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Summary Report for the Science Atlantic Nutrition and Foods Conference 2020
March 13-14, 2020; Charlottetown, PEI

“Exploring youth’s perspectives of Indigenous food sovereignty during a traditional food project”
<https://www.upei.ca/programs/foods-and-nutrition/science-atlantic-conference>

Description of the conference event:

The Science Atlantic Nutrition and Foods Conference was a one-day conference at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) with several guest speakers, oral PowerPoint and poster presentations from students, a group workshop, and awards. The conference centered around nutrition and food, with a multitude of professional backgrounds represented, including nutrition and dietetics, biology, chemistry, humanities/sociology, agriculture, and food science.

Relevance of the conference/training to the research area:

As a recent graduate of the Nutrition and Dietetics program at Acadia University, I was familiar with several topics at the conference. There were, however, many presentations surrounding global nutrition that are of interest but I have not had yet explored. Having some experience with Indigenous research, I understand how essential it is to develop relationships with the communities that you are working with so that research is culturally appropriate and meets the needs of the community. This was demonstrated in student’s presentations which I think is very important, because we, particularly as Western trained researchers, have to be especially mindful of how we conduct research in communities that we do not come from. I left the conference feeling good, as it appeared that many eager students are entering the research field with this understanding.

I presented my preliminary masters research, which at the time was exploring youth’s perspectives of learning about Indigenous food sovereignty during a traditional foods project. This project is an Elder-led intergenerational project that was implemented by the Paqtnkek First Nation and aims to teach youth about their traditional foods throughout the four seasons. My poster presentation was the only topic surrounding Indigenous health and Indigenous food sovereignty at the conference. Many of the students at the conference were at the undergraduate level, and I had not received any teachings about Indigenous health within my nutrition degree – it was my own interest and background that led me to choosing electives about Indigenous history in Canada. So, my presentation was prepared with the understanding that many of the students at the conference may not have had any prior learning surrounding Indigenous history in Canada and how this continues to impact the health of Indigenous peoples to this day. This influenced my choice to introduce my topic in a way that highlighted the significance of the Land to Indigenous health while also providing an overview of my research. Overall, this conference offered me the opportunity to talk about my research topic with people who have varying understandings of Indigenous history, and provide students with one example of the work that is being done by Indigenous communities to support the health of their communities.

Realized/expected outcomes of attending the conference/training event:

While I learned a lot about the research interests of students in Atlantic Canada at the conference, I noticed that there was little Indigenous research being conducted in the Nutrition and Dietetics field at the undergraduate and graduate level while at this conference. I see the need for more research and

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discussion surrounding Indigenous health and food within Dietetics. I am excited, however, to be a part of these discussions and the movement towards advocating for alternative perspectives within our educational systems, particularly at the undergraduate level. I hope to see more integration of Indigenous worldviews and perspectives when teaching about food and health to provide students with the tools for navigating the interconnected relationships that people have with their food, health and wellbeing. Through this, I hope to see more Indigenous students enter the nutrition field and see their culture being represented within their classrooms and at conferences like the Science Atlantic Nutrition and Foods Conference.

Next steps (1-2 tasks you plan to undertake within the next year):

1. Submit, with my supervisors, a manuscript to the Journal of Canadian Food Studies exploring how Online and Land-based learning can teach Indigenous youth about their Traditional foods.
2. Submit a proposal to present at the National Critical Dietetics Conference based on the above manuscript.
3. Continue to look for opportunities that allow me to develop my public speaking skills, and reflect on and build my confidence surrounding my research area.