

# A Generational Investigation of Traditional Food Knowledge among First Nation Communities in Southwestern Ontario

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Revitalizing Connections - Aboriginal Nutrition Network  
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# Traditional Foods

- Plants and animals harvested from the local environment are central to health and culture for Indigenous peoples worldwide (Raschke & Cheema, 2007)
- A major shift from traditional foods to market foods has negatively affected dietary quality and cultural identity (Egeland et al, 2012)

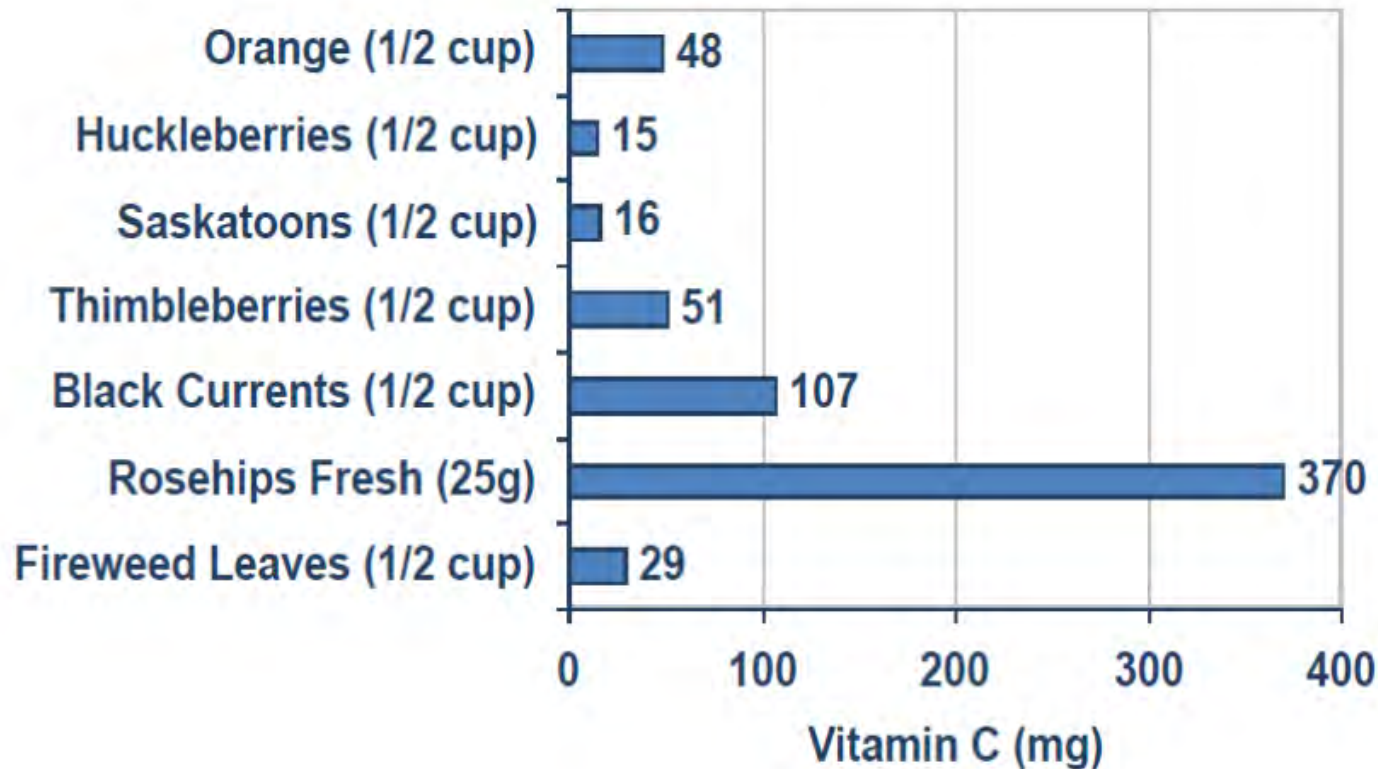


# Examples of Traditional Foods

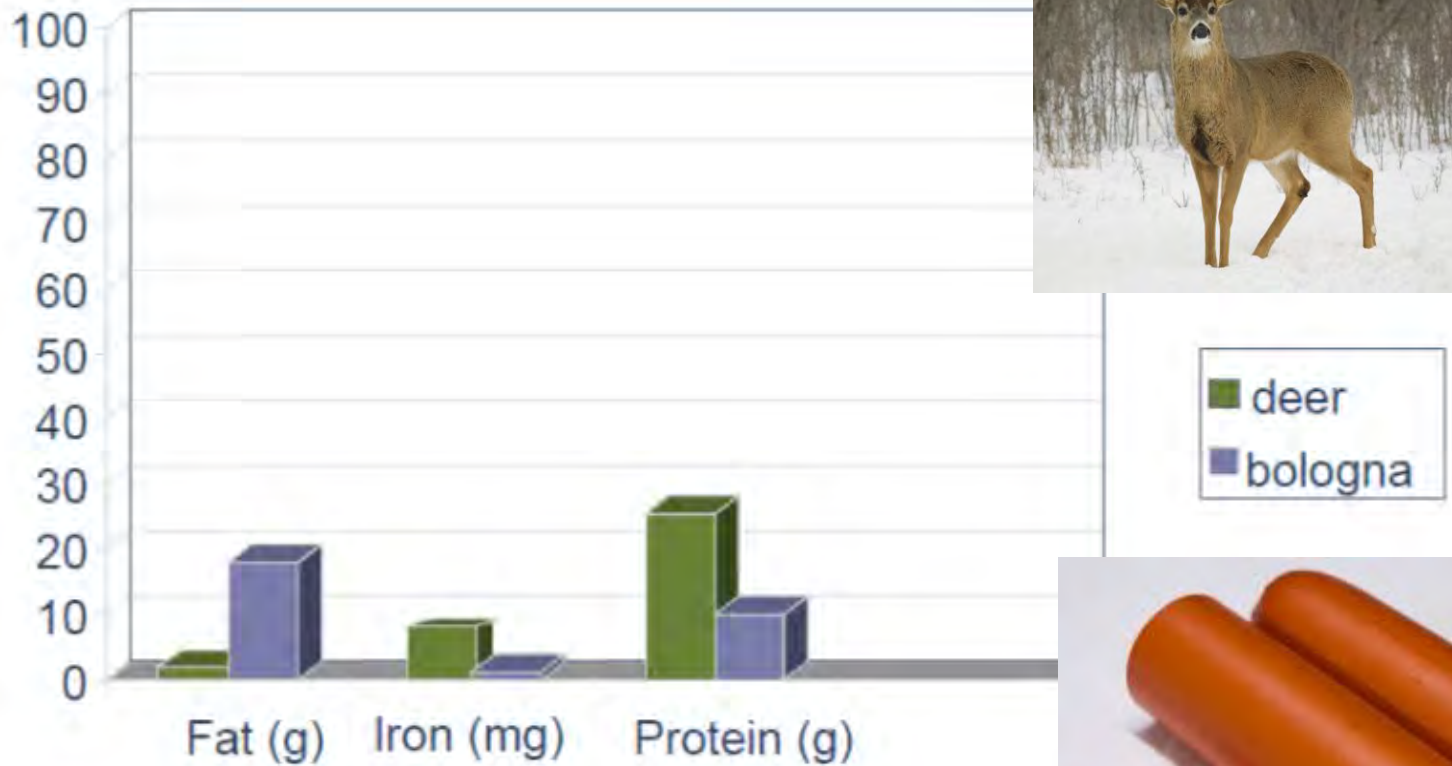




# Dietary Diversity

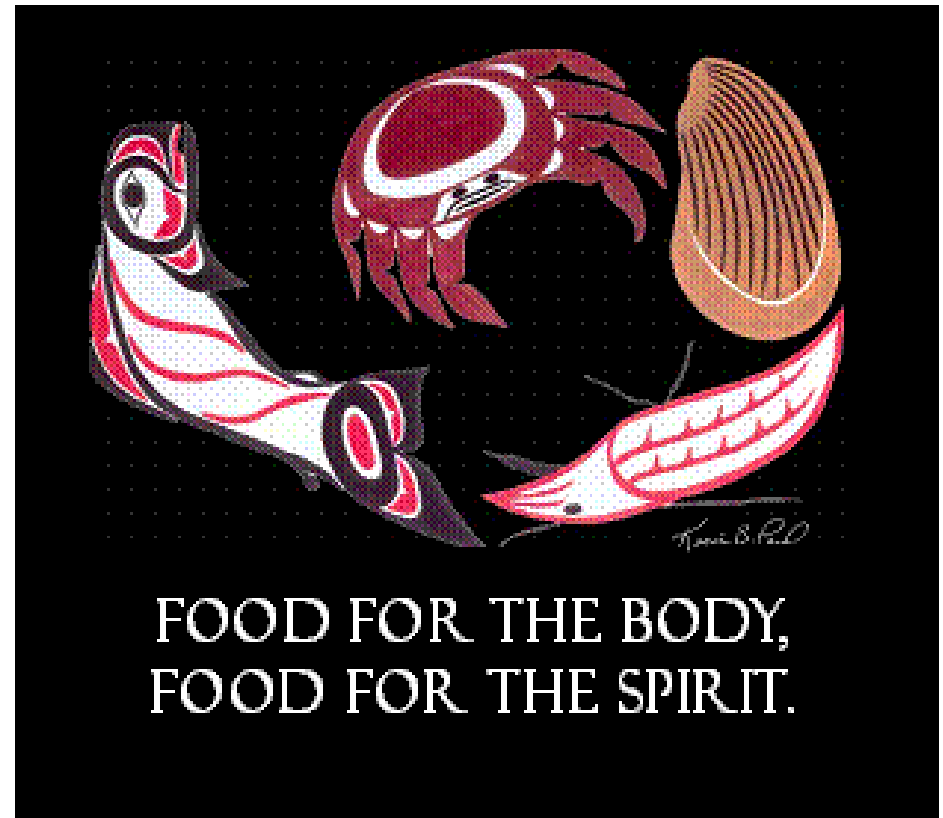


# Nutrient Density



# Traditional Food Systems (TFS)

- All foods within a particular culture, available from local resources and are culturally accepted
  - Includes the sociopolitical meanings, acquisition/processing techniques, use, composition and nutritional consequences for people using the food (Kuhnlein & Receveur, 1996)



# Consequences of Dietary Change

- Gradual decline in use of Traditional Food Systems
- Major consequences for culture and health

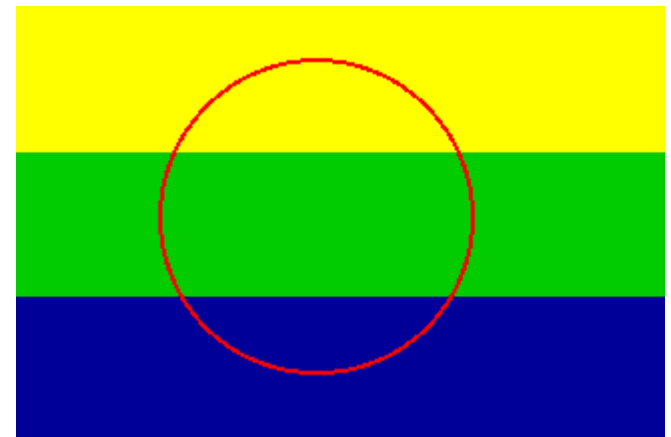
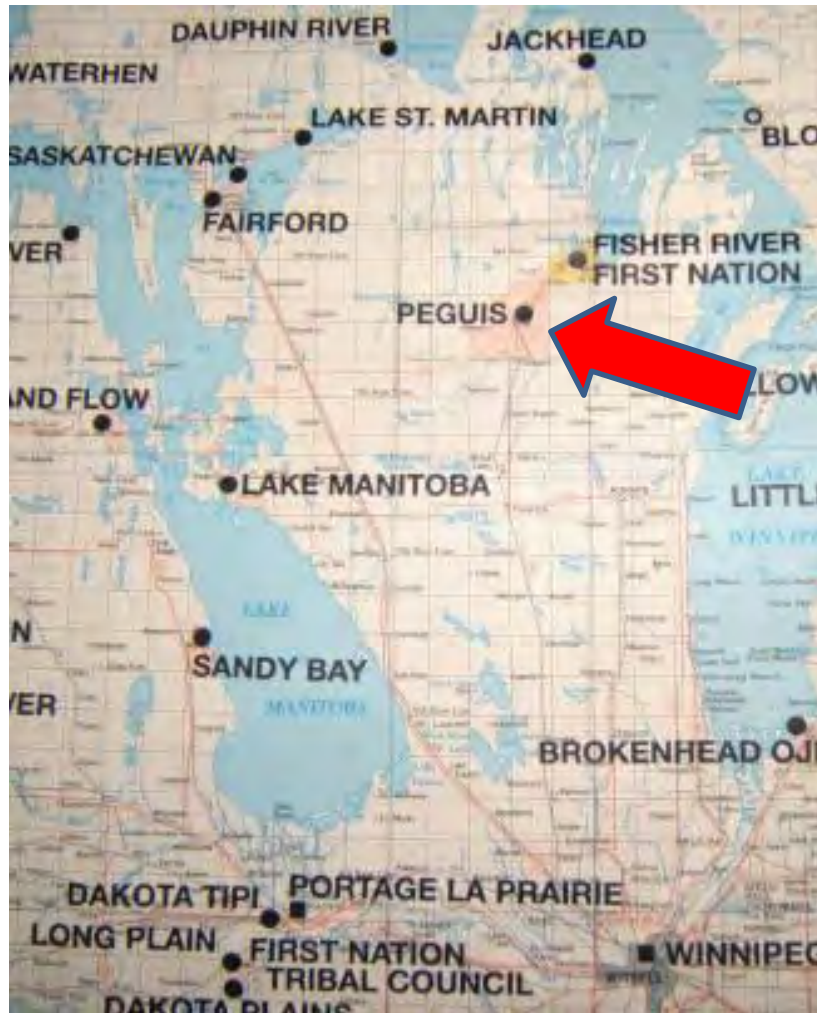
## CULTURE

- transfer of knowledge to next generation questionable
- ↓ practice of cultural-specific food activities
- ↓ dietary diversity
- ↓ cultural morale

## HEALTH

- ↑ sedentary lifestyles
- economic disadvantage → poor diet
- ↑ chronic disease related to obesity
  - Diabetes, CVD, and many others

# Peguis First Nation



# Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

- **Indigenous Knowledge**<sup>1</sup> refers to the cultural traditions, values, and belief systems that have enabled many generations of First Nation people to practice nourishing, healthful relationships with the natural environment and with their social environments, therefore fostering a good way of life, or *bimaadiziwin*, as it is referred to in the Anishinaabe language

<sup>1</sup> (Cajete, 2000)



- *“Some of them turn their nose up at the food. And I said it’s better than you’re buying at that store. I said, that’s good food. You know what the animals ate and they’re clean. I said all them brings up the fat and all the different things in there. You don’t know.”*

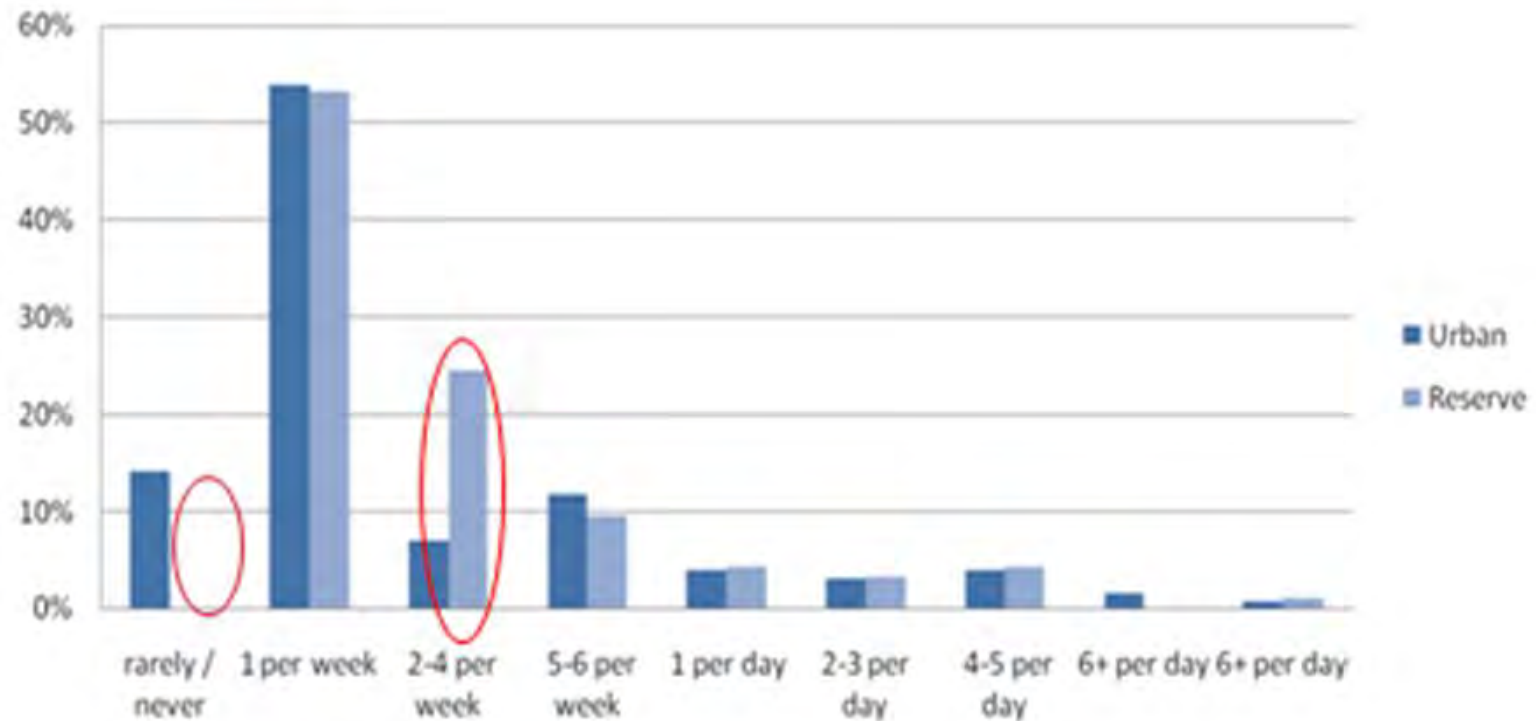
# Research in Southwestern Ontario

- Study conducted in 2010 to identify dietary patterns and determinants of food choice among SOAHAC clients who reside in urban (London) and reserve (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation) locations
- Qualitative and quantitative components



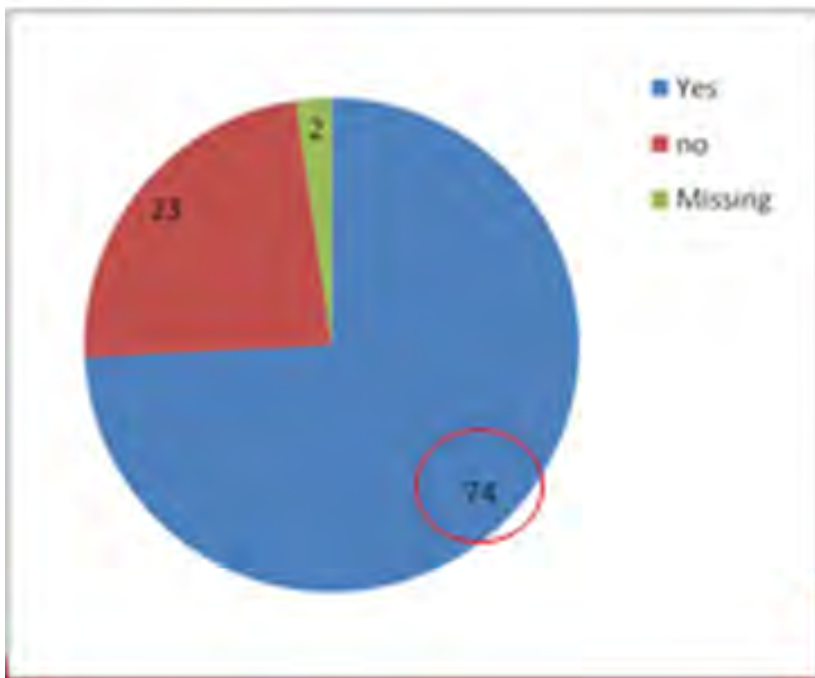
# Determinants of Traditional Food Consumption

## Traditional Food Consumption by Place of Residence

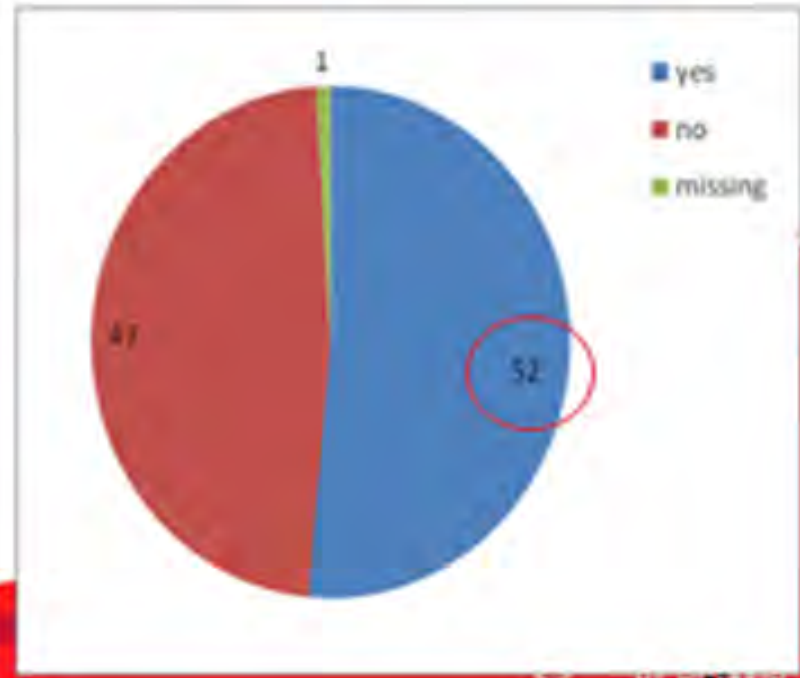


# Determinants of Traditional Food Consumption

## Traditional Food Preferences



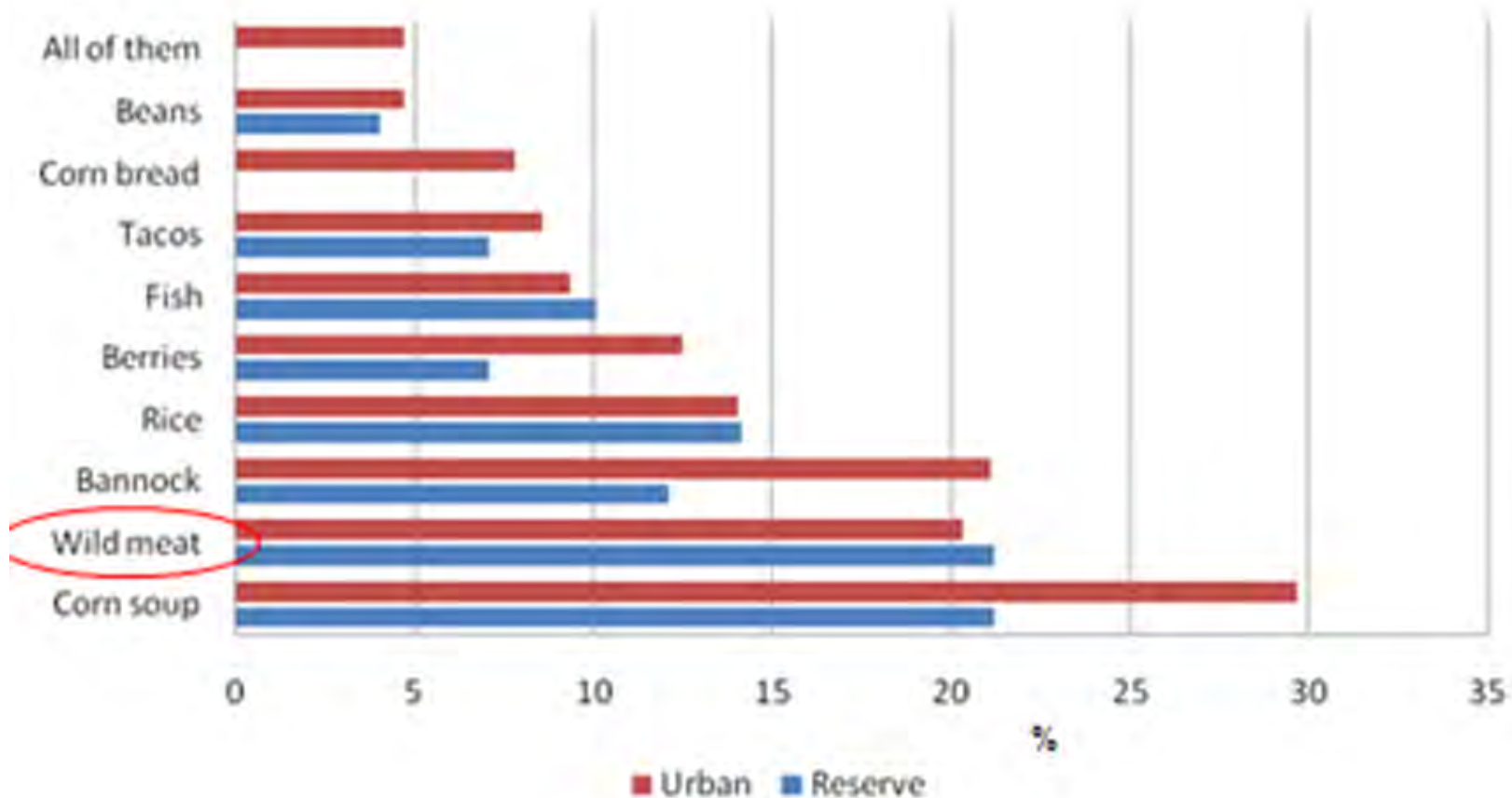
Urban Sample (n=128)



Reserve Sample (n=99)

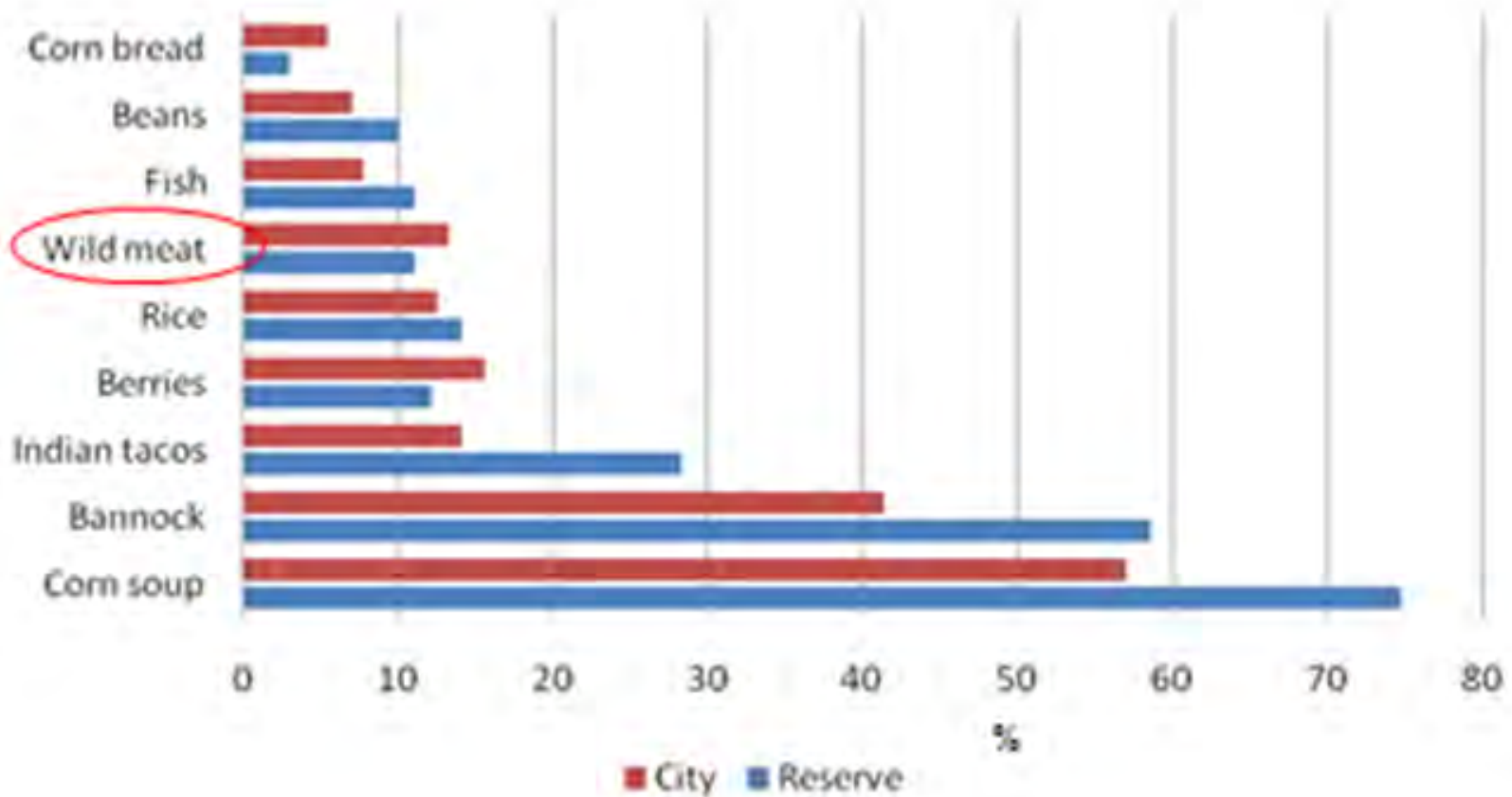
# Determinants of Traditional Food Consumption

## Traditional Foods Preferred to Eat More Frequently



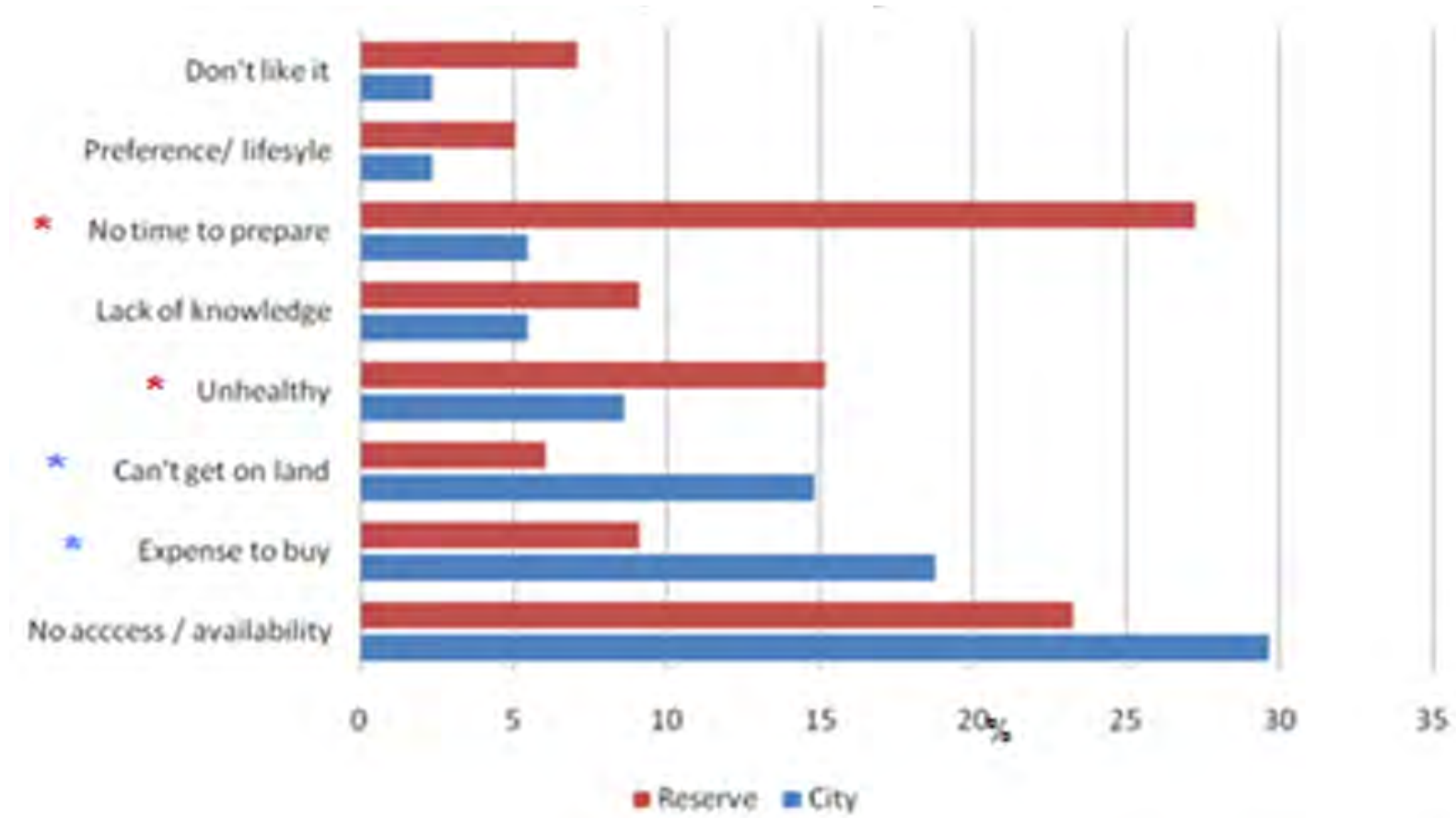
# Determinants of Traditional Food Consumption

## Traditional Foods Eaten Most Frequently



# Determinants of Traditional Food Consumption

## Factors Preventing the Consumption of Traditional Foods



# Research Objectives

- To investigate current knowledge surrounding access, availability and traditional food practices
- To describe and compare the historical context of present day urban and rural food environments
- To explore the hypothesis that food insecurity may be associated with cultural loss resulting from the inter-generational trauma of residential schools



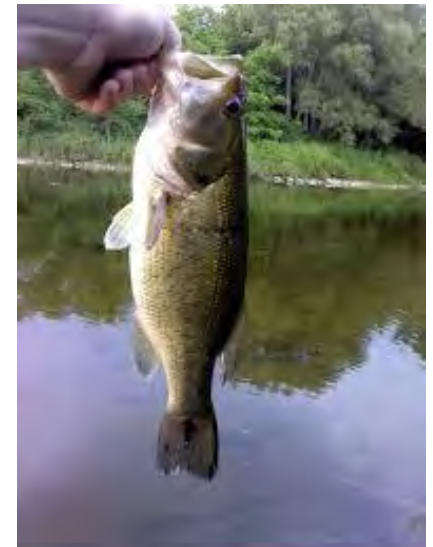
# Residential School Impacts

- Beginning in 1892, more than 150,000 children were removed from their families and communities
- Students of residential schools suffered significant cultural loss, including loss of language, ties to family, and traditional teachings, that led to disrupted transmission of traditional knowledge to subsequent generations (Elias et al., 2012)



# Secondary Analysis - Urban

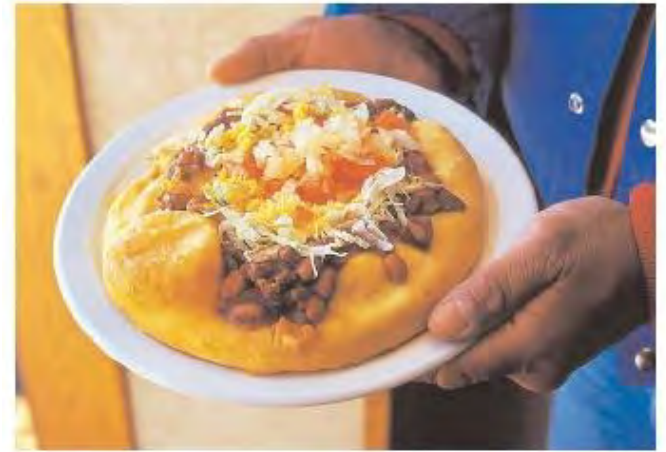
- Desire to have more regular access to traditional foods, but lack of access to ingredients (cost, transportation) as well as lack of time and knowledge
- Less family support and experiential teaching opportunities: most (72%) of women interviewed are single parents
- Environmental concerns regarding safety of wild meats such as fish



- *“It’s harder, especially when on the reserve you are closer to family. And if someone was cooking or we’re going to make stuff, we could do it together. In the city we’re all scattered around..”*
- *“It would be easier if I could do it myself – learn how to make things on my own, but I haven’t had very many teachers.”*

# Secondary Analysis - Reserve

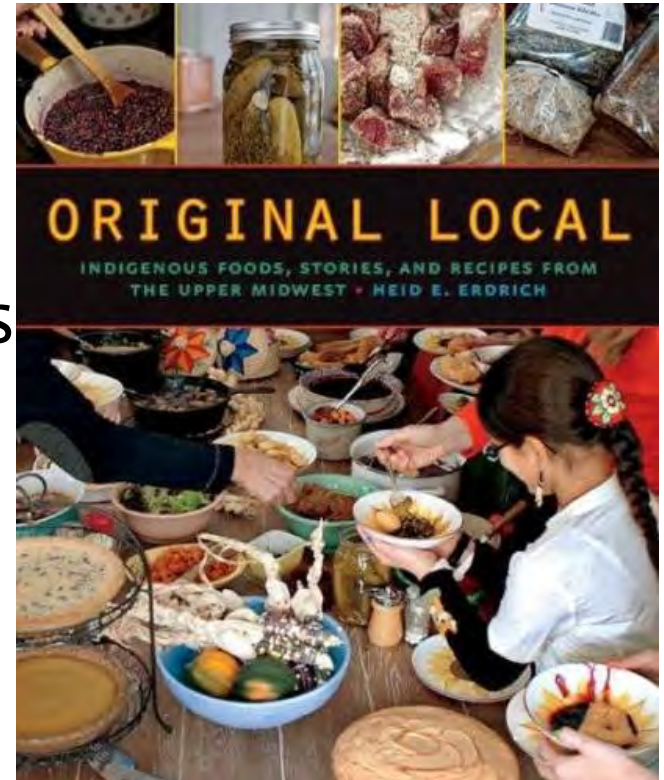
- Issues of preference and health properties of foods compared to physical access or knowledge
- Traditional foods not necessarily part of daily lifestyle; associated with family and community events - necessary to be connected socially as well as culturally
- Similar environmental concerns about potential toxins in wild meats (deer, fish, rabbit, turkey)



- “I think in a way [my family] prefers traditional foods because it’s always been there and it’s kind of entrenched in you that originally that’s what you like. I don’t know many people that don’t like it, but it’s one of those things – it’s something exciting when you’re gonna eat it because you don’t get to eat it that often.”
- “I don’t like corn bread. I know it’s weird because I eat corn soup, right? I don’t know why I don’t like it!”

# Research Process

- Input on secondary data analysis
- Collaborative design of life history interview questions
- Member-checking of transcripts and preliminary analysis
- Dissemination feast and community gathering
- Co-development of resource book of stories, photos and recipes



# Traditional Teachings Program



- The central hypothesis guiding this research is that improving First Nation's health is embedded strongly in the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge and improved access to Elders and traditional healing practices, at family and community levels, and in culturally informed health service provisioning

**SOAHAC Traditional Healthy Lifestyles Program Presents:**

# **CORN SOUP MAKING WORKSHOP**

**THURSDAY AND FRIDAY MAY 22 & 23, 2014**

**With Charlie Elijah**

**11—1 pm Daily**

**SOAHAC Chippewa Training Room**

**Lunch Provided**

**Please call ahead and pre-register**

**Limited Spots Available!!**



# Food Sovereignty

- Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. (La Via Campesina, 1996)
- [http://www.honorearth.org/resilient\\_food\\_and\\_energy\\_economies](http://www.honorearth.org/resilient_food_and_energy_economies)



# Thank You



Southwest Ontario  
Aboriginal Health  
Access Centre

*The Indigenous Health Lab*



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