodsheds**
Approaches to Change	'amending' to fit imposed and external needs.	'nurturing' to meet collective and emergent needs.
Belonging	Being (un)deserving of food/community support if you cannot afford it, invasive discourses used to exclude.	Recognizing shared gifts and the importance of migration, along with the varied reasons for movement.
Boundaries	Bound to colonial/capitalist scales and boundaries – borders permeable from the top down (corporations), not the bottom up (grassroots/local producers or harvesters).	Multi-jurisdictional, fluid ecological scales. Grounded in place yet flowing through – attentive to interconnected impacts and the need to form communities beyond human boundaries.
Direction	Linear flow of progress – removal of 'ebbs' from 'ebbs and flows'.	Cyclical flow of relations/abundance – attention to and respect for necessity of 'ebbs'.
Justice	Justice often focusing on access to products rather than decision making (security not sovereignty). Often restricted to global-scale social challenges.	Justice (and health) as dependent on healthy ecologies – change must be holistic, not just with a focus on wellbeing, but on the need for bottom-up and multispecies decision-making power.
Relationships	Survival through commodification of both food (commodity) and person (consumer). A 'placeless' and obscured web of relations – 'food from nowhere/no one'	Bioregional approaches to food sovereignty that reject objectification and commodification in exchange for acknowledgement of relationality and interdependence.
Scale	Economy dominating humans dominating nature – living on environments.	Economy and society situated within nature – living in ecologies.

As seen in the table above, participant visions of foodsheds reframed the challenges of industrial food systems. Rather than solely responding to the harms of the industrial food system by focusing on the borders and boundaries to be overcome, foodshed imaginaries shift the focus to a generative development of regional assets and bioregional food sovereignty, in line with Gibson-Graham's (1996, p.192) understanding of "ethical practices of being-in-common" as co-extensive with regional watershed scales. These

visions map closely onto both Gray et al.'s (2001, p.30) four principles of community-based ecosystem management, and Kloppenburg et al.'s (1996, pp. 36-9) five emergent principles of foodsheds: 1) moral economies where food systems are re-embedded in human needs rather than economic ones, 2) commensal communities composed of sustainable and reciprocal relationships between people, multispecies beings, and the lands and waters on which food grows, 3) the importance of self-protection, secession, and succession – seen through refusals to accept narratives of inevitability by both divesting from harm and creating alternatives, 4) shifting scalar focus to proximity, rather than localism, to understand interconnected regional impacts, and 5) nature as measure, where affection for place ensures ecological limits are respected rather than ignored. In other words, how a love of place fosters a transition from amending to nurturing.

A shift to the intimate scale of the relational allows for attention to be paid to how everything flows from the self to the home, to beyond. The body, or 'individual' self, is not a single unit, rather diverse systems and ecologies working together for the functioning of a larger whole, similar to the structure of watersheds and bioregions. Just as the water cycle is present on a global level, watershed scale, and intimately in the body, this micro-meso-macro can be replicated from the self, home, beyond. The language of the Land of Dark Fruits roots regional food systems in place, context, ethical relationships, and movement, and shifts focus from how global acts impact and restrict us locally, to how local or regional actions can intervene in global problems.

5.4.2 Nurturing rather than Amending

Approaches to systems change often focus on the need for individuals to radically change our actions to ensure we are not contributing to harm or worsening social and ecological conditions for others. While this is important, participants acknowledged that, when living under complex and globally interconnected systems, it is nearly (if not entirely) impossible to divest from harm. Participants noted that reorienting towards how we can have the greatest positive impacts, rather than focusing on eliminating all negative impacts, shifts the focus from reactive to generative approaches. Acting for something, rather than solely against, is generative: it maps a pathway forward to where you want to be, increasing the radical potential of visions to create hope, empowerment, and facilitate positive action.

Nurturing rather than amending changes the focus to a care economy by addressing needs through nurturing place and context-specific assets, rather than amending through outside interventions. This extends to the importance of meeting people where they are and resisting entrenched hierarchies. This is not a sympathetic outreach to those that need your 'help,' and helping on your own timelines. Rather this requires a reframing – acknowledging that the tables at which you sit are not necessarily the right ones, and at times you will need to leave your seat, build relationships with others to get invited to other tables and see how you can support folks where they are, rather than where you'd like them to be. This reframing assists in refusing the path-dependency of dominant stories: amending implies a constant need to respond to problems through external inputs, whereas nurturing shifts the vision to the strengths of place – whether it be in relation to

ecological realities, the creation of relationships, or potentials to imagine otherwise, this creates a foundation from which to envision and pursue justice-oriented alternatives.

5.4.3 Foodshed Imaginaries – "thinking ecologically"

Connecting all sections in this chapter, foodshed imaginaries are the stories we tell of visions that move through place. A commitment to nurture rather than amend asks us to listen to the needs and assets of place and respond to human-caused problems through place- and context-specific pathways. This is a practice of thinking (and living) ecologically, not economically – of shifting our understandings of what is 'economical' towards that which is 'ecological,' thereby strengthening our economies through deep integration with healthy ecologies. Mirroring the distinction between space and place, an environment is something that is out there – space – that we live on, that we deforest, that we pollute, that we have to 'fix', whereas an ecology is something that we are a part of. In short, we live *inside* of an ecology and *on* an environment. In this understanding, industrial food systems are something humans have inscribed on place, something that extracts at the expense of ecological wellbeing, whereas a foodshed becomes something that we live in, webs of relationships that we are a part of. In this way, foodshed imaginaries can be understood as a way of thinking that underscore pursuits of change, such as the creation of alternative food initiatives.

'Thinking ecologically' offers an opportunity to transcend the limitations of human constructed boundaries and "find genuine opportunity to challenge and transform our relationships with the world, one another, and the heavy cloak of the self." (Larsen &

Johnson, 2012, p. 643; Kloppenburg et al., 1996). This is a politics of becoming – a process, not simply a single action. These shifts in language are key, as they highlight the need to rebuild relationships with ecologies across scales to move towards socially and ecologically just food futures. Consistent with a radical food geography approach, an intimate understanding of historical and ongoing power relations within food systems and multiscalar approaches to transcending them are necessary for a transition toward foodsheds. 'Thinking ecologically' asks us to understand human-constructed systems and boundaries in how they impact diverse beings and natures – both social and ecological. This affirms Kloppenburg et al.'s (1996) statement that "until and unless we know where we are in the larger social and political ecology of the global food system, we may not be able to move effectively toward realization of a foodshed locally" (p. 39).

Foodsheds are stories of relationships and are necessarily fluid and dynamic. The Land of Dark Fruits is a story of bioregional possibility, where food-based relationships become constitutive of alternative scales and understandings of relationship and community, resisting hierarchization in favour of grounded, rhizomatic dreams. Foodshed imaginaries can provide an ethical framework through which to approach and entrench alternative food initiatives, helping to move justice-oriented alternatives from the margins to the home. It is critical to note here that foodsheds are not the defining relations structuring engagement with place, or a system to replace the dominance of colonial and capitalist relations. Rather, foodsheds are a vision, a single layer of possibility mapped over – yet not obscuring – continuously overlapping socio-sedimentary layers of place, community, and engagement. These imaginaries are important as they nurture hope in the

attainability of climate change response and movement building (Freire, 1997; Goralnik et al., 2014; Ojala, 2012).

Much of the findings have been organized to show how the home can provide a sense of nourishment for individuals and movements – when we start on the intimate scales of self and home, care can extend beyond to broader realities. The seeming immutability of large-scale systems like colonialism and capitalism makes it difficult to imagine life outside of these economic systems, creating challenges faced by those seeking to transform food systems. However, through deep listening and patience, priorities can shift towards ethical imperatives rather than capital accumulation. We need generative imaginaries rooted in language of hope to build alternatives and move forward – as Kelley (2002) notes, “the map to a new world is in the imagination” (p. 2).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

> As in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. (van Manen, 1997, p. 13)

This thesis was my attempt to tell a different story about food and foodsheds, but it is difficult to write a conclusion to a story that is not yet complete. To paraphrase van Manen (1997), to summarize this story risks destroying its meaning, as like waves on sand, this story continually rewrites and erases itself. Kelley (2002) further describes poetry as "an emancipation of language and old ways of thinking" and connects it explicitly to progressive social movements through its power to "enable us to imagine a new society" (p.9). In this sense, we can see how poetry connects phenomenology, ecologies, and relationships. Foodshed imaginaries are an exercise in geopoetics, a creative practice that encourages affection and action for the ecologies we live in by narrating interdependence through intimate relationships between lands and waters, the foods that grow on them, and the multispecies beings working towards commensal communities. Part of the harms of industrial food systems comes from the distancing and alienation it creates, enforcing views of food from nowhere and no one. Through interacting with my participants and the watershed, I've come to see that engagement and relationships with place and the broader ecological community separates *nowhere* into its constitutive parts – *now here* – re-imbuing space with the symbolic relationships inherent to place.

Alice Te Punga Sommerville (2017) asked us to imagine Ocean Studies as an ocean itself: “without a singular starting point or origin; endlessly circulating. Not beyond genealogy, because nothing is, but possessed of a genealogy that is impossibly and beautifully wide” (p.28). This research serves as a call to action to those who undertake future research on foodsheds, asking them to imagine foodsheds as watersheds – intimately interacting with multitudes of places while flowing through them, endlessly circulating through and across scales, and impossibly and beautifully diverse. Stories of foodsheds can, and should, be told, but they will always be partial. This fluidity and diversity could be seen through the varied visions of and approaches to generative justice-oriented change held by my participants. Despite a plurality of approaches and desires, all shared similar understandings of the importance of nurturing connections across borders, while working to erode the powers that prevent those connections from forming. Participants’ use of ecological language re-embedded stories into the specific places and contexts they arose from, without using language of oppression to structure ways forward or limit knowledge and change from flowing to other places. Key to this is an understanding of the specificity of these myths – while these stories and approaches can be sources of knowledge and inspiration for other people in other places, this specific story can not be replicated. This story can be traced through the pathway created by the themes and sub-themes, summarized in table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1: Condensed Codebook

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Material – Borders and Boundaries Participants' understandings of the boundaries they/others face that limit the realization of place-based socially and ecologically just food systems.	**Physical Borders**	The impacts of physical national borders, private property and ownership, and lack of access.
	Social Boundaries	The impact of judgement, hierarchies, socio-economic boundaries, and 'invasive discourses' on limiting community network generation and participation.
	Epistemic Boundaries	How the impacts and perceived inevitability of global systems and structures contribute to restricted thought and action, distancing, and the internalization of capitalist frameworks.
Relational – Place and Community The impact of relationships with place and community on the perceived attainability of socially and ecologically just transformation.	**The Self**	How the participants understood their community and who they were responsible to, their connection to place and the ecological community, and how engaging with food and/or place contributes to their wellbeing.
	The Home	The importance of place-attachment to food systems transformation, particularly participant relationships with Lake Superior. Understood through the home as landscape, as community, and as potential for transformation.
	The Community	An extension of the home as potential, understanding the importance and potential of ethics of care and place-attachment to contribute to positive change. Understood through water-based metaphors such as upstream and downstream and rippling or seeping outward through time and space. Importance of inspiration flowing through
Ethereal – Cultivating Possibility Participants' dreams and aspirations regarding place-based, socially and ecologically just food futures, and understandings of how to get there.	**Rooted Dreams**	The importance of future visions and dreams that are rooted in place and generative approaches, and how shifting toward ecological language and metaphors supports transitions away from individualizing worldviews.
	Moral or Ecological Economies	The importance of reorienting economic and community approaches towards ethics of care, intentional practices of reciprocity with the ecological community as a whole and nurturing rather than amending change.
	Movement as a Practice	The importance of movement, particularly through relationships, to transcending boundaries. Reframes and returns to the previous themes and subthemes to trace their movement - through space (material), of belonging (relational), and through vision (ethereal).

Ensuring the stories we tell (and our approaches to change) attend to the diverse socio-sedimentary layers of place can assist us to frame pathways forward through the complementary and competing visions and contexts of place, rather than mapping them over and obscuring pre-existing opportunities and limitations. Whether it be in relation to

stories shared around the kitchen table, in the garden, or over a meal, food has and continues to play an important role in sharing, co-creating, and enacting new ways forward. As Hayes et al. (2014) note, we should be "encourage[ing] forms of storytelling that move beyond the conceptual and linguistic barriers, objectifications, and separations [toward those that] invite a sense of kinship with the earth" (p. 45). Getting to justice-oriented food futures not only requires new stories and visions, but intimate understandings of history to know what to change. By 'thinking ecologically,' we can build resilient futures by grounding ourselves in the assets of the places we call home and follow the example of rivers and watersheds by learning to carve pathways around (and through) the human-constructed and enforced boundaries that limit pursuits of change.

6.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While there are numerous approaches to and visions of alternative food systems, all carry their own limitations. Whether it is a focus on urban contexts, a lack of acknowledgement of ecological implications, or pursuing justice-oriented change within human-constructed boundaries like national borders, these limitations restrict the scope and sphere of change. Approaching food outside of capitalism, and grounding in ecological scales and imaginaries creates opportunities to approach food-systems change without the scope of focus being a response to capitalism and colonialism. A relational approach that highlights interdependence between human and nonhuman natures and healthy ecologies (ecological determinants of health) has the potential to incorporate the deep interconnections and reliance between the entire ecological web of life into the

imagination of the future, moving toward multispecies co-management of bioregional settings.

One large limitation was the lack of participants from the northeast side of the watershed or the Lake Nipigon area. Although this project used the Lake Superior Living Labs Network (LSLLN) hubs as points of departure, the research would have been strengthened by representation from these shores. Further, despite there being many BIPOC organizations and initiatives across the watershed, this research spoke to predominantly settler organizations and individuals. As discussed in the recruitment section, one of the key reasons for this was the lack of pre-existing relationships between researcher and prospective participants, along with the presumed impact of structural barriers impacting BIPOC organizations and individuals, contributing to lower capacity. Another limitation was my inability to connect with anyone at the Minnesota Farmers Union, particularly someone involved in the Minnesota Foodshed project. While they employ a spatial approach to foodsheds, it would have been valuable to have their input in this project. As the LSLLN continues to grow, it would be beneficial to support the development of new hubs in the northeast and diversify the steering committee and network partners by fostering deeper relationship with Indigenous communities and BIPOC organizations operating across the watershed. Future research should be targeted on different populations, and more diverse participants.

If a project like this were to continue, it would be valuable to conduct follow up interviews with interested participants. In that case, it would be interesting to compare the location and method of mobility chosen for subsequent interviews, and whether that would change the context of the conversations. Ultimately, this would be an interesting

project for a collaborative and relational grounded theory approach, where similar methods could be used alongside group discussions and reflections with knowledge co-creators to create a place-based approach to social and ecological justice that is both rooted in the specific places all call home and flowing through to the other places. Further, as the central focus on story and narrative became apparent through the research process, re-attempting this project using a narrative approach rather than phenomenology would also likely yield interesting results.

This research is very specifically grounded in the Lake Superior watershed, and future research on foodsheds in other areas – whether watershed focused or not – will necessarily be different. Place-specific research will share similarities with other places yet will always be distinct because of the specificities of the place- and context-based realities of the research setting. It would be very interesting to see whether future research at the intersections of foodsheds and watersheds would result in similar stories, particularly when the watersheds are bisected by borders. Similarly, it would be interesting to see whether watershed-based relationships differ when the watershed falls under a single human jurisdiction, or whether research settings at the intersection of different culturally important watersheds or ecological growing zones for food would result in different relationships with place.

This research has taught me the importance of honouring both the specificities of place, and the vastly interconnected and interdependent nature of places and peoples. Rather than continuing the academic debates between the prioritization of the local or global at the expense of other scales, I hope that other scholars and practitioners take the example of water and watersheds and incorporate a fluid and interconnected

understanding of place to future research. Further, that future research takes seriously the importance of envisioning alternative systems to bring them into life, rather than getting stuck problematizing existing systems – reacting to needs are important in the short term, but only generative visions grounded in place- and community-specific assets will get us closer to the futures we want to see.

6.2 Reflections

This is not simply about the power of capitalism or colonialism, or the borders they enforce, rather, of the language and cultural imaginaries that render them seemingly 'absolute' and 'uncontestable'. Borders are not simply placed around the 'undesirable others' of the human and nonhuman worlds, but around stories and imaginaries as well, demarcating the 'Others' from those who belong. Stories, the foundation of our socio-political communities, have been co-opted and translated away from multiple ecologically grounded understandings of action, impact, and community, to individualizing stories of singular economic realities. By restricting the stories, and thereby the imaginaries, that are culturally accessible and acceptable (re: transmissible), we have been 'sold' a story of disconnection and distraction, making it increasingly difficult to envision alternatives.

However, the idea of a 'single story' is not true in practice – there are always a plurality of ways of relating to place and to each other, and investing in alternatives can help them grow. While narratives can restrict change, they also carry the potential to

resist or refuse ‘singularity’ in worldviews and methods of change. Similarly, despite the Land of Dark Fruits being used here, I do not believe a foodshed, or Lake Superior, can carry a single name. If this is a starting point, then further engagements with this topic in this region will offer new names and approaches. A grounding in relationships can assist in transcending enforced boundaries, moving folks closer to envisioning, and enacting, their dreams of the future of food systems in the places they call home and beyond.

Approaching socially and ecologically just food futures through intentional and reciprocal relationships with places, peoples and multispecies beings allows us to frame our pursuits of change through ecologically grounded and responsive acts, ensuring the places we call home can continue to sustain healthy ecologies into the future. An ongoing task for us all will be to reflect on how we can shift our engagement around the watershed from *inscribed* to *emerging* and shift our understanding of our locations from *on* environments to *within* ecologies. This is one small piece of an ongoing story, an offering that I hope will ripple outwards, inspiring future action and movement toward socially and ecologically just food futures – starting in Gitchigami, flowing through to other places, and eventually returning home.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

To be used in emails or verbally, text will be adapted to address individual participants

Email subject line: Request for participation in research study on food justice in the Lake Superior Watershed

Dear [name of potential participant],

I hope you are well. I am contacting you about participating in a research study titled *Building Social and Ecological Justice Through Place-Based Engagements: Relational Ecologies in the Lake Superior Foodshed.* This research seeks to examine the potential contributes of place-based relationships and movements to social and ecological justice and approaches this topic through food systems in the Lake Superior watershed. This research will fulfill the requirements of my Master of Environmental Studies and may also be used for a peer-reviewed publication. Results from the study are intended to contribute to deepening relationships across the watershed and contributing to academic and activist understandings of food justice and social and ecological resiliency.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this project. Participation will include a 45-to-60-minute interview during the summer months of 2022. As this research focuses on relationships to food systems in the watershed (or, foodshed), the interview will occur in a location and method of mobility that represents how you connect to the foodshed. If you agree to be interviewed, you will be asked to identify a meaningful location and a method of mobility (for example: walking, sitting, gardening, fishing, harvesting) that best represents how you connect to this place.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you will have the option to have your identity remain confidential or to be identified in the results. You may decide to be fully identified (name, location, and other identifiers), partially identified, or completely anonymous. If you consent to have the interview recorded, I will send you a transcript after the interview is complete for you to review. During that time, you may change your mind around being identified or anonymous. After the project is complete, I will send you a summary of the research results in the form of a community-based outcome.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email to receive more information about the project and to set up an interview time and location (should you choose to proceed).

Kindly,

Sarah Siska
Master of Environmental Studies Student
Lakehead University
ssiska@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix B: Participant Information Letter

Building Social and Ecological Justice Through Place-Based Engagements: *Relational Ecologies in the Lake Superior Foodshed*

Thank you for your interest in this research project. Your time and help are truly appreciated. This sheet gives some basic information on the research, what you can expect, and how the data will be handled and used in the future. If anything is unclear or you want more information, please feel free to ask any question you wish, our contact details are at the end of this document.

What is this research about?

This research seeks to identify how engaging with place-based food systems can build social and ecological justice. It will focus on food justice in the Lake Superior watershed, and the role of relationships to building healthy communities. Further, it will look at what needs to change and/or be supported to create a socially and ecologically just future both where you live, across the watershed, and beyond.

What is being requested of me?

I am asking you to participate in a 45-to-60-minute interview to share your knowledge and perspectives about this topic in the context of your experience working in food systems in the Lake Superior watershed. Your participation is completely voluntary; you may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. As the research focuses on the ways that people connect to food in the watershed, the interview will occur in a place and method of mobility that represents how you connect to this topic. If you agree to be interviewed, you will be asked to identify a place where *you* have the deepest connection to food and Lake Superior, and a method of mobility (examples include, but are not limited to: walking, sitting, gardening, fishing, cooking, harvesting). The place and method of mobility will be decided through conversation before the interview is scheduled and will need to reflect safety and accessibility for both yourself and the researcher.

Are there any benefits or risks I should be aware of?

Conducting this interview will help me understand your experience with food justice and the Lake Superior watershed. This research aims to contribute to the Lake Superior Living Labs Network (LSLLN)'s primary goal, which is to "enhance capacity for regenerative social-ecological systems at the local and regional scales in the Lake Superior Watershed"[4]. Through this, the research hopes to create a foundation for future research and action pursuing meaningful change in the watershed and beyond. As this research seeks to deepen relationships across the Lake Superior watershed, you will be provided with the information to join the LSLLN listserv which you may join to connect with others pursuing similar aims. I will also share the results of this research with you and other participants in the form of a community-oriented resource, which may help the focus of the work that you

[4] LSLLN. (n.d.). LSLLN Goals. Retrieved from Lake Superior Living Labs Network: https://livinglabs.lakeheadu.ca/living-lab-approach/goals-and-intended-outcomes/

are doing. To thank you for the time put into this study, you will be offered a $50CAD honorarium for yourself or a local organization of your choice. While there are very few perceived risks from participating in this research, I recognize that some questions may be perceived as sensitive, and you may not want to disclose certain information. As noted below, your identity will only be disclosed if you explicitly consent to be identified. There is a risk that participating in this research may trigger negative emotions connected to climate anxiety. Further, it is possible that the place and method of mobility selected may involve additional risks. Your participation is voluntary, and you are only being asked to offer information you feel comfortable sharing in locations and methods that are safe and accessible to you and the researcher. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person research carries greater or additional risk. All interviews will take place outdoors, one-on-one and at a safe distance. Your comfort and safety are of the utmost importance. If you prefer any additional precautions, such as medical mask-wearing and/or physical distancing, those will be upheld for the interview. If you or I experience any COVID-19 symptoms or test positive within five days of the interview, we will reschedule when it is safe to do so. These guidelines may be updated if public health guidelines change before the time of research.

How should I expect to be treated?

This research aims to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity. Centrally, this means that in participating in this research you should feel that you, and your contribution to this research, have been treated with respect. Participation is entirely voluntary, and all information offered will be treated in good faith. You are welcome to refuse to participate, withdraw from the research at any time and refuse to answer any of the questions asked without any negative consequences for yourself or your organization. All questions about the research, its aims and outcomes will be answered openly and honestly. While I retain final editorial control over what we choose to write, you are free to withdraw any information you have contributed when you are sent your transcript for review.

This study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

What will happen to the data after it is collected?

This data will be used for my Master of Environmental Studies Thesis, a community-oriented outcome, and possibly a peer-reviewed academic article. In all cases, nothing you say will be attributed to you individually unless you explicitly consent to have any identifiers included in the research. You may decide to be fully identified (name, location, and other demographic identifiers), partially identified, or completely confidential (pseudonym, no location, gender-neutral pronouns). If you do not consent to be identified, your confidentiality will always be the number one priority. All raw data, audio recordings, and typing up of interviews will be stored on password-protected computers and only the researcher will have access to the transcript and data. You will be given the opportunity to review, amend, or retract any of your statements before they are included in the thesis or any publication of this research.

If you have further questions about these processes or feel uncomfortable with any aspect of them, please let us know as soon as possible.

Thank you again for your time and assistance,

Sarah Siska
Master of Environmental Studies
Student
Lakehead University
ssiska@lakeheadu.ca

Charles Levkoe
Associate Professor and Canada
Research Chair in Equitable and
Sustainable Food Systems, Lakehead
University
807-346-7954;
clevkoe@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Name of Participant _____

(Please print)

- I have discussed the details of this research project and agree to participate in the research.
- I understand that the purpose of the research is to share my lived experiences as they relate to food justice movements across the Lake Superior watershed.
- I understand that my participation in this study will bring minimal risks or harm.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty.
- I understand that there is no obligation to answer any questions that I feel are invasive, offensive, or inappropriate.
- Unless explicitly agreed to otherwise, I understand that information I provide will never be attributed to myself individually.
- I understand I may ask questions of the researcher at any point during the research process.
- I understand that there are risks of contracting COVID-19 during in-person research.
- I understand the location and activity selected for the research may increase the risk.
- I agree to have this interview recorded (please circle one): Yes No
- I would like to receive a copy of the research results (please circle one): Yes No

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Dr. Charles Z Levkoe (clevkoe@lakeheadu.ca; 807-346-7954). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant in general, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Interview Protocol: Building Social and Ecological Justice through Place-Based Engagements: Relational Ecologies in the Lake Superior Foodshed.

Time: _____ Date: _____ Place: _____ Interviewee: _____

Checklist: □describe project □ask if participant has questions or concerns

□sign consent form □ask if participant would like to be identified or not

Warm Up

1. Could you please introduce/identify yourself? Please include any information you feel is important for me to know.
    a. How long have you lived in the watershed?
2. How would you describe your relationship to the Lake Superior watershed/this place?
    a. *If in situ* – why did you choose this place/method? How do you connect/interact with this place/the watershed?

Food Justice in the Lake Superior Watershed

3. Could you give me a brief overview of the work that you do around food and/or Lake Superior?
    a. Why did you first get involved?
    b. What is the scope/scale of the work (i.e. localized or working across scales)
    c. What do you hope your work will achieve?
4. What is the importance of this place to your work?
    a. As it relates to the people (social)?
    b. As it relates to the land, waters, more-than-humans (ecological)?
5. I find food is a good entry point into questions of justice, whether it is social justice, ecological justice, or even health/racial justice. We all need to eat, and we rely on each other and healthy ecosystems to do so. What does justice mean to you in the context of where we are today and/or your work?
    a. As it relates to the people (social)?
    b. As it relates to the land, waters, more-than-humans (ecological)?

Scaling up through time and space

6. What does community mean to you, and what is the role of community in your work and/or this place?
    a. What groups/people/movements are you connected with in this place?
    b. In other places?
7. Are there any areas that you think could benefit from deeper relationship-building in your work and/or this place?
    a. Whose voices are not being heard and/or need to be upheld?
8. I'd like you to take a moment and imagine your ideal/dream future of the food system (foodshed) in the Lake Superior watershed. What does it look like?

a. What needs to change for us to get there?
b. What needs to be supported?
c. What is the role of you/your work in achieving this future?
d. *If needed explain action-oriented foodshed as place-based, socially and ecologically just food system*

Wrap Up

9. When I think of watersheds and foodsheds, I think of two things: 1) "Everybody lives downstream. What we do here matters." – Kimmerer and 2) "No community's solution should become another community's problem" – Kurtz. Do these ideas of fluidity/interconnection resonate with your work? Why or why not?
    a. *Looking for folks to run with this one and see where it ends up.*
10. Is there anything else you would like to share that I have not asked you about?
11. I would like to ask some demographic questions. What is your age? Gender? Ethnicity?
    a. *Remember that you do not have to answer any question if you do not want to, and if you feel any information is too personal you can skip over it.*
12. Thank you for everything you have shared with me today! Please do not hesitate to contact me with any follow up questions or any other details you feel I have missed.
    a. *Ensure interviewee has my contact information and wish them a good rest of their day.*

Appendix E: TCPS2 Certificate of Completion

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Sarah Siska

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

1169971

Date of Issue: **22 September, 2021**

Appendix F: Codebook

Theme	Sub-theme	Example
Material – Borders and Boundaries Participants' understandings of the boundaries they/others face that limit the realization of place-based socially and ecologically just food systems.	**Physical Borders** The impacts of physical national borders, private property and ownership, and lack of access.	"I don't know what compels someone to think that all those fish in that lake are 'mine'. Why claim ownership like that? How are there not enough fish in these lakes or seas for everybody, if managed properly?" – Lauren
	Social Boundaries The impact of judgement , hierarchies, socio-economic boundaries, and invasive discourses on limiting community generation and participation.	"A weed is just something that is growing where you don't want it to, not an inherently bad plant." – Evalisa
	Epistemic Boundaries How the impacts of and perceived inevitability of global systems and structures contribute to restricted thought and action, distancing, and the internalization of capitalist frameworks.	"Ideally, we'd love to put ourselves out of business, but I don't think that will ever happen. It feels like an impossible goal without significant cultural change and legislative change." – Carson
Relational – Place and Community The impact of relationships with place and community on perceived attainability of socially and ecologically just transformation.	**The Self** How the participants understood their community and who they were responsible to, their connection to place and the ecological community, and how engaging with food and/or place contributes to their wellbeing.	"These seeds are from my teachers. They are from my mother, from my old landlord, from many others. … This made me feel that plants were my community too, because I'm surrounded by these friends." – Abbey
	The Home The importance of place-attachment to food systems transformation, particularly participant relationships with Lake Superior. Understood through the home as landscape, as community, and as potential for transformation.	"Whenever I've been hurting, I would always find myself at the shorelines, right beside the water. I'd put my tobacco in and I'd just listen to the waves, I listen and I feel that there is a spirit, a powerful being that's always with us, and we all have our own connections to it. … We have the same percentage of water as the land does – with our bodies and with the land. So it makes so much sense how we're so interconnected with everything." – Shelby
	The Community An extension of the home as potential, understanding the importance and potential of ethics of care and place-attachment to contribute to positive change. Understood through water-based metaphors such as upstream and downstream and rippling or seeping outward through time and space. Importance of inspiration flowing through	"I used to ride my bike into Sault Michigan, get a coffee, and then come back to Sault Canada. It's pretty easy to cross, which makes the border almost seem fake. Especially given the nature of water because it's so fluid. Are we going to say that this drop of water came over to this side of the border? It's hard to draw the line. If they're literally dumping barrels of oil up there, it's not like you can just ignore what's happening upstream." – Marissa

Ethereal – Cultivating Possibility Participants' dreams and aspirations regarding place-based, socially and ecologically just food futures.	**Rooted Dreams** The importance of future visions and dreams that are rooted in place and generative approaches, and how shifting toward ecological language and metaphors supports transitions away from individualizing worldviews.	"I burnt out on protesting and being anti everything, and when I found plants and gardening and it was just like hallelujah, finally. I think so many people have all this rage and depression because of everything going on, and they don't even realize that their soul isn't being fed, ever." – Julie
	Moral or Ecological Economies The importance of reorienting economic and community approaches towards ethics of care, intentional practices of reciprocity with the ecological community as a whole and nurturing rather than amending change.	"When people have asked me 'what do you do?' my previous answer was that I take care of the soil, I take care of the plants, I take care of the people. That's my job. And now I know that quite the opposite is true – the soil takes care of me, the plants take care of me, the people that I commune with take care of me." – Karena
	Movement as a Practice The importance of movement, particularly through relationships, to transcending boundaries and limited understandings of change. Reframes and returns to the previous themes and subthemes to trace their movement - through space (material), of belonging (relational), and through vision (ethereal).	"The Lake Superior foodshed – wow. I get an image in my mind of a lot of liminal spaces radiating out from the lake. A lot of, well, the lake touches the beach touches the land which touches the swamp, etc. and I'm thinking about all of the things that could grow there. It's kind of vast. Our foodshed would be a really bountiful foodshed. Because we have the traditional foods of the Anishinaabe, and we have the introduced, or colonized foods that perform well here. We have a lot of options. And when we think of feeding more than people, the foodshed would also include those organisms." – Abbey