PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY AND RESPECT FOR THE LAND THROUGH INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING: EDUCATING OURSELVES THROUGH LESOTHO QACHA's NEK COMMUNITY PROJECT.

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the meaning and value of Basotho traditional farming practices and Indigenous knowing using Indigenous methodology. The study sought to 1) understand the core tenets of Basotho traditional farming practices that involve Indigenous knowledge and sustainable land care; 2) investigate the implications of these practices, and how they may inform school curriculum in ways that promote food security and reduce child hunger; and 3) examine the role of gender in food practices in Lesotho.

I collaborated with women Elders who knew oral traditions or traditional farming practices by working with children on a school farm. I used Basotho ways of knowing and communication to gather data including storytelling and observation. I complemented my observation data by utilizing photographs and field notes.

The Elders shared their farming experiences, oral traditions, and knowledge including the cultural and survival significance of selecting, preserving, and sharing seeds, how to grow diverse, healthy, and nutritious food and how to be food self-sufficient. They spoke of and demonstrated ways to gather people together as a community to plant, harvest, and share food while caring for the land through culturally respectful practices. The Elders further shared ways to think about and relate to the land as a gift, as 'a being' from Creator, to be respected and cared for in the same way humans care for themselves.

The Elders underscored the need to promote food security and land care through a food curriculum that embraces traditional farming practices steeped in Indigenous
knowledge. Farming practices such as letsema (community collaborating in fieldwork), hlakantsutsu culture (diversified mixed cropping), koti (minimizing tillage), use of animal dung and ash fertilizers, selecting and preserving native seeds and molala (allowing land to rest after harvest) can constitute a desired curriculum.

The Elders taught me what I understood as, and call, the principles of Re seng (we are all related): all humans and non-humans alike, rootedness, letsema (community collaboration), interdependence, connectedness, reciprocity, respect and care for the land. Reflection on these principles continuously shaped the study's theoretical framework with consequent implications on the participatory action methodology, which I characterize as the Basotho Indigenous Participatory Action Methodology.
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Finally, my heart-felt thanks and respect go to my family, and all Basotho who live in Lesotho and outside of Lesotho for their prayers, love, caring, understanding, and support throughout my years of graduate studies away from home.
DEDICATION

In memory of grandmother, ‘Malesia.

Today after my PhD final oral examination I am told that you have passed away to the Land of our ancestors (April 17, 2008). Thank you for teaching me to Always Remember Where I Come From.

Tsamaea ka khotso Lephuthing
Lehlab-a-kho-ho ka lemao
La e hla-ha la isa khorong ha Motsolaone!

To the Basotho grandmothers and grandchildren.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Ea u eo tsoma metsuntsunyane, 'me u khutle u tsoere re tsoe re tlilo e mona menoana. Hopola botle ke ho boea le marumo le thebe... etsoe setsomi sa pelo e ntle se boea le maru le thebe.\(^1\)

Go hunt and bring us food so that we can rejoice. We should lick our fingers as we give thanks. Remember the good is to bring back home one's weapons. Hunters of good heart return from the hunt with their spears and shield.

The Basotho Elders conveyed these words to me when I left Lesotho to come to Canada to begin my graduate studies. The Elders sent me far afield as a hunter. This was their blessing to me. The Elders' words provided guidance for this study, and I want to honour their words and show respect for the Basotho cultural teachings. This thesis is my way of doing so.

This thesis is the outcome of a research journey arising out of my desire and commitment to improve the well-being of Basotho rural communities who are faced with the problems of hunger, lack of access to clean and safe water, land degradation, poverty, and the subjugation of their Indigenous knowledge. This study focuses on the meaning and value of traditional farming practices and Indigenous knowledge and the implications for promoting a food security curriculum in Lesotho.

Basotho have their way of life such as traditional farming practices and forms of knowledge. They have an oral history that provides relevant political, economic, and social accounts from generation to generation. They have guidance from Elders who

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\(^1\) Elders' words during the ceremonial gatherings held by members of my community allowing me to report my departure to pursue Masters Degree in Canada in January 2001, and during subsequent visits home.
possess cultural teachings, knowledge, beliefs, and principles. All of these comprise the values and life principles that sustain the survival of the Basotho.

Basotho engage in seasonal cycles of agriculture and sustain their communities through the application of Indigenous knowledge and traditional practices based upon subsistence farming methods. Participating with the Land to grow food help the Basotho to learn and promote traditional teachings that include knowledge and values such as respect and care, responsibility, prayer, and inter-connectedness. These traditional teachings and practices have value in developing food security, an ethic of care for the Land, and in reducing child hunger in Lesotho. I suggest that these teachings and practices must be learned, understood, and applied to the Lesotho educational contexts.

The focus on food security and traditional food practices has implications for agriculture and requires an understanding of the history of the Basotho and their lands. I will now provide an overview of the history of the Basotho people through the telling of ‘where I come from, and who I am’.

Historical Background

People and the Land: Basotho Creation Stories

The Basotho history begins with our creation stories. The Basotho creation stories are important because they teach us where we come from and who we are. I hear the Basotho Elders say that one must always remember where he/she comes from; for in that way, one will never be lost. They mean that I must know the oral history of our people. I must know our Creation stories so that when I go away from home, and people ask where I come from, I can tell: I am from the Bafokeng (Hare) clan. I am a Mosotho (singular),
and my people are Basotho (plural): Sesotho is our beautiful language and Lesotho our country. We are the people of Ntsoana Tsatsi. We are the people who came from the East. We came along with our relatives: the animal beings such as the Batsoeneng or Monkey people and the Bakoena or Crocodile people, and the plant beings such as sorghum for food, and the sky beings such as moon that guides our agriculture.

The Origin story I present here comes from the Basotho experience, teachings and understanding of the Basotho Creation re seng which means ‘we are all related: all humans and non-humans.’ This is where we come from. We came this way; from this understandings of relationships and knowledge. Re tsoa lehlakeng (we come from reed)! We came by water through that passage under the cave, and by this story we know who we are. We are the people of Ntsoana Tsatsi, and we have close connection and rootedness to the Land.

Interaction with Other Cultures

The British missionaries and the Dutch-speaking farmers, known in Southern Africa as Boers, arrived in Lesotho (then known as Basutoland) in the 1830’s (Gill, 1994). The arrival of the Europeans was marked by a series of wars in which the Basotho lost much of their agricultural land most prominently to the west of the Mohokare or Caledon River (Gill, 1994). To the Basotho the lost land is known as the “Lost Territory”. The Boers consider this land to be the “Conquered Territory” (Figure 1). The Boers used the river that they have named Caledon River as a demarcation between the Orange Free State and current Lesotho.
The Basotho call the Caledon River, Moo ka hare or Mohokare, which means 'Here inside my land' river so that when current and future Basotho generations hear the name, Mohokare,
Figure 1 Map depicts the traditional territory of Lesotho before conquest which extended into vast areas of the Orange Free State
they will ‘hear’ the ‘story,’ they will ‘see’ this place; Ntsoana-Tsatsi, and they will know where we come from.

The forced displacement of Basotho from their traditional territory of fertile agriculture lands to the less arable mountains impacted Basotho’s food security, teachings, and values gained through traditional food practices. Chakela (1997) points out that hunting and gathering were now limited to a small portion of lands. The Basotho came to rely more on a subsistence agriculture which they practiced primarily on small arable lands.

Lesotho gained full independence within the Commonwealth of Nations on October 4, 1966. Gill (1994) remarks that Lesotho’s independence was unique to Africa in that it “was restored to a previously existing state, not granted to a wholly new state” (p. 1). At independence, the new monarchy was headed by King Moshoeshoe II; the successor to King Moshoeshoe I. However, the nation over which King Moshoeshoe II ruled had “more than six times the population and less than half the agriculture land of his great-great-great-grandparents” (Gill, 1994, p.1) thus contributing to the problems of food security.

The consequences of colonization on food security have implications for women and children in Lesotho. The Basotho women play a major role in food production. Yet when food production declines, it is the women and children who suffer most from hunger. Gill’s (1994) explanation helped me to understand how colonization may have contributed to gender roles in Lesotho’s food production. This is what he says:

The policies of the South Africa reduced Lesotho to poverty, forcing the several young Basotho men to seek employment as migrant workers in the mines of South Africa, leaving their communities, families, wives and children behind (p.1).
One result of the men leaving to work in the mines was that agriculture was left in the hands of women. This outcome may provide insight into the role of gender and food production in Lesotho.

The Problem

Impact of Colonization on Food Insecurity and Indigenous Knowledge in Lesotho

Lesotho is one of Africa's least developed/low-income countries (LDC/LIC). Lesotho is completely surrounded by South Africa (Figure 2) and has approximately 1.8 million people living on a land area that covers 30,355 square kilometres. Approximately, 80% of the population is rural and depends on farming for a living. Most of the farmers tend communal fields/farms and as I stated earlier, most of the farmers are women. The 2002 Lesotho food security report estimated that 444,800 people in Lesotho were faced with hunger (FAO, 2002). Soil erosion and severe poverty were cited as major contributors to Lesotho’s current problems (Gill, 1994; Chakela, 1997; Lesotho Ministry of Environment, 1998).

Qacha’s Nek District: Food Insecurity and Child Hunger

The Lesotho of today is comprised of ten districts. Three of the ten districts, Qacha’s Nek, Thaba Tseka and Mokhotlong, are entirely rural and located in the mountains. The remaining districts are a mixture of urban, rural, lowland, and mountain areas (fig. 2). My research took place in the community of Ha Mpiti in Qacha’s Nek
(Figure 3). I conducted my fieldwork on a school field covering approximately 2.0 acres.

Figure 2 Lesotho map showing the 10 districts of the country. The district of Qacha's Nek, where the study was carried out, is highlighted.
Figure 3 Ha Mpiti village, where fieldwork was carried out, is highlighted within the district of Qacha’s Nek.
and situated in a valley at the intersection between two rivers Mohlaba Poho (the one that kills an Ox) and Maqhaba (Figure 4).

FAO (2002) indicated that the district of Qacha’s Nek suffered two years of heavy rainfall and unseasonable frost causing widespread hunger requiring emergency food assistance. The FAO further stated that approximately 80% families in Qacha’s Nek had no maize. The primary school that participated in this study has approximately 400 children, 98 of whom are orphans. Their diet currently consists of very little protein. Up to the present, the school has been able to provide the children with a lunch consisting of maize and protein (split peas and a few times beans) at best only once a month. Food aid in Lesotho schools is provided by World Food Program (WFP), but this assistance cannot be provided on a regular basis resulting in a need for Lesotho to improve food security (FAO, 2002).

Although many school children are orphans, they live with family members. Many of the children live with their grandmothers, and until recently, most families have been able to care for children who have lost one or both parents. The community of Ha Mpiti values their traditional teaching that says, kholiso ea ngoana Mosotho kea sechaba sohle, which translates to ‘it takes the whole village to raise a Mosotho child.’ There is a strong commitment within the community that orphaned children are not to be separated from the community and placed into orphanages, but to keep this commitment requires finding the means to feed and educate them. I believe that education can play an important role in addressing these problems, but there is a need to understand the relationship between colonial education and Basotho traditions.
Figure 4 Photo of Ha Mpiti village, where fieldwork was carried out. This picture depicts the farmlands of Pheellong Primary school. Photograph by Mathabo Tsepa, September, 2004.
Interaction with the Christian missionaries impacted Basotho’s land traditions, economy, and food security as well as the Basotho education. Chakela (1997) writes that the Basotho culture and oral histories are “under threat from many sources, such modernization leading to loss of traditional knowledge and values; urbanization, which leads to major modifications of the landscape which downplay the importance of rural knowledge and experience.” (p.38) Sefa Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000) address the consequences of modernization to the world’s Indigenous peoples, “As a result of colonial, patriarchal, corporate, exploitative, and often ecologically destructive development models, Indigenous knowledge has been underestimated and undervalued” (p.8).

When the Christian missionaries arrived in Lesotho, they opposed the Basotho Indigenous education that included traditions, culture, and values. Every effort was made to destroy it. Mokhehle (1990) explains that the missionaries targeted “the bastions of the Sesotho society” (p.104) such as forms of knowledge involving medicinal herbs, marriages, and initiation schools. They were determined to “destroy the structural systems of the Basotho society…and totally replace them with those of their own” (p.104). Cohen (1994) explains why the missionaries were against the Basotho’s culture:

Culture was as a symbol of resistance and opposition to progress, and cultural practices were met with diverse set of direct and indirect punishments and sanctions. Education and culture became polarized, with proponents of local culture becoming enemies of educators. This antipathy remained deeply embedded in Lesotho’s social fabric (p. 20).

The legacy of colonization that Mokhehle (1990) and Cohen (1994) are addressing persists in Lesotho today and can be observed in the education system and related curriculum models and documents. I will attempt to clarify this statement with an
example of how the Ministry of Education is integrating environmental education within the education system in Lesotho. Environmental education at both the primary and secondary levels is implemented through existing subjects identified as carrier subjects. In secondary education the carrier subjects include Agriculture, Health, Home Economics, Physical Education, Social Studies, and Science consisting of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics (Lesotho Ministry of Education, 2000).

Basotho cultural knowledge and Indigenous knowledge receive minimal attention within curricula guides. For example, in the science curricula guides for grades 8 and 9, one out of the seventeen objectives states, “at the end of the course students should have developed awareness and appreciation of the role of science in everyday life including the Basotho’s forms of knowledge” (Lesotho Ministry of Education, 2001, p.7). Throughout the curricula guides, there is no mention of cultural knowledge in the learning outcomes, content, and activities nor is there reference to how this knowledge could be gained, understood, and applied in daily life such as during food production.

Further, the study of the environment as presented in these curriculum documents promotes detachment from the problems people face on a daily basis. For example, Lesotho elementary science curricula guides are silent about the link between food, people, and the Land despite evidence in the literature that thousands of Basotho people are faced with severe hunger, land degradation, and abject poverty (Lesotho Ministry of Education, 2001; Lesotho Ministry of Planning, Economic and Manpower Development, 1994; Chakela, 1999; Lesotho UN Agency, 2002).

I feel sad that a country that is food insecure like Lesotho continues to educate hunger-stricken Basotho children through European-based curriculum models instead of
teachings based on Basotho ways of life; farming, food practices, Indigenous knowledge, and values. In this thesis I will argue for the importance of this kind of education. I suggest that if education is to be relevant to people’s lives in Lesotho and help them deal with problems, the school curricula must address land and food issues as well as include traditional Basotho knowledge. The Basotho people’s Indigenous knowledge is characterized by an ethic of care, respect for, and responsibility towards the Land. In outlining the educational value of this ethic and associated knowledge and practical traditions, I will show in the particular case of Lesotho how traditional environmental knowledge can be implemented to promote and sustain food security and land care.

Indigenous knowledge is not well understood and articulated. Practical models are needed to promote Indigenous knowledge of food production and sustained land care within both formal and non-formal educational contexts. This study attempts to articulate some aspects of Basotho traditional knowledge. I will also investigate and evaluate the models for a food security curriculum in Lesotho and critically examine the nature of Indigenous knowledge regarding gender roles in sustainable food production and land care.

I focused my research on food because of the significant role that Indigenous traditions and knowledge continue to play in the production of food in rural Lesotho. By examining the Basotho traditional food practices, I intend to illustrate the validity of Indigenous knowledge and the role of women in food production. As a sign of respect for the Basotho traditions and teachings, I employ the metaphor of a hunter to guide me through the research process. The cultural metaphor of hunting is one of several through
which I hope to communicate my own process of reaching the conclusions this thesis presents.

The Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how Indigenous knowledge can promote food security and respect for the land and thus help Lesotho progress toward environmental sustainability. This question was examined among Basotho Elders and standard six (grade 6) children in rural Qacha’s Nek district in Lesotho. The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the core tenets of Basotho people’s traditional farming practices that involve Indigenous knowledge and sustained land care? How is this knowledge transmitted from one generation to another?

2. What gender patterns are evident among the Basotho people’s traditional farming practices? How do these patterns influence or shape women’s gender identities through participation in food production practices?

3. What implications can the understanding of the Basotho people’s relationship with the land have on school curriculum in ways that promote food security and reduce child hunger?

To address these questions, I collaborated with a Basotho subsistence farming community of women Elders and children, and together we planted food on the school field while learning about traditional food practices. The key participants for this study were the Basotho Elders. Elders possess traditional knowledge that has sustained their communities long before any contact with Europeans. I did not purposely select women
Elders as participants over the men. The invitation to participate in this study was extended to the entire community including men and women. However, the men chose not to participate as this study involved growing food. The men’s lack of involvement led to the emergent question on the relationship regarding gender and food production. I spent 10 months of fieldwork, from April 2004 to January 2005 in the community of HaMpiti village, rural Qacha’s Nek, Lesotho, observing and documenting Elders’ stories.

Philosophical Analysis of Key Concepts

In this section of the chapter, I introduce the following concepts to facilitate clarification and understanding. The three concepts are: Elder, Indigenous (environmental) thought, and food security. These terms of reference are defined primarily from the Basotho teachings and experiences.

Elder

"Who is an Elder?" a friend and colleague asked when trying to understand my work on Indigenous food practices and the role of Elders. “And who decides who an Elder is?” Her questions made me realize that I did not have the answer in the form of a simple definition. The best answer is one that I learned during the course of my data gathering when I discussed this question with the Basotho Elders:

... you schooled people like asking questions about everything...you know your elders right? Now you move from there and say who told me that grandmother Machaka is an Elder? You know, the community knows itself, those who hold dearly and live respectfully our traditional ways, practice our customs and have wisdom become elders. Often people who are called Elders are those who also bring their people’s wellbeing before their own... Those are the individuals whom you would hear people referring to as, respected Elders, respected leaders,
respected teachers, respected worriers in our communities… (Elder ‘Mampolokeng, April 27, 2004 transcript)

Elder ‘Mampolokeng’s response to my question really got me thinking; an Elder could be someone young. It is not only the old person who could be an Elder. This is why the Old people often say, “Semanya-manyane o tsofaletse bohata,” or so and so’s old age and grey hair has not made him/her an Elder.” This is the sense in which I have used the term Elder in this study. Elder does not necessarily mean an old person in age; rather it is bestowed on anyone who has cultural knowledge; who values and respects the traditional ways; who lives those ways in their every day life, as well, those who pass the knowledge to the younger generation.

Indigenous Environmental Thought

Based on the Basotho Elders’ teachings presented through stories in Chapters Four and Five, I will discuss Indigenous environmental thought as a philosophy; a way of knowing that seeks an understanding of how people relate to land and nature, and how that understanding shapes their way of life. It is an epistemology grounded on understanding people, land, and food relationships. Through the experience of farming, and the traditional teachings of Elders, I have come to appreciate that understanding this form of knowledge is crucial for the survival of human and non-humans and necessary for healing the earth and all people. This knowledge is based on the understanding that the spiritual attitudes cannot be separated from the pragmatic subsistence activities or human activity such as growing food. It values women’s (and men’s) knowledge and skills in food practices. In this thesis I use the concepts of Indigenous thought, Indigenous knowledge and Traditional knowledge interchangeably as they are inter-related.
Indigenous thought is a holistic process of knowing that is oriented and firmly grounded in a particular place and homeland.

The diversity of Indigenous thought deserves comment here as it may connote for some an essential view of talking about particular people’s beliefs systems (philosophies). I believe that just as there is diversity of the world’s Indigenous peoples, there is diversity of Indigenous thought. The point I want to make is that Indigenous knowledge is grounded in place. For example, the Basotho’s land and language shape their traditional knowledge of food practices. The world’s diverse Indigenous peoples have diverse oral traditions and therefore diverse creation stories, food practices, ceremonies, prayers, and songs. All of these are forms of Indigenous knowledge unique to the specific lands and homelands. My understanding is that although as Indigenous people we are all different, what brings us together is a shared understanding that all things in the universe depend on one another. The Basotho people say, re seng, ‘we are all relatives’, and ‘we are all related’, meaning everything though unique in its own way is dependent on another. The notion that ‘we are all related’ is a common belief amongst many Indigenous peoples.

I must point out that in the first two chapters of this thesis, I inserted the term ‘environmental’ between the words ‘Indigenous’ and ‘knowledge’ to acknowledge that Indigenous thought or Indigenous knowledge includes environmental knowing. But I also wondered if inserting the terms ‘environmental’ or ‘ecological’ between ‘Indigenous’ and ‘knowledge’ was another form of colonization. I questioned my decision; Is inserting ‘environmental’ or ‘ecological’ between ‘Indigenous’ and ‘knowledge’ yet another instance of seeing Indigenous thought through Western categories rather than accepting it
on its own terms; and through categories that engender the very human-nature separation, 
the human-nature alienation, that afflicts Western culture?

But as I moved on to subsequent chapters, I switched to the term Indigenous thought without the word ‘environment’ between with the intent to adhere more closely to the understanding derived from the Basotho perspective. In Basotho tradition, the concept of ‘environment’ and by extension environmental education does not exist. The Basotho people talk about the land, soil, and nature. The Elders talk about thuta boholo-holo or education, which embraces traditional knowledge and Indigenous knowledge; all these concepts are inter-related.

Carl Urion (1995) of the Dearborn River Métis also helped me appreciate the importance of talking about Indigenous knowledge on its own terms. He explains the problem of defining Indigenous knowledge in terms of, and in comparison with, “Western or European models for acquisition of knowledge rather than on its own terms” (p. 56-57). I adopted Urion’s view that such comparisons may result in marginalization of Indigenous knowledge in the world of academic research. So in Chapters Three through Six, where I talk about Indigenous knowledge, I decided not to insert the word ‘environment’ between Indigenous and knowledge.

Food Security

Since the concept of food security was introduced at the 1974 World Food Summit (United Nations, 1975), official definitions of food security have been considerably refined and elaborated. The initial focus was on the global availability of sufficient volume and stability of basic foodstuffs. FAO expanded this to focus on both
supply and demand (FAO, 1983). The 1986 World Bank Report added the important distinction between transitory and chronic structural food security, with the further proviso that food supply must be adequate for an active and healthy life (World Bank, 1986). By the mid 1990’s, concepts of food security broadened to cover individual to global levels and included concerns with food safety, nutritional balance, and socially or culturally determined food preferences. According to FAO (2002), currently food security is widely regarded as a phenomenon relating primarily to individuals and may be considered to exist when “...all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life...” (FAO, 2002, Official Concepts of Food Security). Given that over 200 definitions of food security exist (FAO, 2002), the description being used should be specified for each study.

My understanding of the concept of food security comes primarily from my experience as a farmer in rural Lesotho, and from my understanding of the Basotho traditional food practices and values. The FAO’s notion of food security focuses upon the individual. This is not the perspective of food security that I am promoting. The Basotho way of life is not individualistic but communal, and Basotho share their seeds and harvest within their communities. The practice of sharing seeds and food produces a greater harvest thereby achieving communal food security.

In this thesis I define and use the term food security to refer to the ability of people to feed themselves by consuming locally grown food. Food security exists when a community has sovereignty over their seed, especially native seeds, fields, animals and homelands; uses traditional farming practices grounded on the Indigenous life principles;
develops an understanding of respect for land, reciprocity, interconnectedness, and interdependency between people, land, and their food; employs farming techniques involving a combination of traditional and modern methods that have proven to be healthy for the land and humans; and ensures food self-sufficiency for families, communities, and the nation of a particular place.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the body of literature on how Indigenous people, Basotho in particular, understand their relationships with the land, and how this understanding can promote food security and respect for the land in Lesotho. This study adds to the literature of ecofeminism by articulating Basotho traditional knowledge as spoken by the Basotho women farmers, and by describing a useful model for including food production and traditional knowledge within the Lesotho curriculum. The study’s findings may help to provide Lesotho educators with pedagogical insights essential to promote and sustain Indigenous knowing within educational contexts. Also, this study will contribute to environmental philosophy by providing an empirical examination of the link between philosophical arguments for caring for the earth and human activity.

In terms of research, this study adds to literature on Indigenous methodologies and will assist researchers who seek to develop and use land-based research methodologies. The findings of this study may help academic institutions that seek to develop culturally sensitive research ethics protocols, especially for research undertaken with the land and within Indigenous communities. The outcome of this study and its application provides tangible and practical implications for food security and child
hunger in Lesotho. Since the study involves growing food, it has the potential to directly benefit the children and families affected by hunger as the community harvests and eats crops they grow in the field. This study will help educators and policy makers who seek to develop educational programmes that can reduce the problems of child hunger and food insecurities.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter Two begins by locating the study within Indigenous traditions and making a case for the importance of Indigenous environment thought. An examination of the stories of the land by Indigenous people identifies principles that provide the basis for developing a theoretical frame for this study that includes community collaboration, feeling of rootedness, respect and care for the land, reciprocal relationships, interdependency, interconnectedness, interrelatedness, origins, and transformation. These principles are interwoven into the thesis, and I explore their meanings in relation to how the Basotho people conceptualize their relationship with the land. I also examine the literature on ecofeminism to illustrate the links between women and the environment, especially given that the women are the ones who directly bear the major responsibility of tending to children, in whose hands the future of Lesotho rests. I also draw upon the works of Third World women, my role models, to demonstrate how these women, sometimes called women from the South, engage Indigenous knowledge to benefit their communities by addressing issues of hunger and food insecurity while raising environmental awareness and care for the land.
Chapter Three serves as the methodology which reflects my attempts to develop a culturally relevant and respectful methodology through Basotho traditional farming practices, Elder stories, and experiences. I relate a story of Origin of my people, where I come from, to establish my personal research relationships and elaborate on the Basotho cultural contexts, traditional practices, stories, and my own experiences. In this chapter, my responsibility of honouring Basotho cultural protocols is illustrated. I discuss how the research process was guided by cultural teachings and knowledge such as metaphors and Sesotho language to establish research relationships with Elders and to make meaning from their stories. The chapter reflects my attempt to develop a respectful research methodology for researchers working with Indigenous communities. I conclude with a description of Indigenous methodology which I define as a process of ‘making relatives’ with people and the land.

Chapter Four serves to present data, data analysis, and interpretation. Although with a qualitative study, analysis is acknowledged as an ongoing process. The data collection and how it is interpreted largely depends on how preceding data and collection processes are interpreted. Chapter Five discusses the study outcomes by providing an in-depth interpretation and understanding gained from the Basotho Elders about Indigenous knowledge and food security through our stories and traditional farming practices and using Indigenous methodologies.

Chapter Six serves as a summary of my research findings in terms of conclusions and implications. The lessons which form the theoretical base for understanding the Basotho traditional farming practices, Indigenous knowledge, and values are discussed. These include: relatedness (re seng, we are all related: all humans and non-humans),
rootedness, letsema (community collaboration), interdependence, connectedness, reciprocity, and respect and care for the Land. I then discuss the study's implications for education, food security and research. I conclude by re-visiting the metaphor of the hunter to illustrate how honouring cultural protocols and teachings have created a pathway for my research journey with the Elders.
This study is grounded in Indigenous environmental thought as it explores how Indigenous people in general, and in particular the Basotho people of Lesotho to which I belong, understand their relationship with the Land that sustains them. It is also an inquiry into how Indigenous understanding can inform sustainable food practices and community wellbeing. To situate the study within Indigenous contexts, I begin this chapter by relating stories of the Land as told by Indigenous peoples, highlighting the lessons learned from the stories, and making a case for the importance of Indigenous environmental thought. I also examine the literature on ecofeminism to illustrate the links between women and the environment, especially given that the women directly bear the major responsibility of tending to children, in whose hands the future of Lesotho rests. I also draw from the works of Third World women to demonstrate how some of these individuals engage Indigenous knowledge to benefit their communities by addressing issues of hunger and food insecurity and raising environmental awareness and care for the Land.

Indigenous People’s Stories of the Land: A Context for Understanding Indigenous Environmental Thought

Based on Basotho teachings and experiences of living off the Land, I understand that the stories of the Land provide an important context through which meanings and
understandings about 'Indigenous environmental thought' are derived. Cajete (1994), a Tewa Indian from Santa Clara, Mexico, explains the story relationship in the context of education. He suggests that stories become a context through which Indigenous people can gain deeper insights into the nature of Indigenous relationships, which is basic to Indigenous education. In Coyote Learns How to Make A StoryBasket: The Place of First Nations Stories in Education, Jo-ann Archibald (1997), of the Sto:lo Nation in British Columbia, articulates her understanding of Sto:lo Indigenous traditions, which are similar to my Basotho people’s teachings. She states that “the sources of fundamental and important [Indigenous] knowledge are the Land, our spiritual beliefs, and the traditional teachings of elders” (p. 70).

This section develops an understanding of Indigenous environmental thought based on the premise that traditional stories are the source of this knowledge. I intentionally give only minimal attention to defining the concept ‘Indigenous environmental thought’ contrary to the norm in academic writing because I want the reader to ‘hear’, ‘experience’, and learn this concept through my telling as it evolves from the oral traditions told in this thesis.

Following this line of thought, I invite the reader to ‘listen’ carefully to the stories that follow in order to be able to comprehend the essence of each. I have selected only those stories told by Indigenous people that develop the meanings and understandings of Indigenous knowledge as it relates to food practices. I select stories written by the people of the culture in which the stories are told. I also include stories in which the authors retain their originality. These narratives are told from original sources (direct quotes), or where the author clearly states that the story is ‘pristine’ in that it was told to them as it is.

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This approach to story selection is essential given the legacy of colonization that has led non-Indigenous authors to write and tell Indigenous stories as if Indigenous people could not ‘speak,’ and in ways that perpetuated and continue to perpetuate stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and their knowledge.

I will clarify the above statement. I do not wish to discourage non-Indigenous researchers, educators, and others from collaborating with Indigenous peoples in undertaking research within Indigenous communities using Indigenous methodologies. But based on my research experience and the dilemmas that I discuss in Chapter Three about language differences, I continue to question the possibility of conducting culturally respectful research. Especially, I question conducting research with the people of a culture different from one’s own culture, where one is unfamiliar with language and metaphors. I hope that by following the aforementioned procedures to present the stories, I have honoured and respected the people of the cultures and ensured the authenticity of the stories.

The Stories

In 1910, anthropologist Arthur Parker, a Seneca of the Iroquois confederacy wrote about the origin of food, corn, beans, and squash in the Iroquois world. In this world, Parker states that corn was said to have come from the grave of the Sky Woman’s daughter after she died giving birth to twins. Corn is believed to have come from the “breasts of the Earth-Mother.” Further, Parker says that from the same grave grew squash from her navel, beans from her feet, and tobacco from her head. “From the Body of the
Old Woman Grew Their Food” (p.36), and the people were given instructions to grow corn, care for it, and use it as their food Parker (1923) adds:

When the grandmother saw the plants springing from the grave of her daughter and cared for by Good Minds she was thankful and said, “By these things we shall hereafter live, and they shall be cooked in pots with fire, and the corn shall be your milk and sustain you. You shall make the corn grow in hills like breasts, for from the corn shall flow our living. (p. 64)

Food such as maize or corn, beans and pumpkin are intertwined in most Indigenous traditions as in the story recorded by Curtin and Hewitt (1910) on the acquisition of corn. In this story, Curtin and Hewitt say that the Bean Maiden sings in order to find a husband. The deer, bear, and wolf offer themselves, but she refuses them because they cannot provide her with appropriate food. After singing the same song repeatedly for several days, Corn Man appeared, and the Bean Maiden accepts him:

I will share with you your fortune or misfortune, whichever it be, whenever mankind (sic) shall have of your welfare and needs, for my grandmother has appointed me to care for mankind during the time that this earth shall endure. So it shall be that they shall plant us always in one place. So from one place you and I together shall depart when we shall provide food for mankind, as had been appointed for us, shall expire. We must teach them our songs and dances, so that mankind may express their gratitude when they shall gather in their harvests of corn, beans and squashes (Curtin & Hewitt, 1910, p. 647).

The relationship that exists between Corn Man and Bean Maiden does not perish in death. In fact, among the Basotho people, our traditional dish nyekoe, which is a mix of sorghum, beans, pumpkin, and maize, exemplifies this marriage. The Iroquois stories of the relationship between corn, beans, and human beings illustrate profound understandings of the principle of origin. The Iroquois stories also highlight appropriate relationships, interdependence and interrelatedness of food, the Land and people embedded within Indigenous context(s). These are core principles of Indigenous thought and will recur throughout this thesis.
Curtin and Hewitt (1910) relate another story of the weeping of the Corn, Bean, and Squash People. The story is part of a much longer version of the Iroquois story of the origin of corn. Here I provide a summary of the story to illustrate the underlying message about how people understand their relationships with the Land within the indigenous context and education:

The people in one village raised corn, beans, and squash for a long time, but their crops failed and the people faced starvation. An old woman heard weeping in the fields. She went to the field and found the Corn spirit weeping because the people had neglected the corn by not tilling up the earth around the corn and hoeing the weeds. He gathered the people together and they decided to care for their crop properly, but before they could harvest it thieves took their crop. They set up a watchman and were able to catch the thieves. They took the thieves to the village. The thieves were tormented. One thief was scratched and had stripes on his face and back and his eyes and tail ringed. This was the corn thief and it became the raccoon. The people scratched the upper-lip of the squash thief and it became the hare-lipped rabbit.

This story teaches the people the importance of caring, sharing, and appreciating the gift of food crops. This story also reminds them that as human beings we co-exist with our four-legged relatives including the rabbits and raccoons who also depend upon the Land for their survival.

In another story of the corn-plant, Roderico Teni, a Mayan from Guatemala, shares his people’s view of the role of corn in their lives:

From the beginning of time, our Indian ancestors spoke to us about corn. In our sacred book that remains with us, the Popwuj, sacred book of the Maya, two of our original people, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, speak to their children about the raising of corn (Teni, 1989, p.14).

The Maya, as in many Indigenous communities, have ceremonies for selecting the field to be planted and the seeds to be sown. Teni (1989) writes that the Maya have an all-night ceremony before selecting the field for planting, “In the spiritual context they requested
strength and protection for the being that is to be born, which is corn” (p.14). Teni stresses the significance of everyone in the community gathering to plant the field in one day. The host family provides food for the workers. The next day they go on to plant another family’s field. They clear the field first and then burn the field with an understanding that the ashes enrich the soil as well as ridding the soil of insects.

Teni (1989) further says that a seed ceremony is conducted to select the seeds for planting. The people use a planting stick, practice crop rotation, and allow the Land to fallow. This Mayan worldview shows a connection between fallowing the Land and the birth of a child. Teni eloquently explains:

> By our custom, a woman, after giving birth, is made to rest for 30 to 40 days. This is to allow her recovery and to insure that there are no problems in giving birth again in the future. The people feel the same about the earth and so are inclined to let it rest. During the time of rest from corn, the earth is sometimes planted with beans or squash, especially beans in order to help recover the nutrients (Teni, 1989, p.14).

Mayan stories teach the basic principles of respect for food, the Land, and human beings. The stories also illustrate the principle of interdependence and gratitude. It can be said that the Mayan people have a clear understanding of the parallel needs of the earth and human beings. In fact, Teni (1989) says, “corn is looked on (as) a living being, as a child might be” (p. 17). According to Teni, planting time includes sharing food as well as songs and celebrations. In addition to field and seed selection ceremonies, the Mayan people have a harvest thanksgiving ceremony to express their gratitude for the corn. Harvest is a time of peace, a time when people are not to quarrel. Corn is mixed with ashes and ground to make flour for tamales and tortillas. It is considered disrespectful to leave any corn in the fields so the people return to the fields to gather whatever might have been missed (Teni 1989). Teni states:
This is done so that the connection that has been made is in no way disrupted...the spiritual connection to what they call the Heart of the Sky. It is seen as the need to make good on the request to the spirit to protect. If this is not done right, if there is waste of corn in the field, it is believed that the element of planting for that family begins to diminish and over the years the harvest will not be as good. The family and harvest is interrelated (p.17).

In this next excerpt, Teni (1989) reveals the relationship of Mayan astronomy and “spirituality that is inside of the corn cycle,” (p.18) and the Mayan calendar that combines the Mayan worldview with their way of life. In this regard, Teni affirms:

This way of the people for Indian people is based on the knowledge that corn is alive, that corn feels and it cries. This is not easily lost and continues to this day. It’s very important because life itself, culture and nutrition revolve around this food. It symbolizes the continuity and the importance of the cycle for the family—the maintenance of family, and more than family, of the larger extended community—including non-human world (p.18).

The stories of the Maya people show that their worldview and way of life are interrelated and support each other within the traditional cultural values of the Maya. The ceremonies can be seen as a way of maintaining harmony and balance between the Mayan people and the universe. Thus, survival depends upon harmony and cooperation within the community not only among human beings, but also among all things, the animate and the inanimate. Teni’s (1989) description of the Mayan worldview is very useful as it parallels the Basotho people’s way of life and forms a theoretical framework for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data for this study.

Among many Indigenous groups, plants and animals are known to transform themselves and the culture of the people with whom they interact. Amongst the African Bantu peoples, the hare is known as a transformer while in North America, coyote and raven are transformers. Corn is also a transformer in some Indigenous cultures. Alfonso
Ortiz (1989), a Tewa Pueblo, narrates a Lakota story of a young couple asking for the blessings:

Day after day, they watched the plant and it grew and grew and seemed to form arms somewhat like a human, but they didn’t understand what it was. When it grew up, it had a yellow tassel; it was the corn plant. It was not the blessing they sought but it was what transformed their culture from one state to another. Corn was the agent of transformation, and an agent of awareness (p. 70-71).

The lesson I take from the Lakota teachings is that food which sustains people can also be considered an agent of transformation. Although not explicitly stated in the stories, I believe that food such as corn is an ‘agent of awareness’ because through the growing of corn, people learn how to respect and care for the crop, the Land, and themselves. In other words, the corn raised their consciousness on how to relate well with corn and the Land that brings this crop into being. The Lakota story helped me unearth the core of Indigenous thought and education; I discovered that it is truly transformative. From the experience of reading these stories, as well as listening to the stories I grew up with, I have learned that the principle of transformation is an important cultural teaching among Indigenous peoples, including the Basotho people. This principle forms a theoretical framework for this study.

The treaty that the plants and animals have with Indigenous people is not a one-time protocol. Throughout the stories we have ‘listened ’to up to this point, we see that in the beginning of time, the people are instructed to grow plants and to eat them as their food. Thus, the stories illustrate that when they pass away, food such as corn, beans, and pumpkins give their consent to leave with the people. Parker (1910) illustrates this agreement between the people and corn by relating a story of the spirit of corn speaking to the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake:
It was a bright day when I went into the planted field and alone I wandered in the planted field and it was the time of the second hoeing. Suddenly a damsel appeared and threw her arms about my neck and as she clasped me she spoke saying, "When you leave this world for the new world above it is our wish to follow you". I looked for the damsel but saw only the long leaves of corn twining round my shoulders. And then I understood that it was the spirit of the corn who had spoken, she the sustainer of life (p.39).

The link between Indigenous people’s existence and their relationship with their food and Land continues even after death. It is upon their death that humans become part of the continual cycle of existence itself, part of our own creation.

Basotho Creation Stories

The stories I will talk about are those I have come to understand as the stories of creation or origin of my people; the Basotho who are the people of Ntsoana-Ntsatsi (a place where the sun comes). Now I will tell you a beautiful little story. It is an Origin story that tells about the Basotho way of life, our ways of life, farming practices, and our Indigenous thought. It is a story that constructs our identity because with this story, and the ones that I will share in subsequent passages, we know where we come from and who we are. This story illustrates that the link between traditional Basotho people’s existence and their relationship with their food and Land continues even after death. A story repeatedly told to me by Basotho Elders goes this way:

Story of Origin and Death

Where I come from, the people bury their dead with the gift of seeds to carry back to, Mother-Earth...this is done so the culture can be sustained. Where I come from the
seed is a bearer and sustainer of the culture. The people who have passed on to the ancestors’ world or journeyed from this world into the next one are buried with seeds. Where I come from, it is disrespectful to waste anything, whether it is food, bones, feathers or umbilical cord from a young baby, everything has to be returned to Mother-Earth. This is done so as to keep harmony and balance with all of creation. The same is true of human remains. They should be given back to the Land where they may be of benefit to earthworms, ants, rodents, plants and other creatures…and in this way the cycle of life continues. Where I come from, the Basotho tradition was to bury the dead in shallow graves but graves deep enough to cover the head of a seated body. In the old days the dead body for internment was wound up in an ox skin, bound with ropes of the “moli” grass and placed sitting up in the grave, so as to be able to rise up instantly on the day when it would be summoned by the spirits to do so. The corpse was gently lowered down into the grave and supported on all sides with the ground dug out to keep it firmly sitting up. A few grains of the seeds of sorghum — “mabele,” maize, beans, pumpkin seeds and, tobacco and a tuft of grass twisted into a tiny ring were thrown beside the body in the grave. Women were buried with more seeds than men since Basotho women play a major role in collecting, selecting, storing and propagating seeds for the community. When the deceased was a man, his arrow and bow used for hunting and protecting the village were also buried with him. The corpse was placed sitting up in such a way as to half face the east, so that the rising sun might slightly cast its rays on the corpse’s right cheek. Some of the binding ropes about the head were gently cut through with a knife so that the covering of the face could be slightly opened to prevent suffocation. In each case the ground dug out of the grave should all be brought back to cover and to fill it up again,
so that none of the soil remained scattered about. The clay pot that bore the seeds in the grave was placed above the grave...You see, today people bury their dead in boxes but many people in rural Lesotho cling to their traditional thanksgiving seeds ceremonies for the burial.

(Mathabo Tsepa, personal story, February 2004)

Moleso Oa Likhomo: Origin of Sorghum in Basotho’s Life

Now I will tell you another beautiful little story. It is very beautiful because it teaches about jealousy that ended up producing marvellous results. It is an original story that reminds me about my identity, and with this story, I know where I come from. It is a story about the origin of mabele or sorghum one of the Basotho’s staple foods.

Story of the Origin of Mabele

It says that long, long time ago a man in one village was married to two wives. But then the great wife also known as first wife became jealous of mohalitsong, young wife otherwise known as second wife. It is said that the young wife gave birth to a beautiful child. Then it is said that great wife was jealous of the young wife. Then one day the great wife planned to kill the younger wife. She looked around for ways to kill the young wife.

Long, long time ago, it is said that there was sorghum plant growing on the Land, but people did not know that this plant was food. People were suspicious about this grain, and did not eat it as they thought that it would kill them. But people saw that the animal
ate sorghum yet they did not die. The animals eat this grass, and do not die, the people thought! But then they were still suspicious about this grain and did not eat it.

It is said that for a long time people did not have food!

But people were still suspicious about eating sorghum, they could not eat grass: no other food was therefore left than to eat food which has already been digested by animals. It is said that people ate fresh cow dung, which they mixed with milk.

It is said that people still did not have enough food to eat.

The great wife was still looking to find ways to kill the young wife. It is said that the first wife gathered grains of sorghum as she was thinking them toxic even though the grains did not kill cattle. So day after day, it is said that, the first wife went out to the Land, gathered grain of sorghum, ground them and prepared soft porridge that she gave the young wife to eat. It is said that she prepared food out of this grain and she gave it to the other woman tricking her by saying: in my family we now eat this grain, it is a secret and people in the community don’t know about. To her surprise, this food produced good results; instead of killing the second wife, the food nourished the woman and her child; cleansing her blood and skin and making her look good and well fed! So the great wife thought: mm! may be I will begin eating this grain, look, it is making her and the child grow big and well, it is cleansing blood, it is not food! She thought! Then it is said that the great wife began to eat the grain and people heard about it. It was the animals and the jealousy of the woman that taught people about this plant sorghum that was to become the Basotho people’s food. It is said that the great wife ate her witchcraft, meaning her
Sorghum is a very important food in the lives of the Basotho. It helped many generations of the Bosotho survive when people had not yet learned about what to eat. The Old People understood this food sorghum to be a medicine. This is one of our original stories, and it is just one version. There are many interpretations depending on who is telling the story, their story telling skills, and experience (traditional and lived stories). Indigenous stories such as this are called litsomo or tsomo if it is one story. A tsomo is a public story, meaning that it is not owned by anyone. This is particularly true if the person telling a story tells it in a way that it has been told for generations. But, it can be owned and become semanya-manyane’s (so and so’s story) if the story expresses much imagination and creativity. The stories I tell and promote in this chapter have much to do with my experiences, and they reflect my own expression, creativity, and understandings.

In Basotho tradition we say, ha ho ntho e mpe e senang molemo, which roughly translates into ‘not all that is unacceptable, sad, bad, or painful can end in a bad way’. The story of the jealous woman ended by benefiting another woman, and teaching the Basotho about a sorghum plant that was to become our food and medicine. Writing this thesis from far afield, far away from my Elders who gave me many litsomo, has helped me appreciate the values in traditional teachings as I engage in story telling through the
learning process; imagining, creating, remembering, and dreaming about the story I want to tell, and making meaning from the stories.

These complex stories not only teach Indigenous people traditional Land ethics, they go deeper into cognitive, emotional, and spiritual realms of our being thereby helping us to be self-disciplined and respectful of the natural world. I believe that such spirituality is grounded in place and in ethical caring of the Earth that sustains us, to Mother-Earth, the sustainer of life.

Another story that illustrates the principle of respect towards food is that of the Salmon People of the Pacific Northwest of the United States, as related by Hughes and cited in Cajete (2000):

The salmon (or the first four) received the most elaborate rites. Usually the salmon were laid with their heads pointing upstream on a newly woven mat...often under special shelter and sprinkled with down feathers of birds. A formal speech or prayer of welcome was intoned as in this particular example:

Old friends, thank you that we meet alive. We have lived until this time when you come this year. Now we pray you, the supernatural ones to protect us from danger, that nothing evil may happen to us when we eat you supernatural ones, for that is the reason why you have come here, so that we may catch you for food...The salmon were offered fresh water symbolically after their long journey through the salt sea... (p.165).

In cultivating this attitude of reverence for their gift of food, the Salmon People of the Pacific Northwest illustrate once again the central foundation of Indigenous environmental thought – participation and relationship, which are also core Indigenous principles discussed here.

Throughout this thesis, I show respect to the Basotho cultural teachings and use the metaphor of hunting as a guiding principle. Therefore, an understanding of traditional stories of hunting is an important aspect of this study. In my search for stories of hunting,
I came upon the Navajo story of the deer hunting way as narrated by Cajete (1994). In this story it says that the Deerman instructed the first hunter in the knowledge necessary to kill the deer. Four deer including a mature buck, a large doe, a young buck, and a little female fawn appear in turn, each with a lesson for the hunter who awaits them in ambush. But just as he was ready to shoot, the deer transformed himself into a mahogany bush, tse esdaazii. After a while, a mature man stood up from behind the bush. He stood up and said, ‘Do not shoot! We are your neighbours. These are the things that will be in the future, when human beings come into existence. This is the way you will eat us (p. 61).’

The deer told “the hunter how to kill and eat the deer,” how to speak respectfully of them, “how to respect the spirit of the deer,” how to properly dispose of the remains the hunter cannot use, and how to hunt only what is needed. Making it clear that the hunter’s success depends upon their “approval,” they also told the hunter of the consequences that would befall hunters who do not approach them with ‘good’ spirit and a sense of respect. “So the hunter let the mature Deerman go for price of his information. And the Deerman left” (pp.61-62).

What is important in this story is that the first hunter and the deer are equal participants in the cycle of life and death and renewal. What is absent from the image is any suggestion of domination, conquest, or exploitation. All of which, as ecofeminism rightly argues, are patriarchal dynamics which I will discuss in the next section. In hunting, power is transformative in that it demonstrates the generative power of life that comes through death. It is a power that is inextricably connected to food, a sustainer of life connecting the hunter and the hunted in a kinship of ‘blood’.
My understanding of the stories of hunting is that the hunter, like the corn, also serves as ‘an agent of awareness’. He/she is an agent of ecological awareness not just for Indigenous people, but also for society at large by forging that most fundamental conceptual connection, that is, a more fundamental connection than the ‘lived’ ones that we have with animals. Namely that we both breathe, drink water, need food and fellow creatures, mate and raise young, contribute to society, and die. We situate the essence of that connection in the good food that sustains us. However, it is also important to note that such awareness is only available to the extent that some people, both men and women, are actually hunting and dealing respectfully with killing fellow beings; otherwise it becomes devoid of meaning, an empty metaphor. The point I want to make is that at the core of hunting lies transformation and renewal of life for the hunter and ecological awareness. Following the advice of the Elders to me about hunting, I will now discuss hunting and attempt to determine any relationship to gender.

Bahlankana Ba Bane Le Mosali: Four Hunters and a Woman

Imagine a group of people walking besides a Moo ka hare river (Here inside my Land) in Lesotho hundreds years ago: the people of Ntsoana-Tsatsi, four men who carry spears and arrows for throwing at the hunt or enemies walk rapidly away from the group. These hunters will search for deer and bucks and may be gone for several days while women and children stay behind. One woman stays on one hill and men on another hill. The rest of the women stay below the hill, they move slowly; they are pregnant, carrying babies on their backs with tari (soft animal skin, a blanket for this purpose), they are not going anywhere that day. They will stay close to the edge of the Moo ka hare river,
cooking the remnants of the meat the men brought several days before, may be gathering some berries, roots or small animals from a rich fertile Land of Ntsoana-Tsatsi, and from a dense vegetation too. They will wait patiently until their men return with meat. So is the woman who lives on the hill. The women cannot hunt animals, so men have told them: they are not one of our kind, one of the four men who visited the woman living on the hill told the other men. Each woman was chosen by her husband or husband’s parents, it is said, on the basis of her loveliness and respect she has for all. Her father or brother gave her to the husband on the basis of his hunting skills.

“Women cannot kill animals,” so it is said by the first of the four hunters who visited the woman who live on the hill. “She does eat. She sits there, and does not eat, but only drinks water.” Next day, the second hunter visited with the woman, and on his way back told the hunters, “but she has hands, feet and head like us, but she is not of our kind, she cannot kill animals.” The next day the man who first visited the woman went to see her again: he gave the woman meat from his hunt, and the woman ate, and he also left her uncooked meat. Then the man returned to his fellow hunters and told them, “she eats like us, but she is not of our kind, she cannot kill animals.” The next day, the first man who had then been visiting the woman frequently came to the hill again: to his surprise he found that the woman had made two pots out of clay, and used one to cook the meat the man gave her. The woman gave the man some boiled meat and gravy. The man was surprised! “Her food is good, he told the other hunters.” It is said that from that day, the four hunters dispersed. They left that man and that woman there. They left the hill to the man who hunts, kills animals and give his hunt to the woman who cannot hunt and kill.
The woman who cannot kill animals does not eat, but only drinks water, waits patiently until man, the hunter returns with meat.

Ke tsomo ka mathetho.

(Mathabo Tsepa, personal journal entry, December 26, 2007)

To my knowledge, the Basotho stories of hunting only talk about men hunters and male warriors. The exception is my uncle’s story, Elder Lekhotla Tseane of the Hare clan. He once related a story to me about a woman from our clan. He told me she was an intelligent warrior. Elder Tseane said that through our history, this woman defeated several of King Moshoeshoe’s men. He also said that the woman was a hunter.

In imagining this story, I do not promote the notion that Basotho women did not hunt and would instead simply wait for men to bring food even when they and their children were hungry. But I tell this story as a beginning of my own exploration to understanding gender and labour division within Basotho way of life, a topic that is central to this study. I have heard Basotho’s litsomo (most of them oral and few written), and I am left with many questions about hunting. The Basotho stories of hunting focus on men only. So I ask: Why do the Basotho accounts of hunting talk about men hunters, and not about women hunters? How could women, such as the woman who stays on the hill, live only by drinking water? Why would women not hunt even small animals such as hare if they were afraid of big ones? Why would only men hunt? If the gender division of labour was crucial to the hunt does it mean that the success of the hunting way of life depends on leaving the major work of evolution to the males? These questions are very important to this study because hunting, like farming, is a Basotho food practice and way of life. I will attempt to address these questions in Chapter Four.
Now returning to the deer hunting way, I have become aware of many life connections. The cyclic nature of the four deer teachings to the hunter is in fact a ‘good’ model of Indigenous environmental thought. Out of the Earth sprang plants upon which the animals feed. The animal in turn surrenders its life so that the hunter may live, and as the animal’s body parts return to the Earth, new life will emerge and be strengthened again. “Do not be greedy, do not be wasteful,” the animals tell the humans. It is indisputable that many modern cultures have become greedy and wasteful, and I believe that the majority of Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers, environmentalists, and people in general would agree.

The deer’s guidance to the first hunter illustrates important teachings that provide me with direction through various stages of the research process. Like the first hunter, I wanted my research to be respectful to the traditional teachings of the Land. That is why I began this chapter with the stories of the Land as a context for Indigenous environmental thought thus demonstrating respect for the validity of the Indigenous traditions. In appreciating and honouring the gifts of environmental thought discourses originating from cultures different than my own, I will next examine ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism: Women and Nature

I am cognisant that the Basotho people do not speak about their relationships with the Land using ecofeminist concepts. However, ecofeminist theory explores the relationship between women and nature, a theme that is central to this study. Environmental thought that seeks to articulate relationships between women and nature could be very useful for understanding how Basotho women relate to the Land and their
role and participation in food practices. Thus, I decided to examine which aspects of ecofeminist theory would benefit my study, and following the advice of the deer to the hunter, taking only what is needed, not being greedy, and not being wasteful. In a metaphorical sense, I believe that honouring the animal of my hunt has shaped my pathway and guided me throughout the entire research process.

What is ecofeminism? Mies and Shiva (1993) explain that ecofeminism emerged as a result of related social movements, including feminism and the peace and ecology movements of the 1970's. As an environmental discourse, it is about women and their relation to the natural world. The term ‘ecofeminism’ was first coined by the French feminist Francoise d’Eaubonne (1975). However, it was not until the 1980's, following the publication of Carolyn Merchant’s Death of Nature (1980) and Vandana Shiva’s Staying Alive (1988) that the term gained popularity. In the following section I provide a brief history of ecofeminism in order to understand its major tenets.

History of Ecofeminism

Merchant (1980) and Griffin (1978) document how modern Western culture associated women and nature. The authors both note that before the 16th century in Europe, the connection between women and nature was premised on two gendered but divergent images: one was an organic conception that conceived nature as feminine and motherly to be trusted (e.g., earth as a nurturing mother), and another that considered nature as wild, illogical, and uncontrollable and to be fought with and controlled by masculine logic as opposed to feminine emotions (e.g., storms and droughts).
Seager (1993) states that during this time, work, culture, nature, and daily life were interwoven into a seamless web, and a nurturing and female-identified earth was considered to be the root of all life. Seager also points out that some historians of science argue that this constrained the abuse of nature because as long as the earth was considered to be alive and sentient and related to us as a mother to her children. It could be considered a violation of human ethical behaviour to carry out destructive acts against it. As Merchant (1980) says, “one does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body” (p. 193). Another sense of taboo against despoiling nature comes from seeing nature as sacred, as God’s creation. This was overcome by thinking of nature’s law as being built into nature by God for us to discover. Merchant describes the transition from an organic to a mechanical view of nature and its significance for the rise of capitalism:

The removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature...the most far-reaching effect of the scientific revolution. Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert particles moved by external, rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimize the manipulation of nature. Moreover, as a conceptual framework, the mechanical order had associated with it a framework of values based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism (p. 193).

Thus according to Merchant (1980, 2003), the view that Mother Nature is caring and bountiful was surpassed by the view that nature is a fearsome, wild woman who must be possessed and controlled by knowing her. The latter gave men a rationale for the violation of nature. Nature was reduced to a set of laws presumed to be knowable. Seager (1993) indicates that nature did not act; it was a physical backdrop to be acted upon. She adds that men of science struggled to subdue nature (woman) to know her secrets, to tame her wilderness, and to put nature to work in the service of human enterprise. Mies and
Shiva (1993) and Seager (1993) note that the literature of male exploration is rife with metaphors of raping the wilderness, penetrating virgin Lands, conquering a capricious nature, mastering the wild, and suppressing untamed Lands. The scientific revolution is seen by many ecofeminists as proclaiming an era in which women, as well as nature, came to be dominated, controlled, and exploited (Mies & Shiva, 1993; Merchant, 2003).

Historically, the diversity of voices is not surprising as Warren (1987), a forerunner of ecofeminism, already acknowledged "there is not one version of feminism, [and] there is not one version of eco-feminism. ...". In her context, she positions ecofeminism as “(i) a strong connection between oppression of women and nature, (ii) the understanding of these connections as a basis for the oppressions themselves and how, (iii) feminist theory cannot be devoid of an ecological perspective; just as (iv) solutions to ecological problems are empty without a feminist perspective” (pp. 4-5).

Agarwal (1992), Jackson (1993,) and Mies and Shiva (1993) further summarize commonly held views of ecofeminist thinking into three elements. First, is the link between women and nature; second, the connection between domination of nature and the oppression of women; and third, the promotion of non-hierarchical egalitarian systems. Agarwal (1992) and Jackson (1993) state that nature was devalued and considered the contrast to reason, an emotional, primitive part belonging to the non-human world existing in the sphere of faith and irrationality.

Agarwal (1992) further describes how in patriarchal thought women are regarded as closer to nature and men closer to culture. She writes that to feminists, the woman-nature linkage is regarded as an important underpinning of the subordination of women. Jackson (1993) states that because men are unable to create life through biological
reproduction, they create artificially through the manipulation of human culture.

According to Jackson, challenging the connection with nature will liberate women. It is important to note that Jackson’s claim is a minority view in the literature of ecofeminism. For example, Seager (1993) argues against this, stressing that women are not only different from men but also are in some ways superior. Seager questions whether it is progressive to become absorbed into a masculine-defined relationship with the non-human world. She believes that a celebration and affirmation of women’s distinctive culture offers an avenue out of the dominant male culture. According to Plumwood (1993), one essential feature of all ecological feminist positions is that they give positive value to the connection of women with nature which was previously given negative cultural value in the West. Some authors assert the superiority of the feminine. For example, Mies and Shiva (1993) assert that women are custodians of the feminine principle representative of an organic unity with nature from which men developed. In Ecofeminist Philosophy, Warren (2000) writes:

> Ecological feminists ("ecofeminists") claim that there are important connections between the unjustified domination of women, people of color, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature. ... I refer to unjustifiably dominated groups as 'others,' both 'human Others' ... and 'earth Others' ... (p.1).

An essential component of the second element of ecofeminism is the suggestion that women have a stronger interest in ending the domination of nature. The point here is, in general, women’s closer productive association with nature and women’s parallel experiences of domination and exploitation help them to see and mourn the abuse of nature generally more clearly, quickly, and fully than men. It is important though, to note also that there are many implicit and arguably controversial empirical claims being made
here about women versus men. One of the most coherent and long-lived ecofeminist statements is this one from New Woman, New Earth by Ruether (1975), a feminist theologian:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society. (Ruether as quoted in Warren 2000, p.xiii).

Mies and Shiva (1993) write that there are important connections between the domination and oppression of women and the domination and exploitation of nature, and therefore women have a high stake in ending the domination of nature. They argue that there is a significant conceptual link between the symbolic construction of women and nature and the ways they are acted upon. The authors suggest that a commonality of goals is assumed to exist between the women's movement and the environmental movement. They further articulate this point of view:

Wherever women acted against ecological destruction or and the threat of atomic annihilation, they immediately became aware of the connection between patriarchal violence against women, other people and nature, and that in defying this patriarchy we are loyal to future generations and to life and this planet itself (p.14).

The third element is the concept that feminist thinking promotes non-hierarchical, egalitarian systems. Mies and Shiva (1993) suggest that life is an interconnected web and not a hierarchy that asserts the integrity of every living thing. Jackson (1993) echoes the idea that human life should not be regarded as having a greater value than non-human life. This perspective is central to ecofeminism. For example, King, quoted in Mies and
Shiva (1993), writes that, "For us the snail darter is to be considered side by side with a community’s need for water, the porpoise side by side with appetite for tuna" (p.14).

It is important to note that although ecofeminists share many common values, there is diversity within the ecofeminist movement. For instance, Mies and Shiva identify two strands of ecofeminism, ‘the spiritual’ and ‘the political’. They write that the spiritual strand encompasses women’s social and natural experience which allows them to sense and value those aspects of their connections to the non-human world. Thus, ecofeminist spirituality tends to celebrate the Body and the Earth. It has emerged from the desire to recover and to regenerate ‘ancient wisdom’ as a means to liberate women and nature from patriarchal destruction (Mies & Shiva, 1993). According to Ruether (1996), ecofeminist spirituality is a religion. Ruether points out that concepts such as God, soul-body, and salvation can be reconceived in ways that may bring human beings closer to the ethical values of love, justice, and care for the Earth.

Although the spiritual strand prevails in both Western and non-Western writings, the concept of the Earth as female and a living organism is debated much differently in the Third World than it is in the First World. For example, Mies and Shiva (1993) show how this concept exists in the Third World:

For Third World women who fight for the conservation of their survival base, . . . the divorce of the spiritual from the material is incomprehensible to them, the term Mother Earth does not need to be qualified by inverted commas, because they regard the earth as a living being which guarantees their own and their fellow creatures’ survival…This materialism is neither commodified capitalist nor mechanical Marxist materialism, both of which are based on the same concept of humanity’s relationship to nature. But ecofeminist [spirituality]…is not to be confused with a kind of other-worldly spirituality, that simply wants food without sweat, not caring where it comes from or whose sweat it involves (p.19).
According to Mies and Shiva (1993), the critique of the 'spiritual' strands in ecofeminism is voiced mainly by those who combine their critique of capitalism with a critique of patriarchy and still cling to some materialist concept of history, and who, therefore imply that they have little congruence with the view that there is a deeper aspect to the relation between women and nature (Mies & Shiva, 1993). Mies and Shiva’s perspectives on integrating spiritual, pragmatic, and political concern for both material welfare and ethical use of the Land resonate with Indigenous peoples’ life ways and form a theoretical base for this study.

I agree with the perspectives of the Third World ecofeminists that the connection between women and nature in impoverished communities is present in everyday concrete realities. It is demonstrated by the clearing of forests and women walking extended hours each day gathering wood, and by drought and changes in water table levels, and women having to travel longer distances each day to carry water to their homes (Mies & Shiva 1993; Shiva, 1988).

An understanding of ecofeminism as a general philosophy is important to this study to the extent that it highlights the androcentric aspects of the discourse on human-nature relationships. As Plumwood (1993) notes, most accounts of environmental philosophies have a heavily masculine presence. This study adds to the literature of ecofeminism by articulating Basotho traditional knowledge as spoken by the Basotho women farmers, describing a useful model for including food production and traditional knowledge within the Lesotho curriculum, and providing viable suggestions on how to develop such models. In the following section, I will further examine women’s relationship to nature focusing on Third World women, farming, and food security. I also
highlight the impacts of multinational corporations on the Third World. I then discuss
Third World women whose work values and promotes Indigenous knowledge and who
act as role models for the women active in community initiatives that seek to address
issues of hunger, food security, and the environment.

Third World Women: Community Programs for the Environment, Hunger and Food
Security

Third World women scholars and activists have responded to environmental
degradation by establishing community programs to address problems of hunger, food
insecurities, and Land abuse. To locate programs that link environmental philosophies
and practice, I examine other Third World communities that employ Indigenous
knowledge to promote food security and respect for the Land. I examine here two
exemplary community programs: the Green Belt movement established by Professor
Wangari Mathai, a native of Kenya, and Navdanya, founded by Dr. Vandana Shiva, a
native of India.

Green Belt Movement

In Africa, we are fortunate to have Professor Wangari Mathai, ‘the great voice of
Africa,’ who through her tree planting initiative has contributed significantly to raising
environmental awareness not only in Africa but worldwide. Mathai, the first woman to
become a professor in Kenya and the 2004 Noble Peace Laureate for ‘environmental
protection,’ established the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, planting her first trees on
Earth Day, April 22, 1977. “The Green Belt Movement started in my backyard,” Mathai writes in her essay “Foresters Without Diplomas.” Mathai articulates her experience, which is similar to my life experiences of farming and community work in rural Lesotho. “I became exposed to many of the problems women were facing, problems of firewood, malnutrition, lack of food, inadequate water, unemployment, soil erosion ... so we went to the women and talked about planting trees and overcoming, for example, such problems as the lack of firewood and building and fencing materials, stopping soil erosion, protecting water systems... The women agreed” (Kitchen, 2005, p.137).

Mathai’s work was a difficult, labour-intensive process. Kitchen (2005) quotes Aubrey Wallance noting that “to initiate the campaign, Mathai went into the schools.” The Kenyan children were involved in planting trees: they dug the holes, walked to the nursery to collect trees, planted them, and took care of them, “It was the children who took the message home to their parents and eventually got women’s groups interested” (Kitchen, 2005, p.138). Almost thirty years later, more than three thousand schools have responded to the Green Belt campaign with over one million children involved. More than ten million trees stand throughout Kenya, with over 1,500 nurseries, and almost all of them are planted and cared for by women.

The Green Belt movement added food security to their tree planting initiatives. During her visit to Kenya, activist and author Frances Moore Lappe (Lappé & Lappé, 2002) recounted a conversation she had with Mathai about the Green Belt Movement. Addressing her motivation to add food security to the work of the Green Belt, Mathai replied that it was ‘hunger’ that necessitated such inclusion. Why hunger? In part, my experience of farming in Lesotho and interacting with African farmers is that many
African governments continue the colonial focus on cash crops, including coffee and potatoes, which serve to replace local staple food crops. As Lappé and Lappé point out, one assumption underlying the practices of cash crops is that increased yields are important not only to feed the hungry in the Third World but also as a means to economic growth.

However, research undertaken by the United States National Council on ‘Lost Crops of Africa in Volumes I and II reveals the following irony. Neglected by Africa’s governments and agronomists, more than 2,000 African Indigenous grains, fruits, and roots have been replaced by cash crops and have therefore dwindled to an extent that some scholars regarded them as lost crops (Lappé, Collins & Rosset, 1996). In Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity, Frances Moore Lappé, Joe Collins and Peter Rosset (1979) criticize multinational corporations’ practices of exporting crops that often replace local crops, making people dependent upon imports for basic food survival. “Food self-reliance,” they argue, “doesn’t necessarily mean producing everything the nation eats, but producing enough of its basic foods to be independent of outside forces” (p.387). This statement provides a frame for understanding food security.

I concur with Lappé, Collins and Rosset. For millennia, Africans have learned to cultivate food that worked well on their Lands without relying on food imports. Their arguments are in line with my understanding that to reduce hunger in Africa there is a need to reclaim and protect Africa’s Indigenous crops. I also believe that people can sustain themselves if they understand their relationships to the Land including how the crops, animals, trees, and people relate to one another. The Basotho Elders’ teachings provide examples of how Indigenous knowledge and traditional farming practices can
promote food security and sustainable Land use. Drawing upon Basotho Elder’s stories, in Chapter Five I suggest that Lesotho does not need multinational corporation practices to promote food self-sufficiency.

As I ‘listen’ to the Green Belt story of reviving the “lost crops,” I think of Elder Negi Sigh of the Navdanya Movement in India and the Movement’s parallel efforts to reclaim ‘ancestral knowledge’ of food practices and share their seed heritage. Reclaiming Indigenous knowledge and food practices is integrally linked to protecting native seeds.

Navdanya Movement:

Dr. Vandana Shiva is a native of India and a world-renowned environmental scholar and activist. She founded the Navdanya Movement in Dehradun in 1991 to promote food security by saving India’s native seeds and also established the Navdanya demonstration farm in her homestead.

I first met Dr. Vandana Shiva in New Delhi, India in October 2003 at the International Symposium, Food First: Freedom from Famine. She invited me to her home village of Dehradun at the foothills of the Himalaya Mountains to see for myself how rural women farmers of the Navdanya were engaged in Indigenous farming practices to promote food security. Navdanya was also the location where the symposium was held. I was fortunate to receive financial support from Dr. Shiva’s Bijavidyapeeth foundation fellowship to participate in the symposium. The fellowship was meant to honour and recognize the agriculture work that I do with women in rural Lesotho. At the opening of the symposium, Maya Jani, one of Vandana’s friends and colleagues since college, and now administrator at Navdaya explained: “Navdanya means nine seeds. This farmers’
movement was established with the goal to help preserve India's agricultural diversity and promote food security" (Mathabo Tsepa, personal journal entry, October 5, 2003). My participation at this symposium on Food and Famine helped to deepen my understanding of the root causes of hunger and food insecurity.

For example, I learned about the diversity of India's crops. Like the lost crops of Africa, the multinational corporations are also threatening India's crops. Negi, a demonstrator and translator at Navdanya explained, "We grow fifty crops here, including four hundred different varieties. In rice alone, we have over two hundred different varieties." Negi noted that Navdanya was also collecting more varieties from the farmers and adding to their storage of seeds every year" (Mathabo Tsepa, personal journal entry, October 7, 2003). As I listened to Negi, I wondered why a country such as India so rich in diversity of food crops has a problem of hunger. I learned that the problems are similar to the ones Wangari Mathai's Green Belt Movement is facing. The role of multinational corporations, the Green Revolution, and bioengineering have all contributed to hunger. Shiva (1991; 1993; 2000) criticizes the processes of corporate globalization. She argues that it is killing hundreds of Indian farmers and threatening the livelihoods of millions more. In The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics, Shiva (1991) elaborates on this point when she states that the Green Revolution encouraged farmers, who for centuries planted varieties of crops, to plant the same seed over large areas. She writes that the assumption behind the Green Revolution was that monoculture combined with the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides would yield more food to feed the hungry in the Third World countries.
The multinational corporate arguments for bioengineering are quite frightening. In Stolen Harvest, Shiva (2000) quotes Monsanto, a multinational corporation, which claims, “worrying about starving future generations won’t feed them. Food biotechnology will.” (p.11-12) Monsanto seeds account for more than 90 percent of all acreage planted with genetically modified organisms (GMO) worldwide. Monsanto and other national corporations promoting biotechnology also promise that GMO’s will reduce pressure caused by erosion and mineral depletion on the Land, help farmers become less reliant on chemicals, and protect the rainforest.

“Navdanya is a farmers’ movement,” Shiva explained to the symposium participants, “aimed at helping to save India’s native seeds, biodiversity of life and women’s Indigenous knowledge from being stolen by corporations like Monsanto” (Mathabo Tsepa, personal journal entry, October 11, 2003). The Navdanya Movement does not just share the native seeds with the villagers but also encourages farmers to value and keep their own diverse varieties and revive the practice of seed exchange that has been threatened by the corporate market.

As I ‘listen’ to Mathai’s story of the Green Belt Movement and to Shiva, Maya, Negi and the other Navdanya farmers articulating the important link between hunger, food security, and environment, my thoughts take me back to my experience at the University of British Columbia when I was told by a professor that there was ‘no way’ I could ‘do’ environmental education that would address the problem of hunger because “hunger is a social problem and not an environmental problem” (Mathabo Tsepa, personal journal entry, October 11, 2003). Yet these two movements clearly demonstrate the link between hunger, food security, women, and the environment. They serve as
model community programs that provide direct benefits to communities, and have
provided direction for the design of this study.

In this chapter I explored the ways by which Indigenous people
understand their relationship with the Land, through the stories that connect them to their
Land and food. I highlighted the lessons learned from the stories, which I call the
principles, and underscored the importance of Indigenous environmental thought in
sustainable food practices. In appreciating and honouring the ‘gifts’ from cultures
different from my own, I examined ecofeminism to gain some insights about women
relations with nature. I also draw from the works of Third World women to demonstrate
how some of these individuals engage Indigenous knowledge to benefit their
communities by addressing issues of hunger and food insecurity and raising
environmental awareness and care for the Land.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

As a Mosotho researcher, I believe that research conducted by Indigenous researchers must honour Indigenous ways of knowing and ways of life while showing respect to community values and imperatives. In this chapter I present my research methods and procedures that helped me make meaning of the Basotho traditional food practices and stories and the role of gender in food production. The research design that I selected for this study is primarily composed of Indigenous and participatory methodologies that are informed by the Basotho traditions and cultural protocols. The Basotho cultural teachings grounded this study in terms of the research processes such as gaining entrance into the community, selecting participants, analyzing data, and developing the collaboration that guided the entire research fieldwork.

The first section introduces the methodology for this study, specifically focusing upon reworking the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model within an Indigenous perspective. The second section of the chapter, where I come from, establishes personal relationships that describe the research context and my experience as a Mosotho woman farmer, community worker (activist), and educator. The third section, Researcher as hunter, illustrates how I negotiated entrance into the research context and selected participants. The last section, Data Gathering and Analysis Process, explores research in practice as framed by Indigenous perspectives with a particular focus on methods of data gathering and ethical issues.
Attempting at Indigenous Participatory Action Research: Choosing Culturally Appropriate Research Design

I have heard many Indigenous scholars say that they are seeking to find culturally appropriate methodologies for their communities. Indigenous scholars assert that an Indigenous research paradigm should support a broader understanding of culture by providing information within a framework that honours and respects the people of the culture (Archibald & Haig-Brown 1996; Smith 1999). This means that developing an ethical and respectful research methodology requires an understanding of Indigenous worldview and how it structures the way of life for Indigenous communities. What is a worldview? Alfonso Ortiz, a Tewa anthropologist from the Pueblo nation, provides the following definition:

Worldview provides people with a distinctive set of values, an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to time and a place, and a felt sense of continuity with a tradition that transcends the experience of a lifetime, tradition which may be said to transcend even time. (1997, p.5)

Understanding the importance of that rootedness furthers the awareness and appreciation of why Indigenous people defend their Homelands. Whether the people are the Basotho, Xhoza, Zulu, Masai, First Nations, Maori or another Indigenous people, each have a connection, a rootedness, with a particular area and specific cosmology.

Leory Little Bear (2000) writes that in Aboriginal philosophy everything is animate and related to each other. The focus is on the process rather than taxonomies or objects. Time is part of the constant flux and language the medium by which worldview is projected: “Aboriginal languages are verb rich languages that are process or action oriented. All of the above leads one to articulate aboriginal worldview as being holistic.
An understanding of an Indigenous worldview is important to the design of an Indigenous methodology. But where do I start? Which research design would be culturally relevant for conducting research within the Basotho community? I reflected upon this question and wrote in my journal how I moved from one qualitative research tradition to the next searching for an appropriate methodology:

When the idea of researching with Elders in my community occurred to me, I started looking for a research design that would respect the ways of knowing and way of life of my people and at the same time allow me to explore my topic on Elders' knowledge of traditional food practices. I identified the experiential, contextual, collaborative, relationship features of PAR (Participatory Action Research), which I believed were more compatible with Basotho's cultural knowledge and ways of life. I was also attracted to PAR by its emancipatory and social transformative goal, which I thought were important for my context. So I selected to draw from the PAR perspective to develop an indigenous methodology for my study (Mathabo Tsepa, short version of journal entry, January, 2002).

I wondered if choosing and adopting the available Western-based research designs for my methodology would simply contribute to another form of colonization that Indigenous scholars such as Linda Smith (1999) warn against. However, I found comfort in the words of Smith (1999) who writes that Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and Indigenous practices. Smith believes that this mix reflects the training of Indigenous researchers which continues to be within the academy, and “the parameters and common sense understandings of research which govern how Indigenous communities and researchers define their activities” (p.143). From Smith’s (1999) suggestion, I draw upon tenets of the participatory action research (PAR) approach.
Participatory Action Research

Park (1993) defines PAR methodologies “as a means of putting research capabilities in the hands of the deprived and disenfranchised people so that they can transform their lives for themselves” (p.1). Comstock and Fox (1993) cite Hall (1977) who describes the main features of participatory research as a research that:

1.0 Is of direct and immediate benefit to the community.
1.1 Involves the community in the entire process from the formulation of the problem to the interpretation of the findings and discussions of how to seek solutions.
1.2 Is seen as part of a total educational experience which increases community awareness and commitment.
1.3 Is viewed as a dialectical process, and dialogue over time and not static,
1.4 Fosters mobilization of human resources for the solution of social problems.
1.5 Requires the researcher to be conscious of the ideological implications of research (p.102).

The basic tenet of PAR includes a shared interest in the process of enlightenment as liberating individuals from the dictates of tradition and bureaucracy as well as a commitment to participatory democratic process for reform. Relevant to this study, Robottom (2002) argues that the PAR approach to environmental curriculum development issues should include the following principles: First it should be contextual, meaning it should respect and relate closely to the particular places and workplace issues; Second, it should be responsive. The issues explored in curriculum development should be of interest to participants rather than exclusively the interest of the external researcher; Third, it should be participatory. The participants should be involved directly and equitably at all stages of the research; and finally, it should be praxis which Robottom
defines as reflective or dialectical interaction between personal theory, practice and setting.

PAR and Indigenous Methodology

Both PAR and Indigenous methodology generally critique the hierarchical, exploitative relations of conventional research, urging researchers to seek an egalitarian research process characterized by genuineness, reciprocity, and the questioning of taken-for-granted ideas of objectivity and separation between subjects and object (Smith, 1997; Smith, 1999). As in Indigenous methodology, PAR emphasizes the experiential. Its approach to knowledge is contextual and interpersonal, and therefore addresses the concrete realm of everyday reality and human agency (Robottom 2000; Smith, 1999).

However, my further examination of PAR led me to detect a silence about Land ethics and care in the theoretical framework. What the proponents of PAR do not say, but what I think is important to Indigenous people, concerns the ethical participation of human with Land or nature in the construction of knowledge. Equally important is the link between Indigenous people, their Lands, and the survival of both. The central issue of homeLands is carefully avoided in the PAR theoretical frame, and yet the issue of how Indigenous homeLands are understood both internationally and within nation-states with Indigenous populations is a critical item in any consideration of Indigenous methodologies.

Participatory action researchers talk about the importance of community in the social construction of knowledge (Park, 1993; Smith, 1997). However, I find their definition of community problematic as it is restricted to a community of human beings
(Smith, 1997). This view of the community of human beings as being separate from nature leads to the exploitation of Land and nature basic to the survival of Indigenous people. In contrast, within the foundation of an Indigenous worldview, the community extends to the plants, animals, rivers, insects, stars and so on (Cajete, 2000); when Indigenous people such as the Basotho say re seng, 'we are all related: all humans and non-humans ,’ we mean that we are a community together with the non-human beings.

In addition, PAR emphasizes the centrality of power in the construction of knowledge (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990; Smith, 1997). However, the human-centred PAR ignores the power of nature in that construction. I find this omission limiting and dangerous on two accounts. First, the assumption that only human beings create knowledge with one another, limits humans’ potential to co-construct knowledge with the Land. This view contrasts with Indigenous worldviews of knowledge-creation that sees everything in the universe as animate with soul, spirit, and knowledge and capable of teaching each other (Little Bear, 2000). In Indigenous communities we have shared value in that the Land is our source of knowledge, survival, and identity. This means that Land is an important component of an Indigenous methodology.

The second assumption underlying human power over nature is dangerous as it leads to exploitation of the Land for material gain. This has implications for Indigenous people who do not separate subsistence activities, ways of knowing, spirituality, and ritual celebrations from the natural world. At present, Indigenous peoples are pressured not only to adopt economic lifestyles but also to open their Home-Lands for resource exploitation such as patenting of medicinal plants or seeds by multinational corporations and dominant nation-states. This means that through patenting of life, multinational
corporations discovered the use of a medicinal plant or seed. The patenting of life is a heinous exploitation of Indigenous people and their knowledge because it requires trading the knowledge that makes survival possible for over 75% of rural Basotho people. These people (myself included) live on biodiversity and knowledge involving the use of seeds for growing food and medicinal plants for healing.

To conclude, PAR is important to this study to the extent that it values experiential, contextual, collaborative, relationship, emancipatory, and social transformation features. These fit with the considerations I want to promote as crucial in an Indigenous participatory action methodology. The Basotho traditional knowledge, cultural protocols, and procedures that I introduce as my methods in this chapter add more value to PAR making it more relevant to the Basotho people. To that end, through my study I have attempted an Indigenous approach to PAR. In what follows, I introduce the concept of “Indigenous Approach to Participatory Action Methodology (IPAM),” and throughout this chapter, I illustrate methodological procedures that provide examples characteristics of IPAM. Through the fieldwork, I have come to understand IPAM as ‘process of making relatives’ with people and the Land as research participants.

Towards an Indigenous Approach to Participatory Action Methodology

I have come to understand and conceptualize IPAM as a process of ‘making relatives’. This process requires that an emancipatory project informing research with, in, for and by Indigenous communities must be accompanied by the study of Indigenous communities’ individual and communal socio-cultural-historical contexts, with specific attention to the Indigenous peoples’ worldview, ways of knowing, and social living
conditions. Likewise, the process is grounded in an Indigenous worldview of a community of beings that does not see the community of human beings as separate from the non-human beings.

Thus, to begin making relations within fieldwork, I first aligned myself with the Basotho cultural protocols, values, and way of life in order to ensure that the research be respectful to "all my relations". Respecting the community’s experiential knowledge, the sources of Indigenous knowledge within this project are the Elders and the Land; thus, the Elders were involved in all stages of the research process. Secondly, I consider the specific context of my research, such as need for food, in order to demonstrate respect for the communal contexts of understanding so basic to Indigenous people and traditions. Thirdly, I consistently consider my motives to ensure that the research would genuinely benefit the community rather than simply fulfilling my interests to complete my doctoral studies. Fourthly, as someone familiar to the culture I showed respect and honour to the community’s cultural protocols. Linda Smith (1999) describes the ‘cultural protocol’ that I am promoting in IPAM:

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are factors to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of the study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood (Smith, 1999, p.15).

Interpreting Smith, I situate myself in this study; I describe my research relationship and speak of how I used Indigenous participatory action methodology to make meaning from Elders’ stories and observations. In following Basotho tradition and cultural protocols, I must locate myself by talking about my clan. I am from the Bafokeng
or Hare clan, and through my clan I have strong connection to the Land. In the following section I will talk further about where I come from.

Where I Come From

“Remember where you come from,
Always remember where you come from,
In that way you would never be lost.”

“Always remember where you come from,” my grandmother has always reminded me. Therefore to describe the research context and my experience, I position myself as an Indigenous African, in particular, Mosotho woman, born and raised as a farmer in rural Lesotho. I locate myself in a place where I truly belong. The Basotho Elders tell us that as a people we come from a particular place of origin called Ntsoana-Tsatsi. Basically, Ntsoana-Tsatsi is a name that connects us to the Land. From the many times that I have listened to the Elders speak about Ntsoana-Tsatsi, I have come to understand what it means; that we are of a people who come from the east, where the sun rises, from within the earth, through a passage under the cave, in a wetland of reed fields; an ideal place for hunting, farming and fishing, and a place where our ancestors reside.

We are the Basotho people. This is the place where we have emerged with all our relatives, animal beings (including Bafokeng or Hare, Batsoeneng or Monkey, Bakoena or Crocodile, etc), plant beings (including reeds, sorghum, pumpkin and tobacco plants),

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2 Today at age 85, my grandmother continues to remind me about my origin and connection with the Land.
3 This place of origin of the Basotho people: a fertile agricultural Land confiscated from the Basotho by the Boers. Today this Basotho traditional territory falls under what is called Orange Free State of South Africa and contributes towards food security, the economy and wellbeing of the people of South Africa.
water beings (including springs and rivers) and sky beings. This location of our Basotho origin has shaped my deeper understanding of the strong connection that I have to the Land as well as to the other beings.

This understanding compelled me to employ Land research methodology that will make constant reference and connective statements best presented in the Basotho language, Sesotho, and provide the reader with the flavour of deeper Basotho Indigenous meanings and knowledge of the Land. In essence, the methodology of the Land requires that in my dissertation, from time to time, I should use my people’s language Sesotho, which comes from the Land. I will illustrate what I mean by this statement; Lesotho: Le-: Le (for Land) of the people who speak (-sotho language).

Writing an academic thesis following the oral traditions of my people and speaking from the heart and speaking English in a way that follows the Sesotho language pattern may be problematic; the language pattern of English may be different from the Basotho way of communication. Also, some words in Sesotho have no direct translation in English. I may be criticized for writing in a way that is considered unconventional to the academic world. However, since some statements in Sesotho have no direct English equivalent, I ask that the reader be patient and seek to understand the underlying message and not be imprisoned by conventions. Linda Smith (1999) a Maori scholar articulates her concerns similar to the ones I have about writing and presenting this thesis within the academic world:

Our Western education precludes us from writing or speaking from a real and authentic indigenous position. Of course, those who do speak from a more ‘traditional’ indigenous point of view are criticized because they don’t make sense (‘speak English, what!’). Or, our talk is reduced to some ‘nativist’ discourse, dismissed by colleagues in the academic as naïve, contradictory and illogical. (p.14)
In positioning myself as a Mosotho researcher, I claim a genealogy that connects me to the Land, the origin of the Basotho people, our survival base, ways of life, ways of coming to know, and cultural experiences. Through my parents, I belong to the Bafokeng, the People of the Hare from my father’s side. Via my mother’s side, I have special relation to the Bakoena, the People of the Crocodile. I have kinship relations with 16 other Basotho clans. In Basotho tradition grandmothers are responsible for taking care of the grandchildren. In my case my paternal grandmother raised me and the community assisted her. In a sense my relationship with the Land was nurtured through my early childhood. I was born and raised in rural Qacha’s Nek district in Lesotho where as a community we are dependent on the Land for our livelihoods and survival.

One of the Basotho teachings that I hold close to my heart and one that navigates me through this dissertation writing journey is my grandmother’s lesson of respecting the Land while working with it to grow food. It is my grandmother who instilled in me a sense of spiritual relationship with the Land, our sorghum fields, chickens, pigs, our ancestors, Creator, and the people in our villages and myself. She implanted in me a sense of care, patience, and responsibility towards all beings. It is from my grandmother that I have developed a strong sense of place; spiritual and pragmatic grounding in the reality that in order to live, I need to work hard. All of these qualities have helped me to survive on the Land. That was especially important because my mother passed away to the Land of the ancestors shortly after I was born and my late father worked in the South African gold mines miles away from our Homeland. I was a girl who was orphaned

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4 Among the Basotho people, clans are determined through the father’s family, thus it is through my paternal lineage that I belong to the Bafokeng or Hare clan.
young and must make it on her own in the world. Today I am an adult woman completing a doctoral program in North America thousands of miles afield.

My geographic location situates me in a place where the majority of the Basotho people live in rural areas where we are dependent on farming for our livelihoods. More than half the rural population of farmers in Lesotho are women. Therefore, born and raised in agrarian rural sorghum, corn, pumpkin, bean, and wheat country, I was initiated into the vocation of farming from the time I was very young. I developed my first garden at about age nine, and my aunt’s father-in-law assisted me in gathering stones and dry Khaki-bush (Tagetes minuta) stalks which we used for fencing the garden and protecting plants against wind and animals. As a little girl, I brought together young girls in my village to begin building family gardens so that the girls could sell vegetables (or exchange them) and use the income to buy pencils, exercise books, and rubbers (erasers) for use in school. I was later to learn that the little girls I helped to nurture our gardens and ourselves were also orphans.

Later as an adult woman farmer, I began to initiate and coordinate outreach programs bringing together various not-for-profit groups that sought to improve the wellbeing of our rural communities. Over several years of working with rural Basotho women, from whom I learned so much about farming, and equally during this research fieldwork, I have become more aware of the complexities of the marginal positions accorded women. The marginalization of women is kept in place by practices,

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5 This connection, I believe, was intuitive on my part because I did not know that I too had no mother until the age of 13 maybe 14. From there I worked with the intention to help orphans; help ourselves to survive in the world. In 2004, I formally established a non-profit organization, called Mohoma Temeng, Educating to Feed Ourselves. I founded Mohoma Temeng with a goal to promote the wellbeing of rural communities, especially orphans; to help reduce child hunger and promote safe food, clean water and education.
institutions, cultural symbols, and prejudices. I wondered how women who are the major
food producers in rural Lesotho could be made to feel so powerless over their food and
the Lands that grow the food. How can women so gifted in traditional food practices be
relegated to such low status in this society? My participation in coordinating community
work provoked me to become aware of the ironies of how a person can be so wise and
respected as a farmer and Elder in one context and deemed illiterate, deficient in
knowledge, and requiring schooling and skills in another!

The person I am is also shaped by my experiences resulting from years of
schooling. As a former elementary and secondary science teacher and currently a
university educator and researcher in Lesotho, I have started to question the school
curriculum; the content and the organization of school knowledge in Lesotho, and
pedagogies including my own, which continue to educate Basotho learners about an
‘environment’ detached from the cultural and socio-economic realities of the Basotho
people. I am concerned about the absence of the Basotho traditional knowledge of food
practices, and women’s participation in agriculture within Lesotho curriculum as outlined
in the school syllabus (Lesotho Ministry of Education; 2001). How is it that formal
schooling traditions continue to teach hunger-stricken Basotho children about British
economics, geography, and history instead of learning about their own Land? As an
educator in Lesotho, I am aware that Lesotho is presently making a transition from a
British curriculum to a curriculum based on Basotho needs (Lesotho Ministry of
Education; 2001). It is crucial that this transition be informed by respect for Indigenous
knowing and insights into the importance of rural concerns and Basotho women’s issues.
Too often curriculum directions are set by powerful groups who are unaware of their own urban, cultural, and gender biases.

Based on history and experiences, I have therefore approached this research work from the position of an Indigenous Mosotho woman farmer, a community leader and activist, an elementary and secondary school teacher, and educational researcher from rural Lesotho. I should point out that unlike many Indigenous peoples in some of the world’s ‘rich’ countries, I also approach my work from the position of a hungry Third World Indigenous rural woman who has left her homeland for a place far away on a quest for ‘food’ for thought and also ‘food’ for physiological nourishment. The physiological food that I talk about here is food for hungry children in Lesotho. My responsibility as a Mosotho woman is to help ensure that I myself, children, and community in Lesotho have sufficient food. I believe that my doctoral studies and thesis from a Canadian (Western and mainstream) university will enhance my status as a woman educator, farmer, researcher, and activist in Lesotho. This is particularly important given the gender barriers that women face in Lesotho. I hope that these professional qualifications and accreditation will help me achieve the funding and policy support that I need to develop and implement a curriculum that will enhance the capacity of the Basotho people to produce food, reduce child hunger, and to understand, critique, and challenge the political and global systems that divert our food and much needed resources to markets elsewhere.

I am a hunter!

\[^6\text{Members of the G8}\]
Researcher as Hunter: Presenting My First Hunt, Seeking Community Permission

When the time came for me to return to my Homeland to gather research data after spending almost three years in a Canadian university context, I wondered how I could re-enter the community. How would I get the people to agree to be part of this study? Because I am an insider of the culture, I value and respect the Basotho people’s ways of life and ways of knowing. As an insider of the Basotho culture, I am familiar with the metaphors of the Land embedded within the daily life experiences of the Basotho people. Thus, I found using the culturally specific metaphor of hunting very useful to re-negotiate my entrance into a relationship with the community.

The metaphor that I wrote in my diary prior to entering the research fieldwork where I was both the insider as well as the outsider guided my conduct of the fieldwork study. The metaphor that was conveyed to me by the Elders when I was leaving Lesotho for Canada resonated in my mind:

Ea u eo tsoma metsuntsunyane,  
"me u khutle u tsoere re tsoe re tlilo e mona menoana. 
Hopola botle ke ho boea le marumo le thebe... etsoe setsomi sa pelo e ntle se boea le maru le thebe."  

Go hunt and bring us food so that we can rejoice. We should lick our fingers as we give thanks. Remember the good is to bring back home one’s weapons. Hunters of good heart return from the hunt with their spears and shield.

I entered the research ‘fieldwork’ as a hunter. I reported to the community that my hunt was not over but that in keeping with the Basotho’s tradition of hunting; I brought

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7 Basotho men, and not women, hunt animals for food. Anthropologists have, for a long time made us believe the stereotype that Indigenous/Native cultures are static. The Basotho Elders show that Basotho do embrace changes to our cultural ways of knowing and being with the changes in our Lands while retaining our cultural values, for example in hunting.

8 Elders’ words during the ceremonial gatherings held by members of my community allowing me to report my departure to pursue Masters Degree in Canada in January 2001, and during subsequent visits home.
my first hunt into the community for the blessings. I shared with the community my first
hunt, which I understood to be my curriculum approach and intervention for a way out of
the perennial hunger facing the Basotho people. I presented my hunt as a way of doing
collaborative research with the Elders and children while growing food in the school field
in a rural Qacha's Nek district, Ha Mpiti village, Lesotho.

I chose to present myself as a hunter as a way of legitimating for me, my research
relations as an insider to the Basotho Elders who reported having negative experiences
with previous researchers. They felt that previous researchers had no respect for the
Basotho culture and ways of life. I found that presenting myself as a hunter created a way
to connect with the Elders and community as an insider, someone familiar with the
cultural protocols. However, I was always cognizant of the challenges of assuming either
of the position: insider or outsider. What does an insider mean to me as well as to this
community? Connotations of an insider within many Indigenous communities may
present challenges even to those researchers who are members of the community. Linda
Smith (1999) articulates some of these challenges:

There are a number of ethical, cultural, political and personal issues that can
present special difficulties for indigenous researchers who, in their own
communities, work partially as insiders, and are often employed for this purpose,
and partially as outsiders, because of the Western education or because they may
work across clan, tribe, linguistic, age and gender boundaries (p.5).

In my research, I found using culturally appropriate metaphors helped me to
overcome the binary opposites of insider/outsider. As a hunter, the insider/outsider
became a continuum consistent with the Basotho cultural ways of life. My role as a
hunter meant that I had responsibility to the community; to share experiences of the hunt,
to provide metsuntsunyane or something beneficiary to the community. Thus, I found that my role as ‘researcher as hunter’ facilitated my shifting from outsider to being a member of the community who only left the community in search of the hunt.

In Basotho tradition, it is quite in order for a hunter to take for herself/himself, the hunt, but hunters demonstrate respect to the chief with the first hunt. The presentation of my hunt took place in a traditional gathering called pitso held at the chief of Ha Mpiti region’s place. I initially proposed to call a community gathering at the school, but as I consulted with the Elders I learned that in Basotho tradition, hunters, especially those sent out by the community, presented their first hunt at the chief’s kraal or enclosure for the blessings. I presented Chief ‘Maletsela Mpiti with my proposal, requesting her permission to conduct the study within the community. It was important that I followed the Elders’ directions to present my first hunt to the chief because the chief not only acknowledged my approach as respectful to the community ways, but she also gave me support by creating a context that I was to use to recruit participants.

I was encouraged by the chief who told me that the topic of my study about growing food was very relevant to her people because of the continuing famine in Lesotho. She granted me permission to conduct the research within the Ha Mpiti community and assisted me by calling a pitso or community gathering. The pitso became the context in which I recruited participants. I remember the following morning I was awakened by the voice of a messenger, one of the council members, announcing that there was going to be a pitso on August 4, 2004. This in fact was the announcement of the site where the community was going to meet. Approximately 100 people gathered at
the chief's place, and a total of 47 men and women told me that they would like to participate in the study and asked me to write their names in my notebook.

Research Participants

To address my research focus on traditional knowledge of food practices, I collaborated with a Basotho subsistence farming community that included 20 women Elders and one class of primary school children and their teacher. The number of students was approximately sixty. The key participants for this study were the Basotho Elders since the Elders possess traditional knowledge, which is the focus of my research. The children, their teacher, and I were primarily learner participants, learning traditional teachings of the Land from the Elders. Women Elders were not purposely selected over men, since the invitation to participate in the study was extended to the entire community, both men and women. However, men chose not to participate in a study that involved growing food, and in Chapter Four of this thesis I highlight some possible reasons for their lack of participation. I gathered data for this study over a period of 10 months, from April 2004 to January 2005, in the community of Ha Mpiti in rural Qacha's Nek, Lesotho.

Children as Participants in Research

Although the key participants of this study are the Elders, the site and location of learning for this study necessarily involves children. The children are part of the Basotho way of life. It is Basotho tradition to initiate and introduce a child to the elements of
nature and traditional knowledge right from birth. This is done in order to help to establish a closer and harmonious relationship between the child and nature. To demonstrate this point I relate a story in Chapter Four that shows one way that a Mosotho child is connected to the natural world, it is called kuruoetso ka khoeli or moon initiation.

Teacher as Participant

In negotiating teacher participation, I was guided by the criteria that came from the Elders; ‘participants become’ because the community knows itself. I found the Elders’ criteria for participant selection very useful. As one teacher said:

This is the first time that we would be doing fieldwork with the Elders over a period of 6 months of working together in the field. This is a long period; we are not used to that. And I believe that if we are thinking of taking this project beyond the time that Mathabo will be with us.... I mean if we are to run it for many more years to come... we better begin on a good foot. I think we need to establish good relationships with the Elders. To do that I think we would need one of us teachers who has done some work with the community, and is a bit familiar with the traditional ways and much into traditional farming to guide us. We could all learn at some point but the good beginning is important. (Mathabo Tsepa, journal entry, April, 2004)

I was happy that after our discussions about which class and teacher would participate in the project, the teachers decided it would be beneficial to have a standard six (grade six) teacher participate. A criterion that came from the schoolteachers for selecting the class six teacher was that she was to be a farmer who had an understanding of traditional ways. This choice was justified by the teachers as appropriate on the basis that this would be the first time the Elders and teachers worked collaboratively over a long period. The teachers pointed out that if our community work program (the fieldwork) was to succeed we needed to have a teacher who not only understands the Basotho traditional ways but who was also known among the Elders as being respectful of those ways.
In summary, the purpose of my study was to seek understandings of how people relate with the Land. Consistent with this purpose, I located participants who had knowledge of how to grow food and who were willing to share their stories of the Land. One advantage of linking participants selection to the study purpose was that I did not have to be concerned about the number of the Elders who would participate in the study. The important criterion was my ability to ground the study in the views of local participants. The contextual locale of the research was also more important than numbers. The number of participants in this study was not static, but kept changing throughout the entire fieldwork. We started with approximately twenty-three farmers including 20 women and three men. After three visits to the field, all men had disappeared from the scene. Two of these men came to the field twice, the other man came once, approximately ten minutes before we finished the day’s work. Of the 20 women who kept coming to the farm, not all of them were present at all times over the ten months duration of the project. Likewise, we started the fieldwork with approximately 60 school children, but their number too was not static throughout the project. Forty-seven children remained to the mid point of the study and through to the end. We lost a farmer who passed over to the Land of the ancestors. We lost students who dropped out either because they lost a parent or two and had no one to take care of their school needs, or for other reasons. Some participants stayed with the project while others left.
Harvest: Data Gathering Process

Four data sources provided information necessary to understanding the Basotho people’s relationship with the Land: observations, interviews (storywork)\(^9\), field notes, and photographic images. Triangulation, that is, the analysis of information from various sources, provided comprehensive core insights. These sources provided multiple perspectives to find characteristic patterns and to delve into the meanings of these patterns for the Basotho. Comparing data over a wide spectrum of time, from oral stories to photographic images, helped reveal the dynamics, complexities, and continuation of the Basotho way of life.

I must mention that my most profound justification for the selection and procedure for this study emerged from the fieldwork and was nurtured by the commitment and hard work by all fieldworkers. Like the food we were planting in the field, over a prolonged period of fieldwork I observed that our methods were flourishing as fieldworkers grew to understand what it meant to be in direct participatory relationship with the Land growing food. In Appendix A, I present a summary of my research timeline that follows the Basotho’s year to further illustrate the context of my study and how the Basotho way of life is closely connected to the Land. The Basotho year is composed of 12 moons, which derive their names from natural phenomena or from ways of life specific to the Basotho. The names of the moons illustrate their responsibilities in the cycles of life and the Basotho way of life. I have presented the moons to begin with ‘Mesa or April, following the order at which I entered the fieldwork to gather data. It is

\(^9\) See Archibald 1997, next section on story telling
important to note that the Basotho year begins at the start of the growing season with the first moon being Loetse or September.

Participant Observation

During the fieldwork for this study my role became that of participant as well as observer. In Basotho tradition one does not join letsema or community collaboration without her/his hoe. I entered the fieldwork with my fieldwork tools for data gathering. I had my pens and notebook where I would write and represent my field observations. I also had my hand hoe that I was going to use to cultivate the Land. I had some seeds of sorghum, maize, beans, pumpkins, squash, and peas; a contribution from my grandmother. I had a variety of vegetable seeds from the local agriculture business people as their contribution to the fieldwork. I had five bags (about 50Kg each) of cow dung from local farmers, another contribution to the fieldwork. The cow dung was to be used as fertilizer. I also had a camera and tape recorder in hand.

My goal was to observe and record how Elders work with the Land to plant food and document their experiences as they took part in a variety of the farm activities. Because the key participants in this study were Elders, my observations focused on how Elders interact with children, the Land, amongst themselves as women farmers, and with myself as a farmer and researcher participant.

Once the farm activities began, I attempted taking some notes of what I was observing, which I recorded in my notebook, and I continued this process for several weeks. I would switch taking notes with taking my hoe for cultivating; it became a very complex and tiring process. It was a challenge to keep up with the note taking while at
the same time working with the Land to grow food. There was too much that needed to be observed, too much work in the school field that needed to be done; one class of about 60 children and 20 farmers needed my attention; 400 children in the school were hungry for food that needed to be grown in the field; approximately 2.0 acres of Land (not just a small experimental plot).

The Elders, teachers, and children told me that what kept their motivation to participate in the fieldwork was a hope that they could grow enough food that they could feed the school children. What emerged as a community need was a desire to grow food and to reduce the children’s hunger. I became anxious about finding ways to balance my role as a participant observer, a woman farmer, and an educator concerned about child hunger. I later found out that documenting my observations and reflecting each day immediately after the fieldwork was a more efficient way by which I could stay focused during the fieldwork.

I entered the research fieldwork with the goal of doing participatory research but not knowing exactly what that means in practice. What does doing participatory research in the crop fields mean? What I learned from this fieldwork experience is that when research involves working with human beings and the Land as participants, the dilemma of shifting positions from being a researcher to participant became more real and relevant. It was not always easy for me to move from the role of being a researcher to being a participant. Part of the difficulty was that I found myself so drawn into the joy of working with the Land that I almost forgot about my intentions to document the events. I recall being so absorbed with sharing cultural teachings with the children and the Elders about how my grandmother and I would use tsehlo (a medicinal plant, a runner like
pumpkin, that bears thorny seeds) to help our pumpkin to bear more ‘children’ (fruits). How we would crush it, soak it in water and sprinkle it over our pumpkin. I wondered about the possibilities of doing rigorous participatory action research while working with humans and the Land as participants. This experience made me realize the complexities and responsibilities of attempting an ethical and rigorous participatory research.

I should mention while the actual growing of food in the field began during the start of the growing season, which is in the month of Loetse or September, I had been involved in the community activities since ‘Mesa or April. I spent much time with the community Elders and became involved in their daily lives the way that I would be as a member of the community. The actual growing of food in the field stretched from Loetse or September 2004 to Pherekhong or January 2005. The pitso took place in Phato or August. In the meantime from April to August 2004, I kept in touch with the Elders who had sent me out as a hunter to report to them about my hunting journey in North America and to seek advice on how I was to proceed with the fieldwork.

My involvement with Elders prior to the planting season included helping the Elders in harvesting of sorghum, maize and beans, and threshing, and winnowing. I also organized community events, which the community had identified as beneficial. For example, I organized seven villages of Ha Mpiti in a tree-planting project where men and women attended in larger numbers, and we planted 1500 wood and 200 fruit trees.

Stories, Storytelling, Storywork and Conversational Interviews

My research with the Elders sought to understand Indigenous thought and traditional farming through participating with the Land growing food, and through oral
stories. Within Indigenous communities, there is a shared understanding that Indigenous knowledge comes from oral histories of Elders' and the Land. I engaged Archibald's (1997) storywork to make meaning of the Basotho's stories of the Land. As an Indigenous educator who values oral tradition and stories, I greatly appreciated the way that Archibald said she combined the two concepts; work and story, to illustrate the importance of how educators need to undertake the educational work of making meaning from stories. She said that the storywork principles of respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, wholism, inter-relatedness and synergy require an intimate understanding and years of commitment to understand and apply them to life and to Indigenous research methods.

I selected storywork to guide the research processes because of the fit with the Basotho people's way of life, which is embedded in oral traditions, stories and storytelling. In particular, the principles of respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity and inter-relatedness are important Basotho traditional teachings. These five principles guided the research processes and form part of the Basotho teachings. These principles and their application in Basotho daily life emerge clearly in our traditional farming practices and stories presented in Chapters Four and Five.

The Elders shared their stories of the Land which provided me with examples of the Basotho traditional food practices and knowledge. My responsibility was to listen carefully to the stories and be able to derive meanings from them. I found that our communal understanding of the fieldwork, commitment, responsibility and respect for each fieldworker assisted us to weave our individual stories into a meaningful whole-story. It is this larger story that brought together participants. I also found there was
consensus among us that stories of Basotho women told by women in their own words could be liberating.

I come from a tradition of farming. One of the most valuable life principles that I learned from participating with the Land growing food, also helped me to understand and make meaning from Elders’ stories and fieldwork observations is patience. There is a relationship between being a farmer who uses farming methods that attempt to respect the Land, meaning that one avoids feeding animals, crops and the Land with chemicals to speed up growth, and being a good listener. Both require patience.

I have listened to Indigenous peoples saying that for one to be able to understand a story one must have an ability to listen carefully to what is being said. They mean that one must learn to be a good listener. To be a good listener one must practice being patient and avoid being in a hurry; rushing the storyteller to get to end of the story, asking questions that interfere with the story and storytelling may limit understanding of the story. In Basotho tradition we have teachings that warn one against impatience, and this is what one of our teachings say, lepotla-potla le ja poli, lesisitheo le ja khomo. I will try to translate this proverb. It says, if you hurry-hurry you will eat a goat and if you slow down you will eat a cow. I provide this literary meaning of the proverb as it also serves to exemplify our way of life and connection to our food.

My responsibility was to listen carefully to Elders’ stories and be able to make meanings from them without making any judgment. Being patient also meant that I could be able to observe carefully how Elders practice farming, and document my observations while at the same time participating in the growing of food. I wanted my research to be relevant, beneficial, and respectful to my people, our traditions, and culture. I think that
my patience has helped me to achieve that goal. Being patient has not only helped me
conduct respectful research, but patience has always been my daily guiding principle.
During my doctoral studies at UBC and the research process, patience and prayers have
been my important guides, guiding me in the good ways, helping me to overcome life-
and-death challenges in ways that I could have never imagined possible. I pray.

Jo-ann Archibald also helped me to appreciate the importance of praying as a
process of learning to make meanings from stories. This is what she says about the value
of praying, “A humble prayer creates a cultural learning process which promotes the
principles of respect, reverence, responsibility, reciprocity” (Archibald, 1997, p. 1).
Within the research contexts for this study and from experience, I have learned that
praying can be important in promoting a feeling that re seng, we are all related: all
humans and non-humans connected to one another, the Land, everything in the universe,
and the Creator. Throughout the fieldwork we prayed.

I really believe that it is through praying that I was able to make meaning from the
fieldwork observations and Elders’ stories. Praying and keeping good thoughts in my
heart helped me cope with the complexities of the research process. The stories and
storytelling process in this thesis were all communicated in my language, Sesotho. I
transcribed the stories and then read them to the Elders for verification. But I also had a
major responsibility to translate the stories into English while attempting to retain their
cultural meanings and oral patterns. After having an English written version of the story,
I still re-read the story several times, going back and forth from re-listening to the tapes
of stories as told by Elders, re-visiting the Sesotho transcripts and comparing those with
the English format of the story. This was an immense amount of work and a challenging process but praying helped me to endure.

The process of making meaning from the Basotho Elders’ stories that were communicated through our language Sesotho made me aware of the importance of language in the Indigenous methodology that I used for this study. If I were not familiar with our language Sesotho and our metaphors, carrying out this research would have been impossible. I wondered about the possibility of conducting culturally respectful research if one is an outsider of the culture and unfamiliar with the language of the people with whom the research is being carried out?

I also used ‘conversational’ interviews primarily to initiate a story-telling process with children. This procedure was important especially with young children because they needed more guidance. I found that one advantage of conversational interviews was that they were close to the everyday way in which people in the community conversed about everyday events.

Photographs

I used photographs to complement data documented from interviews and observations. I found that photographs of the fieldwork activities provided visual images of the Basotho people’s stories of the Land, our traditional food practices, way of life, and social interactions between the Elders and children. During the early growing season, in the months of September through December when there was much work cultivating, sowing, and watering the plants, I found that the use of a camera was important to help quickly capture these activities. The images taken from the fieldwork provided me with a
means of analyzing and reflecting upon the research process, which I could not easily note in the field. As an educational researcher, I also found that photographs presented cultural information on the Basotho people that could be useful in classroom contexts in general, and particularly, in helping children develop environmental knowledge.

Pragmatically, I found that it was easy for me to quickly take a photograph of a particular phenomena, hang my camera around my neck, and still be able to directly participate in the fieldwork; cultivating the Land with my hoe, mixing seeds of maize, pumpkin, and beans in preparation for hlakantsuntsu culture or what modern agriculturalists would call mixed cropping.

Since time in memorial, Basotho have adopted and continue to adopt technologies from other cultures (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) wherever such technologies fit with our way of life. To be sure that I was not imposing photography, which is a modern technology, on to the participants and after receiving permission from the Elders, children, and the teacher to take their pictures, I thought that it would be a good idea to explore further what the participants thought about photographing the fieldwork and how it could benefit our work. In a sense, I wanted to validate with them my use of photography as a method.

Pulane, a teacher and a farmer spoke about how she might use photos with the children in her classroom to initiate a storytelling process and to assist students to recall the Elders’ stories of the Land. She added that the children could use the photos to play mantloane or role-play the farm activities in the winter months when there would be snowfall and not much that could be done in the fields. The Elders spoke about the importance of being able to take some pictures home to show the grandchildren that are
born and those to come. As an educator who values my culture, I was happy when the Elders spoke of their desire to have their stories passed on to the next generations. They recommended that it would be a good idea if a child’s storybook documenting traditional food practices were to be produced from our fieldwork and used in the school. I reinforced the Elders’ idea of a children’s book. I emphasize that such a curriculum project would be the first of its kind in the school system in Lesotho. A Land and food security curriculum written by community Elders, who happen to be all rural women farmers, and children and their teacher in collaboration with a local educational researcher, is not only a much-needed area of curriculum but also a highly innovative initiative.

To write a book for the younger Basotho generations would be to honour the wisdom of the Elders and to validate the Basotho’s Indigenous knowledge of the Land within current curriculum in Lesotho. Such a book would validate the vital work that rural women farmers undertake to produce food for families, communities, and the nation. All the women said that if such a book were to be written, it would probably serve to bring the work of women farmers into public awareness, and that might educate the public to give the farmers the respect that their work deserves.

For the majority of the children in rural schools in Lesotho, having their pictures taken is something they have never experienced before. Basically, for all the children the excitement behind photography was that they would see themselves in the picture; if allowed, they would take their photos home to show to their grandmothers, grandfathers, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, fathers, and mothers. But that was not all. For some children there were no mothers that they could show the photos to. Yet these photos were
still to serve an important purpose in the lives of individual children, and this was true for one girl\textsuperscript{10} in particular.

I love my photograph taken. I can show it [my photograph] to my mother...if she was here. Grandmother says I am a beautiful little girl because I have a good heart like my mother. No photograph of my mother that I can look. In my photograph I can see my mother. I will really feel good...\textsuperscript{11}

The little girl wanted to use her photograph to bring to life the memories of her loved mother. Through the photograph, the mother-daughter relationship would be brought back to life. She is hungry to see what her mother looked like. Her grandmother has told her that she and her mother looked alike. Like most children in this rural and impoverished community-school, the little girl had never been photographed so having her picture taken was also motivation to participate in the fieldwork. I personally found her reasoning for wanting her picture taken so profound and compelling.

I was really moved by the words of the girl because I could identify with her experience. Her story deeply touched my heart. She helped me reflect on my own experience. She also helped me appreciate my role as an educator and that I must learn to move beyond this pain so that I can now re-focus on the important work of “growing food, growing orphans” through the food-curriculum, which I hope to put in place in Lesotho.

Through my discussion with the children on the relevance of photography, I came to understand that photographs of our deceased loved ones can be ‘healing’. This is because, true enough, photographs can evoke and invoke memories both forgotten and

\textsuperscript{10} I did not include the name of the girl for confidentiality. I didn’t feel comfortable either to give her anonymous name.

\textsuperscript{11} Grade 6 girl-orphan is from the Monkey clan. Note how the girl uses present and past tense when referring to her deceased mother. This is because in Basotho tradition, we speak of deceased person as having taken a journey. In a sense our deceased ones are here and over there, and always watching over us.
not so forgotten. They can fuel our emotions, and often emotions that feed the tributaries of tears. But at the end of it all, my experience is that a closer look at these images followed by careful observation, reading, listening, and reflecting can be truly healing especially if such photos are all that one has in place of a mother. What could be a more trustworthy way to justify the use of photography in research in general and in particular within our fieldwork where several of the school children were poor orphans who in their own words desired to connect with their relatives in the ancestral Land in whichever way possible? Photography became an important method for recall, where field notes became a challenge, because I was both researcher and participant in the project.

Making Meaning from Elders’ Stories: Data Analysis

I am a practicing farmer since childhood. I value the Basotho Elders’ teachings about our traditional farming practices and women’s Indigenous knowledge of selecting seeds. In this section of the chapter, I will highlight the important teachings that I have gained from Elders and fieldwork experience about using traditional farming practices, in particular, the process of selecting seeds and ‘hlakantsutsu culture’ or mixed cropping method. I will explain both processes; selecting seeds and hlakantsutsu culture, as examples of Basotho Indigenous knowledge. Then I will talk about how I applied this knowledge in the research process to analyze, and make meaning from, stories, and I will do that by introducing the concept “Analogical and Metaphorical Analytical Approach”.

12 The Basotho use only the word “hlakantsutsu” without a word “cult.” I combine the hlakantsutsu and culture to illustrate that I don’t separate culture from nature, but understand both as a community of beings that need to be respected.
“But Mathabo I don’t understand how farmers work,” a friend who was eager to learn about Basotho traditional farming said, after I presented a paper on Basotho farming practices, at the World Environmental Education Congress, in Torino, Italy. “Isn’t that a waste of time, why select seeds after harvesting while you know that you would mix them again during the growing season in this mixed method, what you call ...[hlakantsuntsu]?” (Journal entry, October 5, 2005)

The work of a farmer is very challenging and complex. We select seeds, we mix them again, we select, we sort, and we try all sorts of things. Sometimes there is a purpose going through all this work, but at other times farmers just want to try things out to see what works and what does not. That is how farmers gain knowledge and develop wisdom for farming. The process of selecting seeds is not a one-time incident within any given growing season (year). But it is an on-going, cyclic process that happens prior to harvest (depending on the crop), at harvest, before and during the new growing season (in spring). The women begin to select our seeds just before harvest depending on the crop. To learn more about the process of selecting seeds, I refer readers to Elders’ stories in Chapter Four.

Analogical and Metaphorical Analytical Approach

In order to arrive at the interpretation and understandings of how the Basotho conceptualize their relationship with the Land, I employ what I call an Analogical and Metaphorical Analytical Approach. My analytical method adheres to the Basotho traditional farming practices, in particular the processes involved in selecting seeds and in hlakantsutsu culture. I have employed the methods of a farmer. My experience as a
woman farmer and a keeper of seeds led me to see the link between the processes of data gathering and analysis and the Basotho traditional harvesting, selecting and mixing of seeds for planting. I chose to work with data in the same way that I would work with the seed. This interpretative framework is deeply rooted in the Basotho traditional way of life as depicted in the stories the Elders tell about their connections to the Land and presented in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis. In what follows I discuss how I used the metaphors of selecting seeds and hlakantsutsu culture to derive meanings from stories that form data for this study.

The analytical framework that I talk about here is analogical and metaphorical in the sense that it draws from the Basotho hlakantsutsu culture, which is a method of farming but not a ‘conventional’ method of data analysis. Hlakantsutsu culture is a Basotho method of mixing several varieties of seeds for planting of mixed crops. It is a process that requires that at the time of harvest, and also prior to the planting season, a farmer engages in careful examination of the crop from which the seed is to be selected. This is then followed by the selection, sorting, organizing and mixing of seeds that are to be sown in the field to make new growth and new life. As mentioned earlier, the process is cyclic and ongoing, in that, at the start of the growing season, from a mixture of seeds stored from the previous year, springs hlakantsutsu culture or mixed and diversified crops from which mature seeds develop. At harvest, the mature seeds in turn undergo the process of being selected, organized, sorted, and carefully stored, and again, mixed for planting. The cyclic nature of the Analogical and Metaphorical Analytical Approach that draws from the processes of selecting seeds and hlakantsutsu culture (mixed cropping) makes it an organic analytical method.
I transcribed the stories recorded in tapes, read the transcripts, and research field notes, and translated the stories from Sesotho into English. I sought to make meaning from the stories using hlakantsutsu culture and seed selection methods.

To make meaning from children's stories I used hlakantsutsu culture. I mixed children's words, phrases, half sentences, sentences, metaphors, idioms, and single letters from transcripts. I mixed them to form a rich diversified hlakantsutsu culture. I re-wrote these on a chart paper. After carefully examining, sorting, and arranging the children's words, just as I would mix the seeds of sorghum, maize, beans and pumpkin, I took the mixture to the field, which became the text. Upon the text I sowed the children's words, at first without worrying about what will emerge. I did this several times moving a word from one position to the other until words complimented each other in a sentence or phrase. I found that I ended up having a poem of several stanzas reflecting many voices.

In November some vegetables, such as turnips and spinach that we planted in the field were ready for harvest. The children and Elders harvested and ate the food they had grown. Food harvested at the farm provided children and their teachers with lunch (Figures 5 and 6: photos of children harvesting and eating turnip). The standard six children were able to take home vegetable rations. Elders were able to take home bundles of vegetable bundles. As I have mentioned in Chapter One, approximately one third of the children in the school participating in this study were orphans and many come to school with their bellies empty.
Figure 5 - Photograph of children harvesting turnips. Photograph by Mathabo Tsepa, November, 2004.

Figure 6 - Photograph of children eating turnips. Photograph by Mathabo Tsepa, November, 2004.
The children spoke about how hunger affects them in their daily lives, and the ways that planting food in the school field was beneficial:

I feel good when we eat our turnips
I mean the turnip root
that day after eating it (turnip) that much
I went home, my stomach was really full
when I get home I just drank water and slept
the food we planted helped a lot that night
I like to come to the field
Here, I can fill my stomach with turnips.

But in our classroom
We are drawing vegetables
we cannot eat it.

Each day, the children could not hide their excitement when they looked at the turnips that were ready for harvest, and I would hear some whispering:

we are growing this food and
we are going to eat it.
we will no longer be hungry

Why hungry child? I wondered?

This poem is a collection of some words, phrases, remarks and stories from children. It reflects what the children taught me about how they felt and about their experience of learning to grow food with Elders. This collection of children stories illustrates how participatory research that is culturally relevant and respectful can benefit the community. These kinds of lessons cannot be learned in the abstract, direct participation and interaction with the land is very important.

The children in this study constituted part the context. Their presence was symbolic and evocative of the Elders’ stories, which I was interested in. Therefore, the
children’s photos in this thesis are aimed at placing the readers in the context. There will not be detailed examination of their role in the study as the aim was to understand the Basotho people’s Indigenous knowledge, traditional farming and food security practices. Thus, the excerpt of children’s stories on page 94, above is meant to demonstrate that the children are always part of the Basotho way of life.

With the Elders’ stories, I did the opposite. My approach followed what a farmer would do in selecting seeds. The process requires that a farmer carefully select seeds because these seeds will not only yield a good harvest for food but will also provide seeds for the next growing season. Every seed is important and is not to be wasted, but the value of the seeds in terms of whether or not they will grow is decided by the farmer. Seeds are kept either as food for the animals or food for people. Mature seeds are not to be wasted; they are sources of survival and are bearers of the culture of the Basotho people, our knowledge, our identity, history, economy, social structures, and education. The importance of seed in the lives of the Basotho people, and reasons why seed must be protected are best articulated by Elder Malepoqo of the Crocodile clan. She speaks of our native seed and warns against its loss:

When we lose our native seeds...we also lose who we are... our culture, knowledge, and survival.... Without the seed, the entire community wellbeing is affected...but my real concern is about the future generation (November 11, 2004).

To decide which stories to present in this thesis, I worked carefully moving from the transcripts to re-listening to tapes and aligning the stories with the research questions. Some stories aligned more closely with the questions than others, and they were selected for that reason. Some Elders told many stories that were in line with the research
questions while others told few stories, but all stories relevant to my research focus are represented in this thesis in various ways including independent stories and collective stories from our group meetings. Just like mature and ripened seed, traditional stories of Elders are a valuable source of Indigenous knowledge. They are important for the survival of current and future generations, and this is in part, why the Elders are key participants in this study. The Elder’s stories are the focus of this research and are presented in the next chapter. In sum, I believe likening the importance and value of oral history gained from Elders to our close relationship with seeds is a powerful educational metaphor.

Some Ethical Issues from the Fieldwork

During the research fieldwork and process, there were some issues that emerged about procedures around informed consent and establishing trusting relationships with the community. I will outline them below, and speak to how I dealt with them.

Chief’s Issues

The chief was appreciative of the procedures I followed in seeking her permission to work with the Ha Mpiti community and the local primary school in the Qacha’s Nek district. She expressed her dissatisfaction about previous research where she observed that often ‘educated people’ [researchers] both local and outsiders entered the community, and conducted research with the schools and or community without her consent. She told me that often such researchers claim that they obtained permission from the Ministry of Education and school principals. Yet, these researchers forget that the
schools are located in a village and are therefore part of communities under the leaderships of the local chiefs.

Another issue that emerged concerned the English language in the consent forms. Although the chief could read and understand English, she requested a Sesotho version of the consent letter and forms, which I prepared and submitted. She explained that her council was comprised of individuals who could not read and understand English, and that it was important that she communicate the information pertaining to my request to the council in the language that the members of the council could understand. Subsequently, she granted me permission to conduct the research fieldwork. She also assisted me in calling a pitso intended for me to introduce the study and myself and to invite Elders’ participation.

Elders’ Issues

The Elders whom I was fortunate to interact with prior to setting on the ‘hunting’ journey to further my studies in Canada in 2001 appreciated my return into the community. Initially the majority of the Elders requested me to provide them with consent letters and forms that were written in their language Sesotho. Their reasons for their preference to have consent forms in their language were in part similar to the ones raised by the local chief. For example, some Elders could not read and understand English well, and others could not read at all. Still others told me “things get into much better perspectives while they are communicated in the language of their ancestors” (transcript of meetings, April to August, 2004).
For various reasons, many of the Elders were reluctant to provide written consent but instead preferred verbal agreement. For example, some Elders explained that they were suspicious about signing papers, since their previous experience about signing of papers often meant that a person in the village would either be taken to a police station or courts of laws or an experience similarly negative. Others spoke about how signing papers resulted in their Land been taken away from them or roads being constructed on their fields. As a member of the community, I was always aware of the ethical issues and the experiences that the Elders expressed. My challenge was to demonstrate to the Elders and the chief that my research would not affect the community in the negative ways that previous research had before.

As someone familiar with the Basotho traditions, I respected the cultural teachings and protocols to re-negotiate trusting relationships with the community. For example, during the search process I used the metaphor of the hunter to report about my study to the chief and community and to ask their permission to conduct fieldwork in and with the community. After introducing myself to the community as a hunter, I really felt good because the Elders told me that they were very pleased that I could go away from home for almost three years and still remember where I came from. What the Elders meant was that I had taken seriously their word to be a hunter, and that I value our teachings, our culture, and the metaphors. During subsequent meetings and individual visits with the Elders, the metaphor of hunting often became an entry point to our conversations. It provided a medium through which to translate often complex and abstract research concepts and processes into common language understood by the community and researcher. The metaphor of hunting became a concept through which
trusting relationships between the researcher and the community developed. The Elders gave me permission to collaborate with them in this study. All Elders provided me oral consent. Elders who could write also gave their written consent.

Parents/Guardian/Children’s Issues

Establishing Relationships with Prospective Students Participants.

From April until June, just before the school closed for winter, I had an opportunity to pay informal visits to the school. I was not completely new to the school community. I knew all the teachers; I knew most of the children and the two women who helped in the kitchen. I felt comfortable here as I grew up in this village, and this is the school where I did my primary education. During my weekly visits to the school, I re-familiarized myself with the school environment, the surroundings, the classrooms, the kitchen, and the school farm. Also, I informally observed children during classroom activities, outside of class, and at lunchtime and play.

During my visits to the school, the teachers and the women who work in the school kitchen and myself talked informally about various community issues including poverty, hunger and increasing number of orphans due to HIV/AIDS. The total number of the children in the school was approximately 400 children. I felt sad to discover that of the 400 children 98 were orphans because they have lost one parent, and 26 were double orphans who have lost both parents.
Academic Vs Cultural Protocols: Issues

The UBC ethics research protocols, stipulates that parents/guardians of young children should provide consent for their children's participation. During the initial stages of the research fieldwork, I learned that many parents/guardians were reluctant to sign the consent forms. They argued that as parents/guardians when they send their children to school it is with an understanding that the school (principal and teachers being adults) should assume all the responsibility towards what goes on in the school. I found that this situation was a clash between the academic (UBC) ethical protocols and the cultural ethical protocols. During the first week of August, the class teacher of the children in standard six (grade six) helped me by distributing the consent forms and letters to parents/relatives. I was fortunate that many of the Elders who agreed to participate in the study were also either parents or grandmothers or aunties or other relatives of the school children whose consent I needed.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the methodology for this study and discussed how I reworked the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model within an Indigenous perspective. I also introduced the reader to Where I come from and Who I am to describe the research context and how my experience as a Mosotho woman farmer, community worker (activist), and educator brought me to this study. I further illustrated my Researcher as hunter role and discussed how I re-negotiated entrance into the research context and sought permission from the study participants. I concluded with Data Gathering and Analysis Process to present my research in practice within an Indigenous
perspective framework and also included my methods of data gathering and related ethical issues. In the next chapter, I will present and interpret the Elder stories.
I am very fortunate because throughout my life and during this study, I participated in farming with Elders who taught me about the values of our traditional food practices, ways of life, and stories. The stories told in this chapter were gathered within the community of Ha Mpiti, Qacha' Nek district in Lesotho. These stories were documented through interviews, observations, photographs, and during fieldwork where I participated in the growing of food with Elders and children. My research took place on a school field that covered approximately 2.0 acres and was situated in a valley at the intersection of two rivers, Mohlaba Poho (The one that kills an Ox) and Maqhaba abbreviated from Moo Ka Hare (Here Inside our Land). During the fieldwork I planted food crops with the Elders and children with the purpose of learning about the Basotho's traditional food practices. In this chapter, I present the Basotho Elders' stories to illustrate examples of the Basotho traditional food practices. I also examine Indigenous knowledge and how this knowledge is transmitted across generations. I conclude by exploring the role of gender in food production.

Basotho people say 're seng' which translates to "we are all related: all humans and non-humans." Therefore we must have respectful relationships with one another, our clan animals, and the Land. This respect is translated into action through the many traditional farming practices and understandings that define the Basotho way of life and ways of knowing. In order to understand a way of life of a people, I believe that it is important to select a thematic focus from the people's own culture. The stories and
observations presented in this chapter focus on farming practices that illustrate the interrelationships of the elements or principles within Basotho culture. Each of these principles or cultural components relies on the other components and together they form the Basotho way of life that is shaped by Indigenous thought, a cultural system of knowledge, and the enactment of a culturally specific paradigm. In my view, to understand the complexity of a culture, one must view the cultural information in a way that demonstrates the interrelationships of all the aspects of that particular culture.

Re seng: We are all related: all humans and non-humans

At the core of the Basotho worldview and way of life lies re seng, “we are all related: all humans and non-humans.” The important aspect of this worldview is the web of relationships that form the whole. This Indigenous worldview explains and gives meaning to the culture’s origin and to the interrelationship and interdependence of nature and humans. Elder Maleshoane of the Bafokeng explains her interpretation of re seng and how this understanding shapes the Basotho way of life:

I believe that everything we do in our fields; how we plant sorghum, care for the Land and crops, harvest and eat foods—all is based on the understanding that re seng (we are all related: all humans and non-humans). Re seng means that we have close relationships to each other by our clan systems. But also, through our totem animals and plants, we are related to the Land, we are related to all those that have relationships to our totems…we have relationships to our ancestors in the spirit world. Re seng! This is what forms the basis of our way of life, the way our families and community are structured, our education and our relationships with the Land that the Creator has given to us, and how we do fieldwork (agriculture) (Elder Maleshoane, conversation/interview, September 3, 2004).

Through the planting of food and following the Basotho way during fieldwork, I gained a deep understanding of re seng. Elder Maleshoane explains that re seng is not an
empty metaphor because, “our people live it, and continue to apply it in daily life.” This is what makes Basotho who we are. Elder Maleshoane continues: “I really like ... that you can travel to the capital city, Maseru, and find young families eager to learn about their clan poems. They say they want to teach their own children about their origins. (Elder Maleshoane, conversation/interview, September 3, 2004).

Throughout my study, I heard the Elders speak emphatically about the importance of maintaining respectful relationships with the Land while working with it to grow food. Elders demonstrated their understandings of the cultural teachings of respect, interconnectedness, and reciprocity in ways that taught children about the uses of traditional farming practices including: hlakantsuntsu culture believed to resemble boieane btholeho or biodiversity and thus providing health and wellness not only to humans but to insects, birds and ‘all our relations,’ and koti or minima/select tillage. They also emphasized the importance of ‘taking only what one needs from the Land’ and ‘giving back to the Land.’ They used nkhono le ntate-moholo or ash and cow dung manure, with an understanding that the ashes and animal dung will nourish the soil and make the Land that has been exhausted or ‘grown old’ to ‘grow young’ and fertile again. These traditional farming practices express the Basotho people’s thanksgiving and a way of “giving back to the Land”, and their understanding of respect for the Land. These principles of reciprocal relationships, of inter-connectedness, interrelatedness, and inter-dependency were recurring themes in the interviews and observations conducted for this study.

For example, developing respectful and caring relationships means that when the sorghum is harvested, some of the sorghum is left to the Land to give back to the soil and
the earthworms. It may also mean that the harvested sorghum that is not eaten is given to the cows, and then the cow dung is given back to the Land as manure. These are the Land ethics and morals that are prescribed within the worldview of the Basotho people.

Traditional Farming Practices

Letsema, (Collaboration/Cooperation: a Foundation for Community Well Being)

The Basotho people utilize letsema or community collaboration (Figure 7) a way of life as they undertake their fieldwork. This work includes selecting the seeds, cultivating the Land, planting sorghum, maize, beans, pumpkin and vegetables, hoeing the fields, participating in ceremonies, and eating sorghum foods such as nyekoe (a mix of sorghum, beans, maize and pumpkin). The Elders expressed the high value of letsema:

The importance of letsema for planting the fields and raising sorghum for the children and families lies in that, besides making the work go easy and fast, it brings people together ...the closeness of a community working together to plant, care for or harvest food in the field is an important cultural teaching.
(conversation/interview, group meeting with elders, August 4, 2004)
Hlakantsutsu Culture

Another significant traditional farming practice that the Elders emphasized throughout this study was hlakantsutsu culture (Figure 8). Elder ‘Malepoqo of the Bakoena or Crocodile clan shares her understanding of the practice of hlakantsutsu culture that exemplifies its application in promoting food self-sufficiency, health, economy, respect, and care for the Land (plants and animals), as well as what would be termed in the academic world as ‘sustainable agriculture’:

...the ‘mix is a way of ensuring that families are fed good food.’ With hlakantsutsu it means that if a family has one field, that family will still harvest at least four different food crops from that one field; sorghum, pumpkin, beans and ntsoe... (a family of sorghum in which only the sweet and nutritious pulp of the stalk is chewed). Then you know the wellbeing of your children is taken care of,
but you also know that at harvest what you leave in the field is good food for the animals. The cows may eat the remains of sorghum or maize, if you have maize instead of sorghum. They don’t like the remains of pumpkin and beans that much… well with the goats…they can eat every other crop or plants. But if you don’t have goats … whatever remains of the pumpkin and bean crop, that you can’t eat you know...you are leaving that to nourish the Land…” (Elder ‘Malepoqo, conversation/interview, September 11, 2004).

Hlakantsutsu culture also expresses the Basotho people’s understandings of the life principles of inter-connectedness, interrelatedness, inter-dependency, and reciprocity as governing relationships. Hlakantsutsu culture is a celebration of ‘biological diversity’. It reinforces the notion that the Land is a ‘great teacher’ that can instruct human beings on how to relate respectfully to ‘our relatives’ the non-human community of beings.

Elder ‘Malepoqo is a respected farmer. She not only keeps seeds but also practices many traditional farming methods. ‘Malepoqo is one of the few Elders in the region who continues to grow the oldest variety of mamenoana maize seeds. This is the very same
maize that my grandmother and I used to plant when I was a little girl. I thought the mamenoana variety was lost until I spoke with ‘Malepoqo for this study.

One lesson I learned from listening to the Elders’ stories and observing their work was that a core group of people keep our traditions alive. There may be only a few, but the magnitude of their presence and persistence was revealed during this study. My hope for my people lies with these few Elders. They have kept our traditions alive and have assumed their intergenerational responsibility by passing these traditions on to others. My hope is that the Elders will continue to pass our traditions on to the young Basotho children. These Elders are the reason why we still have our traditional food practices and why we retain our language and metaphors.
A consistent theme that emerged during the conversational interviews with the Elders was an appreciation of the Land as a gift, a ‘being’ from the Creator that needs to be respected and cared for in the same way that one would care for a human being. It is important to note that the Elders spoke of the Land in a broader sense to include their crops and animals. “I don’t see how I could live without this,” Elder Ntefeleng said holding a mix of soil, cow dung and ash, after showing the children how they were to use the mix as a fertiliser to cover the seeds that were being planted and provide nourishment to the Land. “The Land is our mother and if we don’t take good care of it (she) will soon get tired and would stop feeding us. I don’t know how we can live without this [a handful of soil cow dung and ash in her hand]” (September 11, 2004, transcript):

I gained a better sense of how the Basotho people relate to the Land and nature by participating directly on the Land where we planted our staple food sorghum. When I entered the fieldwork I had no intention to focus on any particular food crop. However, throughout the fieldwork the community elders always mentioned the importance of sorghum in their everyday lives. That was when I realized I had to pay particular attention to this crop. The thematic focus on sorghum provided me an entry point into eliciting meaning and understandings of the Basotho way of life intertwined with this crop; the interconnected relationship of this crop to the Basotho worldview. This observation prompted me to ask specific questions relating to sorghum. (Mathabo Tsepa, personal journal, January 16, 2005)

During one of our fieldwork sessions, I asked the Elders to talk specifically about sorghum and its importance in the lives of our people. Elder ‘Malesholu from the Bafokeng explains:

Sorghum is our major food that has helped our people to survive. But it is also the most important food because all of our ceremonies are centered on this food. Sorghum has important meaning, a lot of meaning to us… when a child is born in the village, on the day that, that part of life, which connected the child to the mother [umbilical cord] heals, there is a ceremony that the women perform using sorghum. A small amount of soft running porridge is prepared from it and this is...
given to the child. This is to say to the child, “look, what connected you to your
mother is now dead, but you are not left on your own. This crop shall look after
you. Sorghum will take care of you...it shall feed your children. (Elder
'Malesholu, conversation/interview, October 14, 2004)

A Mosotho child is introduced to sorghum as a new caretaker; a mother who shall
sustain the child through life. During this time, “a child is also given a name,” and I think
that the name is an indication that the child can now survive independent of the
connecting cord to the mother (Elder ‘Malesholu, conversation/interview, October 14,
2004). The name symbolizes a new phase in the child’s life cycle. Elder ‘Malesholu’s
story also reinforces the idea that there are important connections between women
tending the sorghum fields and women learning about midwifery:

I think the important aspect of tending our fields of sorghum is that by doing so
the women learn about midwifery. I think this is where our strength lays... that
ability to relate raising this crop to raising a child. (Elder ‘Malesholu,
conversation/interview, November 11, 2004)

Elder Ntefeleng provides further explanation on the link between women, their sorghum,
and midwifery:

Our traditional typical planting day starts really very early. If you are to hoe your
own field or you are joining letsema (community collaboration) at another
woman’s field you want to make sure that at 5:00 am you are already in the field
doing some hoeing. When the sun is up above your head you stop hoeing. You
don’t hoe at this time of the day, since doing so would bring hail and kill the
crops. But I also think it makes a lot of sense to us women to call it chaile (take
our hoes and go home). We bring our children with us to the fields, and you don’t
want to expose a young child to too much sun. So you stop working and go to the
fields again come next morning. Again it is about caring for the crops and the
Land in the same way one would care for a child. By this I mean this, most
women carry their babies on their backs when they go to the fields and if you are
to hoe until midday it means you expose the child to a lot of sun...but hoeing at
this time of day also means that you are exposing moist soil to the heat of the
sun... and you know by doing that your crops will die ...so there is a link ...
(Elder Ntefeleng, conversation/interview, November 17, 2004)
One of my research questions focuses on how traditional knowledge is transmitted. Elder ‘Malesholu reminded me that as an educator I too have an intergenerational responsibility towards the young people that I teach. This was revealed at one of our meetings when the school teacher asked how educators might communicate cultural teachings related to midwifery. When the school teacher asked the Elders how one could teach children about midwifery, Elder ‘Malesholu explains:

The question for educators is how do you communicate this kind of traditional knowledge to children? If you teach the little children such as these ones whom we are teaching how to grow food, you have to think about the right language to use. If you tell a child about umbilical cord, then you are putting yourself into some kind of trouble because children are not stupid. A child may want you to ‘do it,’ show her/him what you mean by that, where is that thing? You know, all those questions that children like to ask; where babies come from? So when you teach children like these ones (children participating in the study) you try to find ways to communicate the same cultural values, but you do that in ways that respect a child. I have always found it helpful to tell a child a story about something that the child could easily relate to and understand. …the Old people would tell us that babies come from this biggest and dangerous lake down there at Lija-batho river (One that eats people). They would warn us, not to have babies at a younger age. They would say to us, “there is a big snake there, it takes care of all the babies that the women have in this village. It is a very big snake, and very dangerous, especially to young girls…” The Old people would tell us that only adults are allowed to ask for the babies. Of course, as I said children are not stupid, we would why if there is a snake in the lake, why it does not harm the mothers… “a woman has to run away from the lake fast after receiving her baby,” so we would be told. It wasn’t until I had children and began midwifery that I realized that there was a lot of sense in the way our people spoke about child’s birth…now as we have been taught we have been passing on the teachings to the children. We tell our children that babies come from a lake. I have seen the metaphor of a lake as a place of origin for babies seems to work well with young children. But the moment you introduce the theme of connecting cord (umbilical cord) to mother and baby, you got a lot of explanation to give to a child. (Elder ‘Malesholu, conversation/interview, October 15, 2004)
Elder Ntefeleng further explains the importance of sorghum in Basotho life:

People of this loti [mountains] rely heavily on this crop for our food, since sorghum doesn’t fear drought. You see, our problem of being in the South of the country is that we have less rains than the people in the North of the country... another good thing about sorghum is that you can prepare it in various forms; sometimes we cook it just [on] its own, sometimes we grind it and make it into papa [hard porridge], lesheleshe [soft porridge]. But the food that I really like most is nyekoe [a mix of sorghum, maize, beans and pumpkin], not only because it is good to the taste, but also because when you cook nyekoe you are having four different kinds of food together. In other words, you have ‘good’ food in just one preparation. Two kinds of very refreshing sorts of beverages are also made from sorghum motoho [non-alcoholic] and joala [beer]. (Elder Ntefeleng, conversation/interview, October 17, 2004)

The Elders also talked about sorghum as the “the kind of food that brings happiness to the community”. Elder Marejeleng of the Bataung or Lion clan explains:

“this is because it is from sorghum that the women would develop mohlaba to brew our traditional beer.” I observed other women prepare this kind of yeast, but I had not tried it myself and was eager to learn more. Elder Marejeleng explains how to produce yeast from sorghum:

You need to have the seeds produce roots and shoots. You allow the sorghum seeds to stay in a properly covered clay pot for some days. When the seeds begin to produce roots and shoots, we say mabele a melisa [sorghum germination]. The way you do this is to put sorghum into a clay pot and cover the top of the pot with blankets in order to keep the pot and seeds warm. But you also put some blankets at the bottom of the pot, especially if you are using a container that is not made from clay...after a few days may be seven or so, the seeds would begin to grow...you keep checking ...when all seeds show signs of growth [germination], you now remove the sorghum out the pot, spread it on a mat and allow to dry in the sun. Then you grind the sorghum, and you have your mohlaba [yeast] right there! But you also use grounded sorghum that is not part of mohlaba to prepare soft porridge, which you use as a base or thickener for the beer. (Elder Marejeleng, conversation/interview, October 17, 2004)

My conversations with Elders indicated that the people greatly valued their traditional food practices and the quality of food that resulted from these practices.

However, the arrival of the Christian missionaries in Lesotho demonized the Basotho’s
religion, traditions, and way of life. Our traditional crops were regarded as backward and relegated to negative and derogatory categories such as sekoeta or a person that looks ugly and kills people. I remember as a child how I enjoyed eating papa ea mabele or hard porridge made from sorghum with fresh cow’s milk or chicken gravy. I remember that I began to ‘fear’ eating papa ea mabele when I first heard other children referring to this food as sekoeta. Elder ‘Mannyane of the Bafokeng or Hare clan helped me to understand where terms such as sekoeta originated and the negative effects this naming had on the Basotho’s livelihood. She explains why some people now grow less sorghum and why many of the crop varieties are lost:

People in this part of the country used to eat a lot of sorghum and our children used to like it a lot, and that was before we had many stores and shops. But I remember, my grandmother also used to tell me that when the missionaries arrived to this part of the country people started growing sorghum less and less. I think the problem is that the missionaries didn’t like our ways, our traditions…our food. They taught people that everything Mosotho does was bad… even our food… all that led to some people abandoning our ways including planting more sorghum in their fields as they used to in the old days…we have lost many of the sorghum varieties. (Elder ‘Mannyane, conversation/interview, October 15, 2004)

Caring for Sorghum as One Would Care for a Child

There is evidence that Elder stories about Indigenous food practices and growing food from the Land taught the Basotho people to care for their Land in the same way they would care for their children. I was inspired by the way Elder ‘Malesholu explained how a mother sings songs for her child to grow well in the same way that people in the village sing songs for their sorghum to grow well. She recounts her experience of planting sorghum:

We cared for our Lands in the same way we care for the children in this village. For our people survived directly off the Land, our sorghum fields. Besides
hunting, fishing and gathering, our sorghum fields were the major source of food and for our survival. Today, that’s hasn’t changed much, planting sorghum fields remains an important means of survival for many people of this loti. This is especially true for some of us who can’t afford to buy food like sorghum and maize from shops. So we have to care for this crop (sorghum) in the knowledge that it is what sustained our ancestors, and it is what continues to feed us. I remember, as a young woman I began wondering about, why our people always sang songs when planting this crop (sorghum) or doing any kind of fieldwork. Not that I didn’t like songs and singing, but it was something that I had been thinking about since giving birth to my first child and then beginning to sing songs for the child … So one day I asked this question to grandmother ‘Maliapeng who related to me what her own grandmother used to tell her about the importance of songs in Basotho fieldwork. She said sorghum is like a child…She said “growing sorghum liked to hear our songs.” This is why we sing songs every time we hoe our fields of sorghum; again, we sing our songs during the months of February and March because at this time the sorghum crop begins to develop seeds. So there are those songs we sing for the birds, especially Molepe. We even have a song named after Molepe, since it likes coming and eating the sorghum seeds when they are still ‘young’ and not ripe. You see, we do not want the birds to come and eat all the young sorghum seeds before they could mature into harvest. (Elder ‘Malesholu, conversation, second hoeing session, January 7, 2005)

Elder ‘Malesholu’s story illustrates the principle of respect and how this principle was extended to embrace crops. Her story shows how the people cared for their sorghum crop just as a mother would care for her children.

Caring for the Land as One Would Care for a Woman

Another value of participating with the Land through the growing of sorghum, maize, beans, and pumpkin in the school field is that the experience enabled the Basotho people to develop a deep sense of respect that encouraged an ethic of care for the Land. In other words, the people learned to care for their food and Land in the same way that they cared for themselves. As we worked together in the fields, the Elders expressed their understanding of respectful relationships with the Land. For example, Elder ‘Malesholu explains that just as the earth rests after harvest, so does a woman after giving birth.
"When the people see that the Land is exhausted" or grown old as the Elders would say, “the people would clear another field by the side of the former, to which they return” when it has grown young again. The field that is laid to rest is called molala. “What is important is to note that by our tradition, a woman, after giving birth to a child, is allowed to rest for three months. In the same way a field is allowed to rest for one growing season” (Elder ‘Malesholu, conversation/interview, November 7, 2004).

Elder ‘Malesholu further highlights the importance of allowing the woman to rest after giving birth through the practice of “putting a reed above the door of the hut or house in which the woman and the child are resting” (November 7, 2004). What is important to note here is that many rural communities in Lesotho continue to value this practice, and in areas where a reed is difficult to obtain, a rope made from the grass of mosea [Danthonia drakenbergenis] is used. I believe part of the persistence of this tradition is that the survival of rural communities depends primarily on the Land for food, medicine, and fuel; hence they have strong connection to the Land that is promoted among the younger Basotho generation.

I also believe that the reed is used to remind the Basotho people of that place, Ntsoana Tsatsi, that wetland where we have all come from: the reeds - our relatives, other plants, and animals. The reed is a symbol of origin. It symbolizes that when the people came to this Land through the passage of the cave at Ntsoana Tsatsi, they came by water. The Elders’ stories reveal once again a people whose way of life exemplifies and expresses a deep sense of rootedness to their place of origin, Ntsoana Tsatsi, and a deep connection to the Land that is the source of their survival.
There is also a connection between a woman giving birth and the practice of tending our sorghum fields. During this time of woman’s rest when the baby is very little, men are not allowed to enter the hut of a woman. “Only women who helped to deliver the child, grandmothers and very young children (boys and girls) can pay visits to the hut. The father of the child is allowed to see the child at least seven days after birth. The elderly women are always present to ensure the woman and the child are allowed to rest” (Elder ‘Mannyane, conversation/interview, November 7, 2004). I have observed that when men bring messages or gifts to the family, they are instructed by the Elders not to enter the hut. They must wait outside the woman’s hut and deliver their messages or gifts to another woman caretaker. “During this three month period, everyone in the village, the young women and girls are expected to bring pots of water to the family. People also bring food for the woman” (Elder ‘Malesholu, conversation/interview, November 7, 2004).

These conversations with Elders ‘Mannyane and ‘Malesholu helped me understand the Basotho’s traditional family planning and reproductive education. Traditionally Basotho people relied upon abstinence as a natural means of controlling birth rates. When the people say that they are connected to the Land, that statement is not made in abstract terms. Through respectful relationships with the Land, the Land taught people how to respect and care for both humans and the earth. It is a reciprocal relationship. Elders ‘Mannyane and ‘Malesholu’s stories illustrate the important teachings of respect, interconnectedness, and reciprocity derived from the Basotho traditional farming and food practices.
In Basotho tradition, children acquire traditional knowledge through participating directly with the Land. For example, while walking to the forest with the grandmothers, women and children gather wood, vegetables, and medicinal herbs, and also draw water from natural springs and wells. Also, the Basotho children gain Indigenous knowledge by listening to stories told by Elders and others that focus on participating directly with the Land, such as growing food crops and cultural knowledge. The Basotho people speak about the Land as a great teacher that instructs us how to survive. By our tradition, a child is introduced to the Land and nature at a very early age, and we have several ceremonies by which the traditional teachings of the Land are passed on to children. As a little child and through adulthood, I have been fortunate to learn from Elders who told me stories and taught me how to lead some of our cultural ceremonies. I have since assumed a responsibility to pass these stories and ceremonies on to others. During the fieldwork, the Elders asked me to share a story that illustrates how a Mosotho child is introduced to the elements of nature. The story I chose was one that I experienced several times as a little girl. It is called Kuruoetso ka khoeli, or full moon initiation ceremony; it is a children’s ceremony.

This ceremony awaits the coming of the full moon and is often performed two months after a baby is born. The new baby is taken outside of the mother’s hut or house at night and carefully placed on a grass mat or sheep’s skin. The children, and sometimes adults, of the village gather around the baby dancing in circles and spirals, singing and telling their songs, and praying for this new life. One of the dancers, a child, is asked to go to the centre of the circle to introduce the baby to the full moon. The child carries the
baby so that it directly faces the moon. Those in the circle around the baby continue to sing songs, dance, and pray. Those in the circle tell the baby:

Child holding a baby speaks: Kunkuru thaka hau ke eo!

People in the circle respond: Ho khethoa lipeo, hoa lengoa, hoa jaloa, hoa hlaoloa, ho rapelloa pula, hoa kotuola, hoa jeoa, hoa khijoa, hoa hobeloa.

I will attempt to translate this prayerful song. First, the child carrying the baby tells the baby “there is the moon, your age-mate and helper!” Then the rest of the dancers follow, rhythmically saying: “we select seeds, we plough, we pray for the rain, we hoe, we harvest, we share food, and we sing our praise songs.” This ceremony is carried out to promote respect for, responsibility towards, and connection to the Land and nature amongst young people. I learned from the Elders that when one observes the birth, death, and rebirth of the heavenly bodies and their sacred cycles and movements through space and time, and then incorporates these patterns into daily life, one will live in harmony with the community. I have often heard Elders say, “This is how you will become a woman or a man” (depending on whether the child is a girl or a boy).

Basotho people like many Indigenous peoples believe that heavenly bodies are capable of communicating with each other and with humans. It follows that Basotho understand that the great cycles of the moon exist to guide a person’s body, mind, and spirit. Kuruoetso ka khoeli is believed to give meaning to the child’s culture and origin and to the interrelationship and interdependence of nature and humans. For Basotho people, the ultimate goal of early childhood Indigenous knowing initiation ceremonies is to instil respect for ‘all of our relatives’ and for the sacred life of children during the earliest years of their lives. If a child does not experience these ceremonies, it is believed
he or she will experience problems in life and never develop a deep sense of respect for and proper relationships with nature.

As a Mosotho educator, I place a high value on Basotho traditions and teachings such as stories and storytelling and was thankful that the Elders gave me an opportunity to share a story. I initially found it difficult to recall a story that would be relevant to the focus of the study and to the children. I had been away from home for almost three years, and during that time I did not have an opportunity to share our stories in our language and in ways that follows patterns of oral traditions. During my doctoral program in Canada, I felt the pain of not been able to tell Basotho stories in my language, Sesotho. Coming home, there was that feeling in me of not knowing how to speak from the heart as I was struggling to recall our stories. I believe that the Elders wanted to remind me that with my doctoral degree I may be considered educated to the highest level in Western terms, but what truly matters is how I take on an intergenerational responsibility to pass on the teachings given to me by Elders and others to younger generations.

Another important consequence of my direct participation in this study is illustrated by the following observation I made during fieldwork. One of the women who participated in the fieldwork had been ill for many years and had not fully recovered. At her approximate age of 65, she would typically be active and working her field. However, her illness had weakened her. She is one of the Elders who instructed me to be a hunter and one of the first people I reported to after my arrival from Canada. I told her stories from my hunting journey. I described my study and the fieldwork and explained what I wanted to do with the community. She expressed her desire to come to the field to work with the other women and to teach the children how to grow food. When she heard that
the work we planned to do included sharing stories related to traditional food practices, she conveyed her regret for not being able to participate because of her health. She believed that her illness had affected her memory and therefore she could not remember the stories that she learned from her grandmothers about growing food. I asked her to share with the children what she did as a youth, specifically the Basotho way of growing food. She responded by saying: “I liked mixing seeds” (conversation/interview, September 9, 2004). Her answer did not surprise me since she was a person who had a gift of six-finger hands. This is not a common occurrence anywhere in the world! Such people by our tradition are a blessing to the community in many notable ways. The next day she brought to the field a basket of sorghum seeds, and the other women provided seeds of maize, beans, and pumpkin.

During the month she was with us in the field, she remembered and told several stories to the children and everybody else who was working the Land. Touching and feeling the seeds and mixing them, helped to create within her a knowing that she thought to be long forgotten. She recalled the stories she experienced when she was a little girl. The stories were already sown into her body. Handling and feeling the seeds stimulated and re-activated her knowledge about traditional farming and stories which she then shared with the children. The first seeds that we planted came from the seeds that she had mixed in her basket. The children observed first-hand the processes that lead to hlakantsutsu culture.

I do not include the stories that she shared with the children here due to reasons of confidentiality and privacy. She confided in me about her illness but did not want others to know of her health concerns at the time of this study, and I have a responsibility to
honour and respect her wishes. By her permission, I share some of her stories in this thesis as they relate to the research questions. Her presence in this study is significant as the children appreciated her seed selection stories and during the fieldwork expressed their eagerness to learn more about the process of selecting seeds. The photograph in (Figure 9) shows children learning to select seed that they later planted in the school field.

Figure 9 - Children sorting seeds. Photograph by Mathabo Tsepa, August, 2004.

A Feeling of Rootedness and Belonging

In the community of Ha Mpiti we are fortunate that we still have Elders who can teach the younger generation the traditional knowledge that reminds us of our origins, where we came from, our identity, the feeling of rootedness, and a sense of belonging to a specific place. The feeling of rootedness refers to the Land base that Basotho people identify as their place of origin and continuity. The same connection is also demonstrated in the literature and stories told about Pueblo people and Maya people. They also feel a
deep connection and a sense of rootedness with a particular area and specific cosmology (Cajete, 1994; Teni 1987).

The persistent resistance that the Basotho have against the encroachments of colonialists is further proof of the strong connection the Basotho people have to their Lands. The Basotho people express a deep feeling of rootedness to their Homelands described as “Home,” “our Land,” and “the Land of our fathers – ancestors”. We have a close connection to our Land and soil. Elder ‘Malesholu recounts a story she heard from her great grandfather about the arrival of the missionaries in Lesotho. Her great grandfather told the following story to emphasise the value of, respect for, and seamless connection to the Land that our ancestors had. The story tells of “a chief, (who) on hearing that certain people to whom the chief had shown hospitality presumed to appropriate to themselves, the Land they occupied … said, ‘the Land of my ancestors knows her children! She will reject the new-comers!’”

Elder ‘Malesholu further shared that on another occasion the chief was talking with some white men during the Land treaties that took place near a certain river. She forgot the river’s name but described the location as being close to the burial place of King Moshoeshoe I, the founder of the Basotho nation. The river that Elder ‘Malesholu is referring to is Moo Ka Hare river, which means Here Inside our Land, otherwise abbreviated and known Mohokare. The major wars between the Basotho and the Boers took place along the Mohoakare. The Basotho lost the war, and the Boers used the Mohokare as a boarder between current Basotho Land and our traditional Lands (the stolen territory). They named the river Caledon after one of their people and named the stolen territory, also known as ‘conquered territory’: Orange Free State of South Africa
(see Chapter One for detail). "You ask me to cut the ground?" said the chief of the Basotho to the white men who had settled on his Land, and were absolutely determined, by means of a line of demarcation traced between themselves and the chief, to ensure to themselves the exclusive possession of the territory they had invaded. "I would not cut my Home; I would not cut the Land of our fathers." Then he related to the white missionaries the story from the 'great book':

I am told in your great book: once upon a time it happens that two women had a dispute about a child before a very wise king. The latter ordered that the child be cut in two, and half to be given to each woman. It is said that the pretended mother quite happily agreed that the child be cut into two. But the real mother cried to the king that the child not be cut and offered that she would rather lose the child entirely! This is the story from your 'great book,' you my friends who are strangers to this Land, you think it is quite natural for my home to be cut into pieces. I, who is born here, I feel my heart revolting at the thought. No. I will not cut it! Better loose it altogether. (November 26, 2004 transcript)

The issue of Homeland is very important to the Basotho people; our ancestors died fighting for our country. In my view, understanding the importance of that rootedness will further the awareness and appreciation of why the Basotho people worked so hard fighting several battles to defend our Homelands against invasion by the Boers. Elder 'Malesholu adds that the same chief at a time when his people faced danger was heard saying: "A re shoeleng naha ea rona," or let us die for our Land (conversation/interview, November 26, 2004 transcript)!
Women’s Role in Food Production

Seed, Biodiversity and the Role of Women as Seed Keepers

What the women farmers mentioned most during our conversations was the cultural significance of seed selection and the preservation and sharing of seeds as a fundamental component of the women’s Indigenous knowledge. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Elder Malepoqo of the Crocodile clan is one of the few farmers who maintains a collection of some of the oldest varieties of native seeds. She expresses what she sees as the cultural significance of keeping native seed:

...without our sorghum seeds we cannot survive. When we lose our native seeds we lose not only the ability to feed ourselves, but we also lose who we are... our culture, knowledge, and survival....without the seed, the entire community wellbeing is affected...but my real concern is about the future generation (November 11, 2004).

Further, Elder ‘Mannyane describes the significance of the Basotho native seeds for the survival of future generations:

...survival of our children and grandchildren comes first, and it is in the seed. I also think that saving the seed is really about the future generation that we should be saving the seed that has been passed down the generations...and has proven to do well on our Lands. Without our seeds, how will the children know we were here? When all the native seeds have disappeared, who is going to tell them [children] the stories of our people? It is for our grandchildren that we should save the seeds ...yes, that is right, to keep the tradition alive.... (Elder ‘Mannyane of the Crocodile Clan, November 11, 2004)

Seed selection, preservation, and sharing are fundamental components of the Basotho Indigenous knowledge. The fieldwork during this study allowed for the sharing and exchange of native seeds and traditional knowledge associated with seed selection, harvesting, storage, protection, and sowing. The month of September marks the
beginning of the growing season in rural Lesotho. During this time people hold ceremonies for ‘taking out the plough’ and selecting seeds to be planted. The Elders emphasized the importance of selecting seeds properly and teaching the children about the processes involved in preparing the seeds for planting. September 8th and 9th were the busiest days of our fieldwork since the Elders had told me they would like to spend more time on teaching children how to select seeds.

In Basotho tradition the selecting of seeds is not a one-time incident within any given growing season (year), but a cyclic process that happens prior to harvest (depending on the crop), at harvest, before and during the new growing season (in spring). The women begin to select seeds just before harvest depending on the crop. For example, it is easy to work with sorghum seeds prior to harvest and when the crop is still in the field to examine if they are ripe, mature, and ready to be picked. This is because unlike maize where the seeds are covered, sorghum seeds are exposed. During my visit with Navdanya organic farmers of India, I was amazed to learn from Elders that their methods of selecting rice seed were very similar to the Basotho way of working with the sorghum crop. Just as the Basotho farmers begin picking ripened sorghum seeds prior to, during, and after harvest, the Indian farmers work with rice seeds in the same ways.

During our meetings and seed selection ceremonies, the women farmers all contributed to our understandings of the significance of seeds in promoting food self-sufficiency, survival, and cultural identity.13

13 I believe that our native seed is the very existence of the Basotho people; native seed is a source of our survival, and our soul. Without seed sovereignty the rural Basotho people cannot feed themselves. I liken oral traditional stories to the native seeds. I believe that just as in the oral tradition, a seed is symbol for continuity of the Basotho people. As the Elders say, the seed and sharing of seed is an important aspect of our oral history, identity, and education and must be passed on to successive generations.
The following is a brief summary of what was discussed during these meetings and ceremonies:

In the seed (meaning to our native seeds) sits the wisdom of our grandmothers and the stories of where as a people we come from. In the seed is the history of who we are. When we lose our native seeds we lose not only the ability to feed ourselves, but we also lose who we are, we lose our cultural knowledge, and survival. Without our seeds the whole community wellbeing is affected... this is why our grandmothers have always taken great care of their seeds, protecting and passing them on to us. It (seed) is for the survival of the future Basotho generation (meetings November 8 and 9, 2004 transcript).

The ways that the Elders speak poses challenges to the perception that the multinational corporations have about seed. Monsanto for example is clear that their interest in working with the seed is primarily for economic gain (Shiva, 1991). According to Monsanto, a seed is merely viewed as an object of manipulation that farmers put into the soil and feed with chemicals. The seed is grown and harvested and then sold merely for economic purposes. This view of seed is not that of the Basotho Elders. Nor does it conform to my own understanding and practice of farming in the food curriculum that I hope to develop for the rural children, farmers, and communities in Lesotho.

The Changing Role of Men in Food Production

I now respond to the question of why only women participated in this study. When I asked the women why the men did not participate, they offered various reasons. The men expressed a fear of being judged by their peers and many spoke of preferring paid jobs. The following are examples of what the women (Elders) shared during one of our meetings:
Bo 'me [women], as you know, my husband is no longer working in the mines and he does not have much to do at home so I invited him to come and work with us. But he tells me that he is shy, since he will be the only man surrounded by women. He thinks other men in the village will also laugh at him if he is the only man working with women. (Community Meeting, October 19, 2004)

Elder `Mampolokeng reinforces the notion that men who refused to participate in the study did so because they needed paid jobs, but also because they perceived our work of growing crops with children as 'play':

my husband says that this projeke [project] is not paying money, he does not have time for this play. My son says he would rather go to town and look for a job that will give him money than waste his time playing with women and little children. But if you ask me, it has been years that he has been hunting for that job, and we don't see him bringing food or money home. I don't think there are any jobs out there. (‘Mampolokeng, conversation/interview, October 19, 2004)

Another women adds, "Na oaka o re or me, mine says he will not join this mantloane [Mantloane is a play that every Mosotho child plays - both boys and girls play as they imitate adult life as within families and in the community] amongst women and school children. He says only women can do this mantloane because they are no different from young children."

Other woman express their feelings about the men’s response. "Ke utloa pelo bohloko [I feel pain in my heart], a ‘Mamonaheng shares, "my uncle, he prefers to play moraba-raba [a game, drawn on rock or ground in squares, and played with twelve pieces of stones] all day. If he is not playing, o liphempheseleng [he is where the flags advertising sales of beer are raised]. But when you ask him, “uncle could you help cultivate the garden, we don't have seeds, yet the rains have come. If I get some seeds of sepaile sa thaba [mountain spinach] from other women then we could put that into the soil. He doesn't want to hear that, in fact, to mention work to him, any kind of work, u
It is important to note that although men did not take part in this study for the various reasons reported above, Elder “Mannyane states that, not long ago, this kind of "fieldwork … was looked upon in the most respectful way, and more generally pursued by both men and women devoting themselves to it ….. It was not until the arrival of the white settlers in South Africa, who introduced mining that the fieldwork of sowing, hoeing and daily caring of the fields was left to women…” (conversation/interview, October 17, 2004).

Summary

In this chapter I presented the data, the data analysis, and my interpretations of Elder stories. The significant themes that emerged from the stories of the Elders, my observations of their participation in fieldwork, and my journal notes provide a coherent pattern of the importance of Indigenous food practices and stories in the Basotho way of life. In the Ha Mpiti, Qacha’s Nek district in Lesotho, the community is fortunate to have women Elders who continue to express the Basotho cultural teachings and way of life. The traditional food practices place a high value on community collaboration and foster deep understandings of the interrelationships with nature, respect and care for the Land, and the importance of giving back to the Land. These practices engender within the people a sense of rootedness to the Land that is maintained by organizing letsema
(community collaboration) or matsema (collaborative fieldwork) and utilizing hlakantsutsu culture (mixed seeds, mixed cropping), koti (minimal tillage/cultivation for sowing), and nkhono (grandmother ash) and ntate moholo (grandfather animal dung), and honouring molala (allowing the Land to rest after harvest). A consistent theme is the appreciation of the Land as ‘a being from the Creator’ that needs to be respected and cared for in the same way that one would care for a human being. Thus the Basotho way of life is a way of knowing expressed through traditional food practices that illustrate the pragmatic, spiritual, and emotional relationships with the Land and nature as well as the economic, educational, and social structuring of the community.

Sorghum is the most culturally significant food utilized by the Basotho people as evidenced in their raising and eating of it and in its significance in community ceremonies. When some Elders willingly offered to bring meals to our fieldwork, the food they prepared showed that the Basotho continue to value foods prepared from sorghum (nyekoe and motoho). The foods they brought also revealed that the Basotho people practise traditional ways of life and continue the cultural teachings through the keeping and sharing of seeds. The seed is considered significant in various aspects of community life. It is a source of food, survival, and self-sufficiency and a symbol of cultural identity, history, economics, passage of knowledge, social structure, and education.

The traditional teachings around food practices and the underlying beliefs that form the community’s knowledge and application of forms of knowledge in daily life are evident in the interviews and observations conducted during this study. For example, Elders spoke about the knowledge required for selecting which field and seeds and when
to plant. They spoke of teachings that included the application of knowledge such as in hlakantsutsu culture. The Elders took on the cultural responsibility of passing on the traditional food practices to children and amongst themselves in practical ways. In Basotho tradition, educating and raising children is considered a communal responsibility. As the Elders say, “kholiso ea ngoana Mosotho ke boikarabelo ba sechaba sa motse oohle”, which translates into, “it takes the whole village to raise a Mosotho child”. Relationship with the Land is the central theme of raising and educating children. The knowledge of growing food crops from the Land and the values embedded are key to the passing of any intergenerational knowledge.

However, the Elders expressed a concern that the children who are attending contemporary schools do not have the same appreciation, respect, and reverence for the Land as children who are not “schooled” or who have dropped out of school. This lack of appreciation is evident even in those “schooled” children who take part in family gardening or fieldwork. There is also evidence that the Basotho way of life has undergone adaptations due to the planting of maize, a non-traditional food believed to be introduced to Lesotho by the European missionaries. During the fieldwork, I shared with the Elders and children one of the many stories from my hunting journey in North America. I told the community that I was surprised to learn that maize or corn originally came from North America and not from Europe. The Europeans led us to believe that maize came from Europe! It is important to note that the Basotho people have accepted the gift of maize with great respect. The people care for maize in the same way they care for sorghum and keep the ‘original’ maize seeds. The Elders are as concerned about the disappearance of the ‘original’ maize varieties as they are about the preservation of the
native sorghum varieties. Maize is used in many of the Basotho’s ceremonies and, like sorghum, has become one of the Basotho people’s staple foods.

Letsema allowed for sharing and exchange of native seeds and traditional knowledge associated with seed selection, harvesting, storage, protection, and sowing. As members of the community worked together in the fieldwork, they shared their seeds. During the fieldwork, I observed one of the oldest variety of seqhobane sorghum seeds, solotsi pumpkin seeds, mamenoana maize seeds, and ntsoe (sweet reed like sorghum plant), which my grandmother and I used to plant, when I was a little girl. As I complete the writing of this thesis, the people back home tell me that the Elders keep coming to the school field to teach children about our traditional food practices, and that seqhobane, solotsi, mamenoana, ntsoe (reed like sorghum plant that has sweet pulp), and some native vegetables including sepaile sa thaba, papasane and theepe are flourishing in the fields!
My participation in letsema or community collaborative work with women Elders and children growing food and listening to their stories helped me understand the teachings and values underlying our traditional food practices, Indigenous thought, and related stories. I believe that in seeking to understand the Basotho way of life and culture, I must search for those principles within our traditions and culture that express meaning and connections that are enacted in everyday life experiences. For example, what are the “cultural systems of knowledge” that guide the culture? What are the core themes “which illustrate the most unifying principles of existence” (Ortiz, 1972, p.132)? In this chapter I discuss the study outcomes and provide an in-depth interpretation and understanding gained from the Basotho Elders that focuses on Indigenous knowledge and food security through stories and traditional farming practices using Indigenous methodologies.

I begin this chapter with the following three questions to introduce the emergent principles revealed in the Elder stories presented in Chapter Four: What are the core Indigenous teachings and values expressed in Basotho people’s farming practices and in our stories of the Land? How do these values show the interconnected relationship between humans and nature? And in what ways does Indigenous thought add to the understanding of how Basotho educators might address the problems of food insecurity and promote respect for the Land in the Lesotho curriculum? By ‘listening’ intently to the stories told by the Elders documented in my fieldwork observations and journal notes, I
am able to discern and summarize the teachings from these stories that show how the Basotho people understand their relationships with the Land and nature. Each story reveals how the Basotho worldview is enacted in the culture’s everyday way of life.

My readings of the stories and my understandings of the teachings have led me to identify the following principles: re seng (we are all related): all humans and non-humans), rootedness, letsema (community collaboration), connectedness, interdependency, reciprocity, and respect and care for the Land. I find these to be significant aspects of Basotho Indigenous thought, our traditional food practices, and way of life.

Re seng: We are All Related: All Humans and Non-Humans

At the core of experiencing and understanding the Basotho worldview and way of life lies an understanding of re seng, ‘we are all related: all humans and non-humans’. The important aspect of this worldview is the web of relationships that compose the whole. The Basotho people’s stories of the Land and Indigenous farming practices give meaning to the people, their origin, and to the interrelationship and interdependence of nature and humans.

In Chapter Four, Elder Maleshoane of the Hare clan explains how re seng shapes the Basotho way of life. The telling of her story reveals an understanding of re seng that is consistent with claims made by Indigenous scholars who write that many Indigenous groups perceive the notion of ‘we are all related’ as a metaphor to denote an interpretation of ‘community’ that transcends the simple definition of humans living together (Cajete, 1994). Elder Maleshoane of the Bakoeng or Hare clan spoke about
community as a context that forms the foundation of Basotho life. I understand her meaning of community to be the way our families and villages are structured as well as our Basotho education, our relationships with the Land, and how we do fieldwork such as agriculture.

A Feeling of Rootedness and Sense of Belonging

The feeling of rootedness that I discuss in this chapter refers to the relationship between the Basotho people and the Land base that they identify as their place of origin and continuity. In many Indigenous communities, we share the principle of being closely connected to the Land. For example, the Elders’ stories in Chapter Four along with the stories of the Pueblo and Maya people presented in my literature review exemplify a seamless connection between Land and people. They have a connection that involves a sense of rootedness and belonging with particular places and specific cosmology (Ortiz, 1989; Teni, 1998; Cajete, 2000).

There is evidence in the Elder stories that the Basotho people identify with the Land as their place of origin and continuity. The emphasis the Elders place on the importance of having a deep sense of rootedness to place is reminiscent of my grandmother’s words to me; I must always remember where I come from. The Elders I spoke with during this study also remind the Basotho children that they should always “remember our origins, where as a people we came from, our identity” (Elder ‘Malesholu of the Bafokeng, conversation/interview, November 23, 2004). In my view, feelings of rootedness and a sense of belonging to a specific place refer to the Land base that Basotho people identify as their place of origin and continuity.
This study provides clear evidence that the Basotho people express a deep feeling of rootedness to their Homelands. One of the stories shared by Elder ‘Malesholu in Chapter Four demonstrates the close connection between the Land and our ancestors. When the traditional chief of the Basotho people is told by the white settlers to divide the Land he responds, “I would not cut my home, I would not cut the Land of our fathers.” As Elder ‘Malesholu’s story confirms, the Basotho speak of their Land as “Home,” “our Land,” and “the Land of our fathers.” Indigenous communities share this common value of connectedness to Land as a place of origin.

I believe this identification with the Land explains why Indigenous peoples today continue to express a deep sense of connection with a particular area and specific cosmology (Cajete, 2000) and rootedness to their Lands. Elder ‘Malesholu recounts in her story that when the colonialists threatened to take the Land the Chief urged his people to fight and attack, “we must die for our Land” (conversation/interview, October 17, 2004). I believe that an understanding of the importance of this rootedness will foster an awareness and appreciation of why Indigenous people defend their Homelands.

Interrelationship, Interconnectedness, Interdependence and Reciprocity

The Elders’ stories illustrate that ‘food’ such as sorghum is central to maintaining relationships between people and their Lands. The connection amongst people, Land, and food is brought to life through the traditional farming practices that involve letsema and the practice of hlakantsutsu culture. Direct participation with the Land and growing food appears to establish and maintain a context for respecting the Land. As Elder Maleshoane points out, “respecting the Land, these crops and all that goes with it is not something you
can learn sitting in your hut...you got to work with the Land, or the seeds, or the crops or whatever it may. In the long run that interaction and communication you have with your crops and the Land lead to developing respect…” (conversation/interview, October 19, 2004). Elder Maleshoane’s story is consistent with claims made by Indigenous scholars who propose that Indigenous people learn about respectful relationships through their direct participation with the Land (Teni, 1998) and by negotiating those relationships on a continuous basis (Cajete, 2000).

Throughout the fieldwork, the Elders spoke of the importance of maintaining respectful relationships with the Land while working with the earth to grow food. Elders demonstrated their understandings of the cultural teachings of respect, interconnectedness, and reciprocity in ways that taught children about the uses of traditional farming practices including: koti, hlakantsuntsu culture, boieane ba tlholeho, and thus providing health and wellness not only to humans but to insects, birds, and ‘all our relations.’ The Elders also emphasized the importance of ‘taking only what one needs from the Land’ and ‘giving back to the Land.’ These traditional farming practices express the Basotho people’s thanksgiving and a way of “giving back to the Land”. The Elders’ understandings of respect for the Land, reciprocal relationships, of inter-connectedness, interrelatedness, and inter-dependency were recurring themes in the interviews and observations.

This study reveals that the relationship that exists among the crops of sorghum, beans, maize, and pumpkin does not perish in ‘death’ or the perceived disappearance of certain varieties. During the fieldwork, I observed that when the Elders volunteered to bring food to the fields, they brought our traditional dish nyekoe, which is a mix of
maize, beans, pumpkin, and sorghum. Nyekoe exemplifies the marriage of sorghum, beans, and pumpkin that is observed in hlakantsuntsu culture. The Elders’ stories of the relationship between sorghum, pumpkin, and beans, and human beings illustrate profound understandings of the principle of appropriate relationships, interdependence and interrelatedness of food, Land, and people that is embedded within Basotho way of life.

The principles presented above have been discussed by scholars in the field of Indigenous knowledge. They offer that plants and animals in the conceptual thought of Indigenous people shows how willingly these ‘beings’ sacrifice their own lives for humans (Cajete, 1994; Parker 1923). Consequently the humans show respect when they appreciate animals and the plants as gifts. Indigenous people including the Basotho explain that when they plant their sorghum fields and grow their food, they offer thanksgiving ceremonies to the animal and plant world. This, in my view, was done to establish and maintain harmony and balance with the Land. According to Archibald and Haig-Brown (1996), to be in harmony requires that human beings respect the gifts of the other beings in the universe and establish and maintain respectful reciprocal relations with one another. This observation leads me to articulate ‘indigenous environmental thought’ as a philosophy based on the concrete relationship amongst people, their Lands, and food.
Respect and Care for the Land

The Elders’ stories support and exemplify claims made by Indigenous authors who write that Indigenous people care for their children in the same way they care for the Land, and this care and respect comes from their direct participation with the Land (Cajete, 1994, 2000; Teni 1998). Participating with the Land growing sorghum, maize, beans, and pumpkin in the field enabled the Basotho people to develop a deep sense of respect for the Land that led to the evolution of an ethic of care. People learned to care for their food and Land in the same way they cared for themselves. Elder ‘Malesholu’s story that the Basotho allow a field to rest after harvest in the same way that they allow a woman to rest after giving birth is congruent with the Mayan perspective (Teni, 1998).

The Basotho Elders’ stories also illustrate that ‘Indigenous environmental thought’ is premised on a belief that an animate being has a soul, spirit, and knowledge. There is evidence in the stories that animate beings taught Indigenous people many of the life principles including, respect, responsibility, reciprocity, sharing, and appropriate relationships. This means that the people were able to communicate, negotiate, and re-negotiate their relationships with the food and the Land. But negotiation as we know it is a difficult enterprise. I believe that the ability to negotiate with non-humans is not something Indigenous people were born knowing. Instead, Indigenous people learned how to negotiate through their long participation with the Land. Cajete (2000) confirms that participation over time is a foundation of Indigenous knowledge.

The Basotho Elders’ stories together with observations made from the traditional farming methods illustrate that the people are aware that the Land is alive because it gives birth and grows food which in turn helps nourish the people’s own bodies. And
because the people respected themselves, for example by allowing the woman to rest
after birth, they were able to extend the same respect to the Land by allowing it to fallow.
Respect for ‘all our relations’ is an important life principle that helps keep the universe in
harmony. Some who have carried out research within and in collaboration with
Indigenous communities point out that respect begins with the self and ripples outward to
embrace all our relations, animals, plants, soil, rivers, rocks, and beyond (Archibald &

Hlakantsutsu Culture

The Hlakantsutsu culture is further testimony of the Basotho perception and
honouring of the value of people, animals, plants, Land interdependence, and the need for
care and respect of all beings. Elder ‘Malepoqo of the Bakoena clan explains the
importance of hlakantsutsu culture within the Basotho way of life, economy, health, and
care of the Land:

You see, the ‘mix is a way of ensuring that families are fed good food.’ With
hlakantsutsu culture, it means that if a family has one field, that family will still
harvest at least four different crops from that one field; sorghum, pumpkin, beans
and ntsoe (a family of sorghum in which only the sweet and nutritious pulp of the
stalk is chewed. (Elder ‘Malepoqo, conversation/interview, September 11, 2004)

Hlakantsutsu culture also expresses the Basotho people’s understandings of the
life principles of connectedness, interdependency, and reciprocity as governing
relationships. It is a celebration of biological diversity. Hlakantsutsu culture reinforces
the notion that the Land is a great teacher’ that teaches human beings about how to relate
respectfully to ‘our relatives’ the non-human community of beings. My observations and
fieldwork with Elder ‘Mannyane revealed that she employed traditional farming
practices. She selected seeds using methods that resemble natural selection as she chose sorghum ears that were resistant to disease, with strong stalks, of a good size, and exhibited overall strength of the sorghum. “Each year, using these methods that I learned from my grandmother, our seeds and crops have improved, until now the sorghum stands up well against strong winds and dry weather, and harvest has increased” (Elder ‘Mannyane, conversation/interview, July 5, 2004).

The fieldwork provided a space where the Elders were able to integrate traditional knowledge on planting food crops and seed selection as well as exploring possibilities for strategies for environmentally friendly agricultural methods. As Elder ‘Malepoqo attests, “the school field could be used to try out some of these old seeds and continue to strengthen the seed and to share the seeds with children to share with families” (conversation/interview, September 11, 2004) Elders ‘Malepoqo and ‘Mannyane’s stories illustrate the cultural teachings of respect, interdependency, and proper relationships that the Basotho people have with their food and the Land. These are the cornerstones of Indigenous knowing. The Elders confirm that the ceremonies were performed to express gratefulness and to establish and maintain harmony and balance with the universe.

In my view, the Basotho Indigenous environmental thought provides guidance for how we can construct theory around food. Indigenous theory is embedded in relationships, whether it is the body of a human, or mother earth, or food. The substance is important. There is evidence in the stories of how food evoked the notion of interdependence and symbiotic relationship. As Parker (1910) tells us “…and the corn shall be your milk and sustain you. You shall make corn grow in hills like breasts for from the corn shall flow our living” (p. 64). Cajete (2000) says that corn brings people
together. From my experience of growing maize, I learned that maize unlike other crops could not propagate itself; it requires the help of humans to reproduce.

Basotho people depend on maize for their survival, but also maize depends on the people for its propagation. In this way, maize becomes a way of knowing, an epistemology for the Basotho people. But research indicates that the introduction of industrial agricultural and monoculture practices combined with the intensive use of herbicides and pesticides that accompany these practices have devalued the reciprocal complexities of participation and relationship (Shiva 1991, 1993, 2000).

The Role of Women in Food Production

The observations and stories presented in this thesis show that the women Elders in the community of Ha Mpiti are plant breeders who select the seeds best suited for planting on their Lands. The women keep the varieties of sorghum, maize, beans, and pumpkin separate, and they supervise the planting as well as farming practices. The agriculture practices of having molala and hlakantsutsu indicate that the Basotho people have an understanding of soil fertility.

There is also evidence in the Elder’s stories that they practice agriculture that is healthy to the Land, birds, insects, themselves, and to other beings. They do not use pesticides to kill the birds that eat their sorghum. Instead, to scare birds and other animals away from the sorghum fields, the Basotho farmers sing their songs and build fires to generate smoke. The traditional agriculture practiced by the Basotho Elders provides a way of life in which the Basotho people organize themselves through their ceremonies.
and illustrates the connection between the Basotho way of life and their worldview. These components appear in both the Elder stories and in my fieldwork observations.

My observation that only women Elders participated in the fieldwork and growing of food substantiate claims made by scholars who state that in Third World countries women are the major producers of food at the village, regional, national, and international levels (Maya & Shiva, 1999; Shiva, 1988, 2000). Although I invited the entire community to participate in the study, the fieldwork was done by women which is consistent with the findings of Shiva (1988, 2000). The nature of the participation of the women illustrates the way of life in the community of Ha Mpiti in contemporary times where females tend to engage community and development work in large numbers while men tend to prefer paid jobs.

Traditionally men were also active participants in food production, but the advent of colonization affected gender roles. Elder ‘Mannyane said that before the introduction of the mining industry in South Africa, both men and women worked together to plant the fields. However, the stories of Elders ‘Mannyane and ‘Malepoqo reveal that within the domain of fieldwork, females tended to assume more responsibility in seed selection and activities such as storage activities, hoeing, harvesting, and food preparations. With the introduction of the oxen plough, men tended to prefer to use the ploughs, and they perceived this work as their role regarding cultivation of land.
Encounters with New Seed Technologies

Many Elders reported that the Basotho people have lost some of the native seeds of sorghum and the oldest maize varieties. They attributed this loss to the introduction of ‘new seed’, which I believe are hybrid varieties, coupled with monoculture and the use of chemical fertilizers. The Elders also spoke about how the Lesotho government is encouraging them to practice monoculture instead of hlakantsutsu culture.

However, the Elders who tried monoculture using the ‘new maize varieties’ that were supplied by the government on a loan scheme pointed out that the result was “bad harvest, unhealthy crops and poor livelihood” (Elder ‘Malepoqo, conversation/interview, July 17, 2004). The problem with these “new maize varieties is that they do not do well during periods of drought,” but the government does not tell the farmers about this.

“What they tell us is that if we add the white fertilizer [chemical fertilizer], it is food for crops and would make the crops grow faster, but you go to the field, you dig with your hoe and you find the fertilizer is still there, and the plant has not eaten it…. I do not trust everything they [the government] say. So in one field I planted the government seeds and kept the other field for mamenoana” (Elder Malepoqo, conversation/interview, July 17, 2004).

When I visited Elder Malepoqo I observed the harvest from the two maize varieties. She had the harvest from mamenoana stored in her granary, but the harvest from the government seed was spread out on her courtyard. She told me that the crop was wet and unripe as it did not reach maturity. She was hoping that the sun would help make it usable “there is nothing you can do with the crop, you cannot use it for food, I tried soaking it with the hope that I can feed it to the animals, but the pigs refused it; now I
don’t know what to do with it” (conversation/interview, July 17, 2004). Elder ‘Malepoqo could not feed the crop to anyone, and even the pigs and chickens refused the maize. The result was more hunger and an impoverished livelihood for her family.

The government’s new seed is pushing farmers like Elder ‘Malepoqo and thousands of rural farmers in Lesotho from local food-self sufficiency to hunger. The point I want to make is that farmers in rural Lesotho cannot afford the ‘conversional’ Western technologies of heavy machines such as tractors and chemical fertilizers. The large amounts of fertilizers as well as herbicides and pesticides required by monoculture of the new seeds (whether it is genetically or not genetically engineered) are unaffordable to farmers in Lesotho.

As I reflect upon who benefits from the new seeds and chemical agricultural practices, I become more aware that it is really the corporations, whether multinational or national, as well as their government agencies, that benefit from the profits of selling new seeds and chemicals, and not the nutritional, economic, and cultural needs of the impoverished Basotho farmers and their Lands. The planting of government seed suggests that biotechnology is for profit and for the benefits of markets, and not for the benefit of rural Basotho farmers.

Green Revolution

Elder ‘Malepoqo’s story supports the literature on the impact of the Green Revolution on Third World farmers. What Elder ‘Malepoqo describes is the result of the Green Revolution and corporate globalization which Shiva (1991; 1993; 2000) rightly criticizes for threatening the livelihoods of millions of farmers in the third world. In the
case of the Basotho, the lives of women and their dependants, the children, men, other animals and plants, are threatened.

In The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics, Shiva (1991) elaborates upon this point. She argues that the Green Revolution encouraged farmers, who for centuries planted different varieties of crops, to plant the same crop over large areas. She writes that the assumption behind the Green Revolution is that monoculture with the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides would yield more food to feed the hungry in the Third World countries. Monoculture means growing one crop only in a large expanse where diversified planting such as hlakantsutsu culture would be the more respectful, ecological, and sustainable agriculture method. The promise of the Green Revolution that monoculture would produce high yields has been an illusion to the women who are the Basotho rural subsistence farmers. Elder ‘Malepoqo’s story reveals that small subsistence farmers are encouraged to engage in a monoculture that works against biodiversity while marginalizing native crop varieties.

In contrast, Indigenous thought is grounded on understanding people, the Land, and food relationships. It is a holistic process oriented and firmly grounded in a particular place and homeland. I choose to define Indigenous knowledge as an epistemology essential for the survival of human and non-humans, a knowledge necessary for healing the earth and humans. This knowledge is based on the understanding that spiritual attitudes cannot be separated from the pragmatic subsistence activities. It values women’s as well as men’s knowledge and skills in food practices.

To clarify the aforementioned definition, I do not mean that all people everywhere must adopt an Indigenous thought if they are to adapt to an ecological way of life and live
respectfully with the Land, nature, other people, and themselves. However, I do believe that Indigenous thought can provide a starting point for people who are interested in changing from a non-respectful and non-ecological way of life. Another important implication of my definition concerns whether non-Basotho people or non-Indigenous peoples are expected to develop their own ways of knowing from their ancestral past that upholds ecological values such as respect for the Land. I believe that non-Indigenous people can develop their own way of knowing to establish a relationship with the Land that is ecological and respectful to nature.

In Chapter Four and in this chapter I share stories about my people’s way of life. I have attempted to make meanings from these stories and to articulate and discuss the Basotho traditional knowledge, teachings, and values of the Land. I do not share these stories’ meanings and understandings with the expectations that all people everywhere should live them. In Basotho tradition, it remains the responsibility of the listener whether or not they choose to listen to the story, make meaning from it, allow the story to work in them, to learn from and live that story, and to then pass it on to the next generation. The purpose of the story is to teach both the listener and the storyteller.

Some Emergent Issues and Dilemmas

The research questions for this study focused on Basotho traditional food practices and knowledge and the role of women in food production. However, data in this study reveal some methodological, ethical, and epistemological issues. These emergent issues are important to consider while conducting research with Indigenous communities
and the Land. I will now highlight some of the issues relating to the research practice that arose through my participation with the Elders and children growing food crops.

Re-Visiting the Institutional Research Ethics Protocols and Policy

In Chapter Three I described my research dilemma concerning the differences and contradictions between academic institutional research ethics protocols and the Basotho cultural protocols. In this chapter, I will highlight further research dilemmas through a discussion of research ethics and protocols with the intent of providing some methodological considerations that may help to ensure that research conducted within the Basotho communities and other Indigenous communities is culturally relevant and respectful to people and the Land.

During our reflective meetings about the fieldwork, I observed that when the Elders spoke, they did not separate the research issues from the daily issues about the Land and Homelands. My experience of participating in the fieldwork, growing food, listening to the Elders’ stories, and my observations of their interactions showed a culture that values the Land and perceives and understands it as a gift to be respected.

The Elders’ stories as well as their farming practices illustrated strong values of “respect for Land”, “Land care”, “giving back to Land,” and “treating Land as human”. These Land ethics and morals, which are prescribed within the worldview of the Basotho people, prompted me to question the institutional research ethics and protocols. I found that the University of British Columbia (UBC) research ethics policy identifies research regulations in the categories of human subjects, animal care, bio-hazardous materials, and clinical research. Despite UBC’s advocacy towards environmental sustainability, “Land
care” as a possible research ethic category is absent in the research ethics protocols. I wonder if there could be a place for “Land care” within the institutional research ethics protocols? I am aware that the research ethics has a section on bio-hazardous materials, but this is not sufficient. I recognize that including bio-hazardous materials is a good starting point for highlighting ethical concerns regarding the Land, but it does not go far enough to include problems of toxic waste and residue.

Also, it is important to note that respect and care for the Land is more than just avoiding direct harm to the Land. It also involves the use of cover crops, and caring for insects, birds and other beings. What might research be like if grounded in and guided by “Land care” research ethic protocols? Should research ethics protocols be limited to only human research and animal participants?14

My dissatisfaction with the institutional research ethics protocol is with respect to the silence about the link between the research protocols and ‘Land care.’ This silence has implications for the Basotho, and I believe, for many Indigenous peoples who as the literature shows, do not see themselves as separate from their Lands (Teni 1998) and their Homelands. The central issue of Homelands is either deliberately avoided in the institutional research ethics protocol or ignored due to lack of informed research involving Indigenous people’s thought or lack of representation on the board that formulates such protocols. Yet the issue of Indigenous Homelands and how they are understood both internationally and within nation-state having Indigenous populations is

14 During the early years in my doctoral program, especially in 2003 when I began my comprehensive examinations, research proposal and ethics application, I began, with some hesitation, to point out what I saw as shortfalls in the university research ethics protocols. I did not have courage to do so. I am thankful for scholars such as Marlene, B. Castellano (2004) for pointing out the importance for academic institutions to consider Land ethics for research within Aboriginal communities.
a critical item in any consideration of Indigenous research ethics, protocols, and methodologies. I suggest that the categories of ‘Land care’ and ‘Homelands’ need to be given careful consideration by the institutional ethics and protocol board that guides research, especially for research undertaken with the Land and within the Basotho communities and with other Indigenous peoples who share similar values of respect and care for the Land.

The UBC Behavioural Ethics Review Board (BREB) demands consent for adult research participants, assent for children who are minors, but no protocol regulation for babies. The women in the study worked in the field with babies clinging on their backs and my use of photographs as data raised questions for me around babies’ anonymity, and made me question the respectfulness of my research practice. For example, I wondered if it was fair to include babies as data (i.e. their photographs) just because UBC is silent about them? Is it fair to include babies because parents have consent, and because it is a cultural practice, “our people’s way of life to introduce our children to the teachings of the Land” and to bring babies to the fieldwork (Elder Maleshoane, Conversation/interview, December 7, 2004)? Is it fair to exclude poor rural women from participating in the project only because they must bring their babies to the fieldwork? What about babies’ rights? As I continued with the fieldwork, I found myself in a dilemma about which protocol I must follow, institutional or cultural or both and how? How could ethical issues such as the ones raised here be addressed so that research is ethical and respectful to all participants including the Land?

In Chapter Three I described my research dilemma about the institution ethics and consent forms that I designed and translated into English and then submitted to the
university for approval. I described how the Elders regarded these same consent forms with suspicion. I also highlighted the challenges posed by differences in language; the university uses English while the Elders I collaborated with for my research speak Sesotho. My research dilemmas that emerge in this chapter and those discussed in Chapter Three lead me to see that the ethics procedures followed in Western institutions are generally not culturally sensitive. They ignore language and cultural differences regarding the meaning of giving one’s signature. They ignore Land care as an important ethical consideration during research within the Basotho communities.

Right of Ownership to Some Form of Traditional Knowledge and Ways of Knowing

Another emergent issue that deserves discussion concerns the right of ownership to some forms of traditional knowledge and ways of knowing. Elders who have specific knowledge including rainmakers and those with the ability to stop hail felt uncomfortable to reveal details about such knowledge. For example, Elder ‘Malesholu, a medicine woman and traditional healer, described a traumatic case in which the White South African scientists arrived in the community and co-opted Basotho’s widely known medicinal plants purely for commercial purposes. “When they come, they ask for the teachings about these herbs … find out about the use of our medicinal plants. They leave. Then the next thing you see in the market is a medicine that is being made from the mountain spiral aloe that belongs to this Land … you are now being asked to buy that which belongs to you” (Elder ‘Malesholu, conversation/interview, November 11, 2004).

Elder ‘Malesholu’s story confirms arguments made by Third World researchers working within Indigenous subsistence agricultural communities who write that Western
corporations take ownership of Indigenous knowledge through patenting. These researchers argue that this appropriation of Indigenous knowledge is an attack on biodiversity, the traditional knowledge of medicine, as well as agriculture (Shiva, 1997; 2001). Through patenting, the corporations “find about the use of a medicinal plants,” (Elder ‘Malesholu, November 11, 2004). They claim this traditional knowledge of medicine as their own invention, patent it, and obtain exclusive rights to the product and/or related processes.

In my view, this process of patenting traditional knowledge is comparable to the African slave trade because what is being traded is the very knowledge that makes survival possible for 80% of the rural Basotho people. These people live on biodiversity and “knowledge involving the use of medicinal plants for healing” (Elder ‘Malesholu, conversation/interview, November 11, 2004). Patenting and the theft of traditional medicine and knowledge will eventually determine the livelihood of the rural poor. For example, Elder ‘Malesholu states, “the mountain aloe that was once a communal medicine is now owned by the markets that expect the local people to buy it from them” (conversation/interview, November 11, 2004).

I find it sad that corporations and governments, instead of engaging technological advances to benefit local communities, particularly with regard to the Land and environment, fail to recognize Indigenous knowledge (Sefa Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000; Smith, 1999). The Elders also pointed out that they fear that if specific cultural and traditional knowledge becomes public, it might be harmful to individuals using it without proper training, skills, and wisdom. Indigenous researchers confirm that Indigenous
Elders express concerns about revealing certain forms of traditional knowledge and teachings (Archibald, 1997).

Hunger Awareness: Working with Communities in Poverty

Having women living in poverty participate and sustain a community-school farm project that would not provide income to meet their livelihoods became another ethical dilemma for me. I continued to feel this even though I explained to the participants that there would be no payment for participating in the project.

Through participation in the fieldwork with the Elders and children, as a researcher I developed an understanding of the relationship between food self-sufficiency and hunger. Thus, an awareness of hunger and the issues around feeding children became part of my gathered knowledge and experience; hunger was part of the reason why I undertook the study examining the food, Land and people relationships. I wondered how I could help my community to eradicate hunger. In my conversations with the children who participated in this study, I heard that some arrived at the school hungry. These children of hunger reminded me of a girl named Mamello who I met in 2002. This young girl had a significant impact on my life, and the experience of meeting her and listening to her experiences of hunger became one of the stories that inspired me to undertake this research study. I will tell Mamello’s story in Chapter Six.

In this chapter I introduced the emergent principles revealed in the Elder stories presented in Chapter Four. These principles are: re seng, (we are all related): all humans and non-humans, rootedness, letsema (community collaboration), connectedness, interdependency, reciprocity, and respect and care for the Land. The data gathered from
Elder stories, my observations, and journal notes reveal these principles to be significant aspects of the Basotho Indigenous thought, traditional food practices, and way of life.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

My research sought to understand traditional farming practices and Indigenous thought through growing food and oral stories using a Basotho Indigenous Participatory Action Methodology. This study explored how Basotho traditional farming practices and Indigenous knowledge can promote food security and respect for the Land in Lesotho. This research showed that Lesotho can be helped to reduce child hunger and promote food security by including traditional knowledge in the Lesotho education curriculum.

In this chapter I summarize my research findings and the lessons learned through my experiences conducting this study. These lessons or principles which form the theoretical basis for understanding the Basotho traditional farming practices, Indigenous thought, and our traditional teachings and values are: re seng (we are all related: all humans and non-humans), rootedness, letsema (community collaboration), interdependence, connectedness, reciprocity, and respect and care for the Land.

Also in this study, implications for education, research and food security are discussed through the hunter’s story. The metaphor of the hunter is highlighted throughout this thesis to illustrate how cultural protocols and teachings created a pathway for my research journey with Elders and children as together we explored and experienced Basotho traditional food practices.
Conclusions

Coming Home: Bringing My Hunt to Elders and Community

The Elders’ advice and guidance that I “go, hunt and bring back home,” some “good food” for the community started me on my research journey. I drew upon the metaphor of the hunter to negotiate entrance into the community and to ask permission from the Elders to tell me their stories of the Land and to teach the children and myself about the Basotho traditional food practices. I also employed the analogy of selecting seeds and practicing hlakantsutsu culture or mixing seeds to give way to mixed crops. I demonstrated respect for the validity of Indigenous traditions and knowledge by choosing to focus my research on Basotho traditional food practices, women, and Indigenous knowledge. By ‘listening’ intently to the stories of the Land told by the Elders and through my observations and journal notes from my fieldwork, I now summarize the teachings from these stories that illustrate the ways Basotho understand their relationships with the Land and nature.

Each Elder story revealed how the Basotho worldview is enacted in the culture’s everyday way of life. My readings of the stories and understandings of the teachings have led me to identify the following six principles: relatedness (re seng, we are all related: all humans and non-humans), rootedness, letsema (community collaboration), interdependence, connectedness, reciprocity, and respect and care for the Land. I found these principles to be significant aspects of the Basotho people’s Indigenous environmental thought.

The stories of the Land that are presented in this thesis have taught me how to relate to the Land, how to think about nature, traditional food practices, and Indigenous
environmental thought, and how to conduct research that involves working with Elders’
and the Land to grow food. The ‘good food’ brought by ‘woman the hunter’ into the
community of environmental discourse is ‘Indigenous environmental thought’.
Honouring the Basotho Elders’ teachings helped me learn new stories of the Land and
new research approaches. As I embarked on my hunting journey, the Elders inspired and
enabled me through the metaphor of ‘woman the hunter’ to give back to my community.

The Basotho Elders who collaborated in this study talked about the principles of
interconnectedness, inter-relatedness, sense of rootedness, letsema, community
collaboration, hlakantsutsu culture, practices and methods of koti and molala,
interdependence, reciprocity, and respect and care for Land in relation to how they felt
about growing food from the Land. These principles are so closely linked that it is
difficult to address them as separate entities. Cultivating an understanding of each is
important if developing a food security curriculum in Lesotho is to be respectful and
culturally relevant. Through the exploration of Elders’ stories and their food practices,
this thesis illustrates how Lesotho can reduce child hunger, promote food security, and
Land care through the development of a food curriculum that embraces traditional
farming practices, traditional teachings, Indigenous knowledge, and values.

My study’s findings also suggest that traditional farming practices of Letsema,
hlakantsutsu culture, koti, nkhone le nstate moholo and molala combined with Indigenous
participation, action, and relationships in process, may help lay the foundation for
developing a Basotho Indigenous Participatory Action Methodology (IPAM). These
traditional farming practices reveal how Basotho develop, promote, and translate the
metaphor of re seng, ‘we are all related: all humans and non-humans’, into our daily lives
and help reinforce my understanding that Indigenous methodology is a research process that upholds and honours the ‘making of relatives’ with humans and the non-human world (people and Land).

In sum, the Elders’ teachings through traditional farming practices and their oral traditional stories, helped me see more clearly the connections between the metaphor of re seng, ‘we are all related: all humans and non-humans’, respect and care for Land, reciprocity, responsibility, and inter-relatedness which are core considerations of the Indigenous participatory action methodology. These principles need to be understood and applied to the curriculum if Lesotho is to promote food security and reduce child hunger.

Implications for Education

A number of significant implications emerged from this study for Indigenous people, education, research, and food security. My research on understanding Indigenous thought through traditional farming practices and stories challenges educators in Lesotho to consider the connections among people, Land, and food in their conceptual and philosophical frameworks. This study informs educators who wish to integrate Indigenous knowledge within educational contexts and provides deeper understandings of knowledge systems. Elders’ stories and traditional food practices also offer examples of pedagogical insights that educators in Lesotho can draw upon to promote and sustain Indigenous knowing within educational contexts. These insights are important because I believe that educators who are willing to promote Indigenous knowing in their educational practices may lack appropriate pedagogies.
My findings also indicate that Indigenous thought may provide an understanding of the interconnectedness and inter-relationships that humans forge with other people, the Land, nature, and food. This understanding offers a concrete framework for educational approaches that are responsive to eco-justice (Bowers, 2001), ecospirituality (Riley-Taylor, 2001), and critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003). Bowers (2001) remarks on the failure of educational theorists to link education, culture, and environment. I suggest that establishing educational programs that emphasize the relationships among people, Land, and food has the potential to examine the connection among education, culture, and environment and address this curriculum gap that Bowers underscores. In this study, the connection between food, culture and farming became evident. These findings challenge environmental educators to consider the relationships among people, Land, and food in their curriculum frameworks.

This study provides an educational framework that incorporates the relationships among people, Land, and food which I suggest is important to the Basotho and other Indigenous learners and their communities. These findings support ideas promoted by scholars of Indigenous education. In re-defining Indian education, Hampton (1995) suggests that Indigenous education should emphasise the importance of “sense of place, Land and territory” for indigenous learners and their communities (p.40). Cajete (2000) agrees by saying that “We need to know our stories of the Land and to teach with the insights we gain from these explorations”. He adds “Indigenous education is, in its truest form, about learning relationships in context” (p.183).

This study also provides evidence that a sense of place, Land, and territory as conceived by the Elders and presented in their stories can be promoted through a
curriculum model that emphasizes people, Land, and food relationships. This challenges schools to utilize school fields and gardens in meaningful ways to create a space where children learn about traditional knowledge, cultural teachings, and values through growing food. In addition, establishing an educational curriculum grounded upon Indigenous environmental thought may promote healing and decolonisation (Simpson, 2002), encourage teaching and learning not only in “culturally appropriate” but also “culturally inherent ways” (p.17) while reinforcing the notion that Indigenous knowledge is developed through “content but also process” (Cajete, 1994, p.24; Simpson, 2002, p.18; Snively & Corsiglia, 2000).

Food is an important element of the Basotho life in spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and economic ways. Food can be used as a medium to re-imagine abstract and spiritual concepts such as ‘worldview’ and ‘way of life’ and make such concepts tangible for developing curriculum and instructional materials. Moreover, following a thematic focus of food can provide a holistic view of the Basotho people’s ways of knowing.

Cajete (2000) writes that grounding environmental education on an Indigenous worldview is important for Indigenous students because it provides the “context we need to evolve a contemporary guiding philosophy for educating indigenous people.” He states:

In exploring our own expressions of indigenous education, an expression of education that is truly ours, truly coming from our sensibility, our understanding of the world and who we are, we are empowering not only ourselves but also a brighter future through education (p.181).

As in most parts of the world, Lesotho’s modern education system is based on a Western worldview that does not allow for exploration, but rather places diverse cultures
on a hierarchical scale. This leads to omissions, misinterpretations, and stereotypes in curriculum. Educational programs that emphasise people-Land-food relationships can serve as models to produce citizens who respect cultural diversity.

Educational programs that emphasise the relationships among people, Land, and food may also enhance Basotho learners’ understanding of the origins of their cultures. Such programs may help the Basotho people maintain their way of life and ways of knowing in contemporary times and provide guidance on how people from a specific culture can respond to current environmental issues. Thus, an educational programs that emphasises the relationships among people, Land, and food, and one grounded in Basotho tradition can lay the foundation for developing an interdisciplinary food security curriculum based on meaningful understanding of traditional farming practices, Indigenous knowledge, and Elders’ stories.

Implications for Research

The Indigenous Participatory Action Methodology (IPAM) that emerged in this study presented several methodological considerations that contribute to theoretical frameworks and research process and procedures. The IPAM conceived through this study was developed during the process of completing my doctoral studies. While writing my doctoral comprehensive examinations, I attempted to develop an Indigenous approach to Participatory Action Methodology. The IPAM defined in this study evolved through my dissatisfaction concerning the silence of PAR regarding Land care and respect for Land.
As I wrote this thesis, I was of two disparate hearts. One heart was advising me to continue with my idea to develop IPAM, while the other was warning me, "No you can’t really make it, you are only a doctoral student". This duality emerged from a lack of faith and confidence in myself. I did not believe I was capable or had the right to move beyond adopting PAR as my methodology and re-create and re-name it as IPAM. I now believe that the IPAM conceived through this study is significant as it contributes to the PAR theoretical framework. In particular, it may be beneficial to PAR researchers who wish to explore Land-based methodologies that respect and value humans and the non-human including the Land.

This study also provides ecological alternatives to research that informs existing theoretical frameworks by considering Land care and respect for Land in the ethics protocol. The Land-based methodological approaches presented in this study may be useful in environmental education research, specifically to researchers in Lesotho. The methodology in this thesis would be useful to researchers in Lesotho. To the best of my knowledge as an educator, researcher and farmer, this thesis is one of the first in Lesotho to develop Basotho Indigenous methodology, in particular, through the use of Elders' stories and farming practices. My research is also the first to apply farmers’ methods of food production, for example hlakantsuntsu and selection approaches, to analyse data and make meanings from Elders stories, and the first to employ an Analogical Metaphorical Analytical Approach. I suggest that an Indigenous approach to Participatory Action Methodology (IPAM) based upon Basotho traditions and protocols should be considered, understood, and implemented if research within the Basotho communities is to be respectful and culturally relevant.
This thesis also revealed research dilemmas concerning institutional and cultural research ethics protocols such as informed consent. I found through conducting this study that the ethics procedures followed in Western institutions are generally not culturally sensitive. Language differences and cultural differences regarding the meaning of giving one’s signature are not addressed. Also, Land care as an important research ethical consideration particularly while conducting research within contexts such as the Basotho communities is ignored. I suggest that the categories of ‘Land care’ and ‘Homelands’ need to be given careful consideration by the institutional ethics and protocol boards that guide research. These considerations are especially important for research undertaken within Indigenous communities and with Indigenous peoples who share similar values of respect and care for the Land.

Practical Implications for Food Security and the Role of Gender in Food Production

The outcome of this research provides tangible and practical implications for food security and child hunger in Lesotho. The children and families affected by hunger benefited from the study as the community harvested and ate crops they themselves grew in the field. Thus, this study provides possibilities for food security as it may inform educators and policy makers who seek to develop educational programmes designed to eliminate problems of child hunger and food insecurities in Lesotho.

Another practical finding of this study emerged from the Elders stories and their understanding of the application of traditional farming practices. Based on what I learned through these stories, I suggest that food security in Lesotho does not require the heavy input of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, and hybrid seeds. Basotho rural
farmers are already struggling to afford ‘conventional’ Western agricultural technologies and to expect them to afford expensive chemicals and attain food self-sufficiency is incomprehensible. That is, even if chemical agriculture was not detrimental to the health of the Land and people, it would still be a hardship for poor rural farmers to rely upon them. Any agricultural practices and technologies that promote food security by advancing the nutrition and health of human beings but result in harm to the Land cannot eliminate hunger in Lesotho.

This study adds to the literature of ecofeminism by articulating Basotho traditional knowledge as spoken by the Basotho women farmers. These Elder women stories present a useful model for including food production and traditional knowledge within the Lesotho curriculum while providing viable suggestions on how to develop such models. The Basotho women stories about the role of gender in food production also revealed that at one time both men and women participated in food production. This finding suggests that traditionally there was no gender division in the growing of food crops. This insight may be useful to ecofeminism research.

Future Research

When I began the fieldwork for this study my focus was not on gender differences amongst farmers. Rather, my intention was to collaborate with and document the Basotho stories of both women and men. Thus my research question that sought to find a relationship between gender and food production emerged during the fieldwork. My findings that the majority of men did not choose to participate in the study calls for further investigation into gender roles in food practices in Lesotho. Men farmers and
women farmers could be asked to share their stories of their participation in food practices. Also, women Elders and men Elders could be asked to tell traditional stories providing the opportunity for research on the relationship between men and women’s stories of farming.

As I conclude this thesis, I am keenly aware of the position I place myself in as I plan to promote Indigenous thought. I face a great challenge if I want to implement Indigenous thought within the Lesotho school curricula. My dilemma is that if my goal is to inspire Indigenous environmental thought, the motivation should come through participation in and with the Land where Elders, children, and teachers can grow viable food and learn about Indigenous values. This requires commitments in time and letsema or collaborative approach to educational practices. The challenge here is the current school context in Lesotho that focuses on pre-set goals, prescribed learning outcomes, content, activities, achievements, and standardised examinations. In addition, the Elders, whom I believe should be fully involved in curricula planning and implementation as they are the bearers of Indigenous environmental knowledge, are not currently involved in the schools. The Lesotho school curricula guides are silent about the contributions of Basotho Elders as potential sources of environmental knowledge.

Another related problem is that the environmental education component within the school curricula in Lesotho is reduced to a simplistic perception of ‘environment’ characterised by the biophysical concepts and taught as ‘ecology’. The emphasis is on conservation, protection, management, and control of the ‘natural’ world. These ideas are indicative of the preservationist or wilderness Western environmental thought. In addition, Lesotho school curricula devalues Indigenous knowledge by excluding it from
curriculum guides at the expense of ‘ecological science’. Given the demands of the

current examination driven curricula, it is possible that Lesotho teachers follow only the

prescribed curricula, thus supporting the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge.

Contrary to what the school curriculum prescribes, the Indigenous perspective

does not see the people, Land, and social issues such as food security as separate. Instead,

an Indigenous perspective on the environment emphasizes the relationship between

people-Land-food. I believe that an Indigenous perspective has the potential to ameliorate

ecological crises, address social justice issues, and instil within human beings a deeper

sense of respect for the earth. But now I face another dilemma as an educator and a

researcher. I wish to alert Basotho people to the idea of developing our own curricula

based on Indigenous environmental thought derived from the Basotho stories and way of

life. I believe these kinds of curricula can help Basotho children and their communities

better understand issues associated with food production and also provide them with

ways to contribute to respect for the Land and food security. How can I respectfully alert

teachers, children and the community to become aware of these issues without

influencing them to think in particular ways? These issues remain a challenge for me as I

plan to return to Lesotho to explore Basotho’s perspectives on their relationship with the

Land.

Inspired by the Elders’ gift of the hunter metaphor that guided me through this

research process, I wish to end this chapter with a story that first motivated me to begin

my journey. I am thankful to my dear Sister, Dr. Sandra Scott, for encouraging me to

conclude my thesis with this food security curriculum narrative.

This is how the story goes:
When I reflect upon what the Elders taught me about food security through their stories and farming practices, I have come to greatly appreciate the importance of farming and Indigenous knowledge in promoting food security and reducing child hunger in Lesotho. I think of the orphans I met in this study and throughout my life who could not go to school because they were hungry, despite the fact that primary education is free for all children in Lesotho.

My thoughts bring me to the story of Mamello an 11 year old girl living in a small village in my home district. I remember her well. I also remember that cold, windy, and rainy day that she came knocking at the door of my aunt’s house. Her first words to me were, “Mother, I am selling Papasane, we are hungry mother.” Papasane is one of Lesotho’s native vegetables; they are very delicious and grow ‘wild’ in the wet foothills. The papasane’s flavour is mild yet bitter, and they are also used to make ‘good’ medicine. She said, “Mother I am selling vegetables here,” and in her hands she had two plastic bags full of Papasane. Because I am a farmer and along with my relatives we grow our own vegetables, both native and exotic in our garden, it was not in my plans to purchase vegetables. So I said to Mamello, “My dear child, I can’t buy Papasane today because I just picked some vegetables from our garden the previous day, but if you come in the future I might be able to buy your vegetables (in Basotho language the future could mean next day or the day after or anytime).” Now you will notice how the young girl referred to me as mother, and that I call her my child. In Basotho tradition, all children in
the village are the children of all adults. As the African proverb says, “It takes the whole village to raise a child”.

But when I finished speaking, Mamello did not move away, her name is Patience, and she just stood there patiently, waiting for me to provide an appropriate response. And then I was wondering, “What did I say, not say, what was she thinking?” As if seeing through me, she raised up her head, just a bit, and oh what I saw! Tears from the clouds mixed with tears from her own eyes were forming streams that trickled down her beautiful yet thin cheeks. I extended my hand, which I put on her shoulder, wanting to let her know that it was safe for her to speak. But I also wanted to let her know she may keep the silence because I understood her (well, at least I thought I did; I thought she was hungry), and yes, I was both right and wrong. The little girl then opened her mouth and spoke, “My mother said if you could even give us a basin of maize meal in exchange for these vegetables because we have no food, no food at all mother. Today is now the third day that my younger siblings, my mother, and I have been taking ourselves to sleep and waking ourselves with our empty stomachs. We are hungry mother, no food mother.”

Maize is the major staple and source of carbohydrate in Lesotho and grounded maize meal is used to make papa, the basic traditional dish. The Basotho people are hungry unless they eat papa.

So I took the girl’s hand saying, “Come into the house,” and I opened the door for the girl to enter. I opened the bag of maize meal and gave her two basins to take home. I also encouraged her to sell her vegetables to the next family so she could take home both the maize meal and the money from her vegetables. I then learned from Mamello that she was in the fourth grade in the local primary school, but she has not been to school for two
weeks. At school, the children are provided food from USAID which comes through organizations such as WFP. (I used to eat the same food at the same school, but then our food came mainly from Canada and the United States).

The little girl Mamello then left in that cold rain, and I was deeply touched by her experience of hunger. I felt as if I was seeing a hungry child for the first time in my life. Her story helped me see more clearly the relationship between my childhood efforts of growing gardens and growing orphans and of learning how to grow gardens to help orphaned children grow food and grow ‘ourselves’. I became aware of the discomfort that I have been carrying within me. I wondered Why?

Since that rainy cold day, I decided to commit the rest of my life to ‘hunt’ for ways to help free Lesotho children from hunger. Hence this thesis becomes one way as this study presents ideas on developing a food security curriculum through respectful and culturally relevant research and community inspiration, motivation, and activism.

This dissertation presented curriculum possibilities that mark the first trail in my hunting journey. My journey continues as I strive to achieve my goal: to educate for food security in a food-insecure Land and to promote the importance of traditional farming practices and Indigenous knowledge and knowing in the Lesotho curriculum.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Schedule of the Research Fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Sesotho Name</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Fieldwork Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>'Mesa</td>
<td>To light -Fires are now kindled on account of freshness of the mornings and evenings. Ntsoe – a family of sweet sorghum-like plant is ripe</td>
<td>Reporting myself and my study to the chief. Visiting with Elders at Elder 'Mannyane's home: Establishing research relationships. It is 'Mesa, the fires are on, and we are seating in a circle around the open fire. The ears of unripe maize are boiling in a tree legged pot. The other ears we are roasting- and this is the part I like best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Motseanong</td>
<td>Warbling of birds -It is cold; the little birds (Mamotintinyane) warble through the valleys in search of food and shelter</td>
<td>Visiting with Elders: Establishing research relationships continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Phuptjane</td>
<td>Maize dish -mixture of sorghum, beans and pumpkin cooked together</td>
<td>Visiting with Elders continues: Elders Ntefeleng, Maleshoane at their the fields in and helping them in building the thresh-floor, and winnowing of the sorghum grain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Phupu</td>
<td>Name of maize plant, but without the termination ptjane, which is a diminutive because the plant is now fully developed</td>
<td>Visit with Elder 'Malepoqo. Variety of maize is spread at the courtyard. She took me inside the hut where she stored a variety of 'Mamenoana, in a large tradional straw basket, in the shape of a dome, the texture of which is impervious to rain -this is sesiu, she explained to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Phato</td>
<td>Hidden -The pasturage of the last season is so dry that the cattle refuse to eat it; fresh grass is still too short. The cows have no milk, or hide it, as the Old people would say</td>
<td>Pitso – community gathering at the chief's kraal: continuing establishing research relationship with community, and presenting my research proposal. Conversations audio taped, followed by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Fieldwork Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Loetse</td>
<td>Pasturage - The grass springs up in the fields. The small birds return, sing their songs, and the people are happy to hear the songs.</td>
<td>introspective fieldnotes 7 visits: Fieldwork planting season begins: The people gather for the seeds ceremony. The seeds are planted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Mphalane</td>
<td>Kind of iris, which grows at this time.</td>
<td>3 visits, 4th one canceled: one Elder has lost a son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Pulungoana</td>
<td>Fawn of the gnu - This is the season when the female gnu produces her young.</td>
<td>First hoeing for sorghum, maize grains. 3 visits Vegetables harvested: turnips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Tsitoe</td>
<td>Kind of cricket, which makes a good deal of noise at this time. Children run about happily on the soft earth and rejoicing happily at the songs of Tsitoe. The minds of the children become strengthened...lots of food...no children no food.</td>
<td>3 visits: second vegetable harvesting continues, second hoeing of maize, etc. a grandchild child is born to one grandmother. We are able to provide turnips and spinach to feed the mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Pherekhong</td>
<td>Coverer (moon of the) - The sorghum begins to come into ear, and huts are erected for the shelter of those whose business it is to attend to the preservation of the products.</td>
<td>3 visits one cancelled as we mourned loss of one farmer. What do people do during death. End of research fieldwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Tlhakula</td>
<td>Sorghum grain begins to shed cover. Ear of maize Dark come from the west. Lots of rain and thunderstorm bring fresh water to the people and the land. Hail and medicine man returns to the fields.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Tlhakubele</td>
<td>Fully grown sorghum grain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>