

***COLLABORATIVE & CREATIVE LAND PLANNING IN CANADA'S NORTH:
SUPPORTING WILD PLANT HARVEST THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION
RESEARCH IN WHITEHORSE, YUKON.***

by

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Collaborative and Creative Land Planning in Canada's North: Supporting Wild Plant Harvest Through Participatory Action Research in Whitehorse, Yukon.

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Abstract

A 2017 survey of the residents of Whitehorse, Yukon, indicated that over 60% secure at least a portion of their food from foraged sources (City of Whitehorse, 6). Yet, strategies for the protection of wild harvest spaces and practices are seldom addressed within local food and land planning. Working in partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN), I examine the impact of omitting harvest from planning and what it would mean to chart a new course. This research reveals that the decision to exclude harvest not only harms northern and Indigenous foodways but perpetuates colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal power dynamics. Ultimately, neglect for harvest cannot be separated from historical and ongoing attempts to undermine the knowledge and authority of Indigenous Peoples and, more specifically, Indigenous women. When activities like plant foraging are deemed feminine, they are left out of land planning on the assumption that they cannot or do not contribute adequately to the financial and physical well-being of the community. Planning projects that do not consider wild plant activities subsequently threaten to displace foragers from the land along with their rights to the land. In this way, the current systems of land management serve the imperialist agendas of Settler nations by centralizing power over land, limiting the diverse claims that Indigenous communities have to the land, and naturalizing gendered hierarchies of land ownership. Conversely, however, our findings also suggest that the inclusion of harvest practices within planning initiatives can help to confront these systems of injustice, advance community wellbeing, strengthen Indigenous self-determination and uphold ecological health. Towards these aims, I have collaborated with Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the harvest community to develop strategies in support of their practice and to advocate for the inclusion of harvesters in upcoming planning projects.

Lay Summary

The practice of harvesting wild plants is an integral part of the health, culture, and economy of Whitehorse, Yukon. Yet, strategies for the protection of wild harvest spaces and practices are seldom addressed within local food and land planning. Working in partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN), I examine the impact of omitting harvest from planning and what it would mean to chart a new course. This research reveals that the decision to exclude harvest harms northern food security and perpetuates local inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents. Conversely, our findings also suggest that the inclusion of harvest practices within planning initiatives can help to advance the overall wellbeing of the community and its surrounding ecology. Towards this aim, I have collaborated with Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the harvest community to develop strategies in support of the practice and to advocate for the inclusion of harvesters in upcoming planning projects.

Preface

Before his retirement, Senior Land Planner, John Meikle granted me permission to conduct collaborative research with KDFN (see Appendix A: KDFN Letter of Support). The project objectives and its design were jointly developed by me and the members of a community research team, comprised of KDFN Elders Judy Anderson, Margaret McKay, and Dianne Smith, KDFN citizen and project participant Rae Mombourquette, and KDFN Lands, Heritage and Resources staff John Meikle and Roy Neilson. The KDFN citizens on the research team also provide support and guidance in the analysis of the data I collected through interviews, focus groups and observations, and helped me to develop the project recommendations. I then captured our work together in this document, collecting feedback on my writing from participants, members of the research team, and my committee. Though supportive of my work, the KDFN staff on the research team believed it was important for me to maintain a degree of academic independence. While kept informed throughout the project, both KDFN staff members did not take an active role in the stages of analysis and writing allowing me to work with community members to draw conclusions and make claims unhindered by the diplomatic obligation's public servants. Thus, it must be understood that while this research was conducted in collaboration with staff from the Lands Heritage and Resources branch of KDFN, the statements made here are not the official position of the KDFN government.

My work was conducted under the joint supervision of Dr. Christine Schreyer and Dr. Allison Hargreaves. Before KDFN and I began data collection, this project was reviewed by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board. The research was deemed to pose minimal risk to those involved and subsequently approved under the certificate number: H20-00328. As part of our ethics requirements, all participants signed consent forms prior to their formal involvement in the study. Any Indigenous Knowledge represented in this document belongs to those individuals who shared that knowledge with the project.

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Terminology

Harvesting and Foraging: I use these terms interchangeably to refer to the collection of plants outside of conventional Western agrarian settings.

Harvest Relations: This term refers to the relationships that exist between participants and the practice of harvest between harvesters and between harvesters and the land.

Wld and Wyld: Throughout this document I also use the terms wild, wld and wyld interchangeably. This is not a common practice; however, I felt the need to challenge the way in which colonial understandings of land depend on a dichotomy of domesticated and developed human habitat and undeveloped and untamed ‘wilderness’. Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge that far from being untouched by human activity, many ‘wild’ spaces have long been under Indigenous methods of ecological management (Turner, Spalding & Deur 2020, 4-5).

Wmn and Womxn: Throughout this document I use the terms woman/women, wmn and womxn interchangeably. This is partly in keeping with the feminist tradition of challenging the patriarchal linguistic roots of the word by removing the ‘man’ or ‘men’ from woman and women. However, I have also chosen to draw attention to the constructed nature of the category, and to acknowledge the diverse range of people who are forced in or out of that category, regardless of how they identify, by the colonial and patriarchal systems of oppression surrounding them. For me, destabilizing the term woman, through the use of multiple spellings, also helps to broaden its boundaries in a manner that recognizes gender fluidity and inclusivity. Finally, as a student with Dyslexia and ADHD, this approach feels like a playful attempt to push back against neurotypical conceptions of language.

Plant and Plant Communities: For the purposes of my work, these terms are inclusive of all vascular plants as well as algae, fungi, lichens, liverworts and mosses.

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Acknowledgements

While studying at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus, I live on the unceded territories of the Sylix Peoples of the Okanagan. For me, this acknowledgment means that I have a responsibility to learn about, engage and respect Sylix knowledges, laws, and protocols where I am invited to do so, in order to confront colonization and restore the balance between humanity and the land. I would also like to acknowledge that when I return home to Whitehorse, Yukon, I have the same obligation to the knowledges, laws and protocols held by Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. My work here is one small step in upholding that responsibility.

I also recognize that though I am listed as the sole author of this thesis, knowledge production is never an independent pursuit. I would like to thank the members of the research team, Judy Anderson, Margaret McKay, and Dianne Smith, Rae Mombourquette, John Meikle and Roy Neilson, and project participants Emily McDougall, Jenny George, Nikki Dillman, Lauren McClintock, Jocelyn McDowell, Margi Paszkowska and Mary Holozubiec, for lending their knowledge and experience to this project. I must also thank Shirley Adamson for her endless insights, my supervisors Allison Hargreaves and Christine Schreyer for their unwavering support, my examining committee members Tania Willard, Janelle Marie Baker, and Jon Corbett for their tough questions, and Margo Tamez, Iyla Parkins, Maria Alexopoulos and Lisa Grekul for their invaluable mentorship. Additionally, I would like to offer gratitude to my Interdisciplinary colleagues Ange-Aimée Quesnel, Cassidy Acheson, Eva Kasprzycka, Kirthana Ganesh, Mir Rifat Us Saleheen, and Oriane Edwards for their academic collaboration and friendship. I would like to thank my parents who tirelessly fought for my right to access education. Both of you inspire me to face down my fears each and every day. Finally, thank you to the Social Studies and Humanities Research Council for awarding me a Canadian Graduate Scholarship. I would also like to acknowledge the Northern Scientific Training Program, the

Yukon Foundation, the University of British Columbia, and the Institute for Community Engaged Research for financially supporting my studies and research activities.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the citizens of Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation who have stewarded the lands, on which I live, harvest, and research, for millennium and who continue to advocate for the health and wellbeing of the land and all those who depend on it. I would also like to offer a dedication to the harvesting community of Whitehorse, Yukon, who have so generously shared their practice with me and to the plant communities that collectively support us. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work, along with all the sweat and tears that have preceded it, to the Neurodivergent community. As a student with Dyslexia and Attention Deficit, I have struggled tremendously to find space for myself within a social and institutional setting that prizes ableist understandings of knowledge production. However, I was never alone in this fight. To those who have come before me, I am forever grateful for your determination. To those who have fought alongside me, I thank you for your endless love and support and offer my own in-return. And, to those who have yet to come, please know that I am cheering you on.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Indigenous Peoples of Whitehorse, Yukon, have cultivated a longstanding relationship to local plant communities. These enduring ties are reflected in the contemporary harvest of wild plant foods and medicines by the citizens of Ta'an Kwäch'än Council (TKC) and Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) citizens.¹ It is through harvest that these citizens tend to the land, to the needs of their families, and to their traditions. In addition to the cultural and practical importance of harvest for TKC and KDFN citizens, the practice also carries significance for other Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of the area. These harvesters have taken up the practice of harvest in continuance of their own cultural traditions or as a means of adopting northern foodways. However, despite the tremendous value harvest brings to the Whitehorse community, strategies for its protection are seldom addressed within local food and land planning. As a result, harvest grounds are presently threatened by development and over-use.

Working in partnership with KDFN, I examine the impact of continuing to omit harvest from planning and what it would mean to chart a new course. This research project sets out to better understand the significance of harvest spaces and practices, and their contributions to the food security and cultural milieu of the Whitehorse region. With this information, I worked with members of the plant harvest community to design supports for the practice and to advocate for its inclusion in the Łu Zil Män Local Area Plan (LAP), the latest collaborative land planning initiative between the Government of Yukon (YG) and KDFN.

1.1 Research Questions

This research project asks the following questions:

1. What relationships do wild plant harvesters have with the practice of harvest and with Łu Zil Män?

¹ While others have critiqued the initialization of words such as TEK (Wyndam 2017), I have retained the acronyms TKC, KDFN and YG because these are used commonly by those living in Whitehorse.

2. How has the region's ongoing legacy of colonization shaped its residents' relationship to the practice of wild harvest and to each other?
3. What tensions and opportunities exist within the convergence and divergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvest foodways?
4. What resources does the harvest community need to thrive in Łu Zil Män and elsewhere?
5. How can Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments work with this information to develop collaborative supports for the practice?

1.2 Background

The area now known as Whitehorse, Yukon is traditionally recognized in the Southern Tutchone Ta'an dialect as Kwanlin and is located on the ancestral lands of the Southern Tutchone and Tagish Kwan, and within the Traditional Territories of TKC and KDFN (see Figure 1). The city's historical position as an Indigenous trading hub lives on in its current role as a center for commerce (Kwanlin Dün First Nation 2017, 1). As the capitol city of the Yukon, it is also a key hub of governance, and is home to the territory's legislative assembly along with the primary offices of TKC and KDFN. In recent years, the governments of TKC, KDFN, YG and the City of Whitehorse have increased their collaboration with one and another, in recognition of their shared responsibility to the lands and citizens of the region (see "Declaration: Working Together," Government of Yukon 2017, and "Declaration of Commitment," Kwanlin Dün First Nation 2018).



Figure 1: Kwanlin (Whitehorse, Yukon) © K. Panchyshyn, 2021

Home to 33,285 people, the Whitehorse area hosts 78% of the territory's residents, a breakdown like no other province or territory in Canada (Government of Yukon 2020, 1-3). Worth noting are the 4,760 residents who identify as Indigenous, a number that accounts for over half of the Indigenous people living in Yukon (Government of Yukon 2019, 5). While TKC and KDFN citizens make up a large portion of the Indigenous people living in Whitehorse, others belong to Indigenous groups from across the North and beyond. The city's unique cultural composition is reflected in the diversity of the plant foraging community.

TKC and KDFN citizens have cultivated a relationship to plant harvest that spans millennia. As TKC Elder Shirley Adamson explains, "we weren't able to go to the store for food or the hospital for medicine, so we needed to know the properties of the plants around us, we needed to know their energies, and how to use them in a good way" (qtd. Panchyshyn 2020, 6). KDFN Elder Dianne Smith notes that "traditional medicine is everything. It touches everything, every human being, every animal, every lake. Traditional medicines are a part of our way of life" (qtd. Panchyshyn 2020, 6). It is through the teachings of Elders like Adamson and Smith, that plant harvest continues to be practiced by younger generations of TKC and KDFN citizens.

Other Indigenous groups from across the region also practice harvest in the Whitehorse area, as it has long been a place for them to gather or travel through. Though rooted in different cultural traditions and relations to land, individuals belonging to Indigenous groups outside of Whitehorse have also adapted their practices to continue harvesting in and around Whitehorse. Similarly, many non-Indigenous residents share in the practice as part of a 'northern lifestyle' or in connection to their own familial and cultural practices.²

Like many of my fellow northerners, I grew up foraging for delicacies like highbush cranberry and morel mushrooms (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). In fact, in a 2017 survey of Whitehorse residents, more than 60% of respondents indicated securing at least a portion of their food from foraged sources (City of Whitehorse, 6). Indeed, the distinct culinary flavors of soapberry, boletus mushrooms, and wild sage feature prominently in regional cookbooks, stock the pantries of local households, and are at home in the everyday diets of the city's inhabitants (Genest 2010, 8). Similarly, plants like juniper, spruce tip, fireweed, arnica, and chaga have all found their way into schools, hospitals, and care facilities, alongside coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores, markets, and breweries (Panchyshyn 2020, 7). For me and many others however, the harvest and use of wild plants goes beyond the practical need for food and medicine. As local herbalist Beverly Gray explains, wild plants are "intrinsic to who we are as people" (qtd. Panchyshyn 2020, 8). However, the practice of wild plant harvest would not be possible without the lands on which the city resides.

² I would like to stress that there is no separating the practice of northern harvest from Indigenous Peoples, lands and knowledges. No matter where we harvest, Settlers to the north depend on Indigenous lands. These spaces have often been cultivated by Indigenous Peoples to promote the growth of the very plants we seek (Turner, Spalding & Deur 2020, 4-5). Furthermore, non-Indigenous foraging practices often depend entirely on knowledges Indigenous Peoples have gathered on local plant communities. Thus, the practice of northern harvest by non-Indigenous peoples can easily slide into appropriation, particularly when their practice is used to displace Indigenous Peoples from the northern cultures and landscapes. I will discuss this tension further in Section 4.2.1.



Figure 2: Highbush Cranberry © K. Panchyshyn, 2021



Figure 3: Morel Mushroom © R. Mombourquette, 2021. Used with permission.

A stunning array of boreal forest, mountains, lakes, and rivers are woven throughout the city and its surroundings. Currently, municipal parks make up 30% of the city itself, while vast stretches of ‘wilderness’ border the city on all fronts (See Figure 4; Glynn-Morris 2019, 3). These areas encompass important traditional and contemporary harvest areas for TKC and KDFN and, as noted above, have become popular with other harvesters as well. Harvesters are

dependent on these important spaces, and thus, it is impossible to develop supports for harvesting practices without first addressing land planning. Wild harvest is not easily replicated within conventional horticultural or agricultural settings, so, without adequate access to harvest spaces, foragers cannot carry out their practice. Planning is needed to ensure that harvesters are not pushed out by privatization, development, contamination, or competitive use. Nevertheless, strategies dedicated to the protection and support of wild harvest spaces are largely missing from land planning projects in the area. This omission is particularly disappointing given YG's commitment to culturally relevant food systems, made in its Local Food Strategy for Yukon (Government of Yukon 2016).

Without proper consideration for wild harvest, Whitehorse risks losing a vital component of its food network. Many residents, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, conduct their wild harvest in the forests and waterways in and around Whitehorse. It is difficult, however, to balance the need for these spaces with the city's rapid growth. Between 2010-2020, Whitehorse witnessed a 23.5% increase in population and is projected to reach a population of 35, 500 by 2030 (Government of Yukon 2020, 1; Government of Yukon 2016, 3). As the city's infrastructure expands to support its population growth, harvest areas are lost to development and greater pressure is placed on remaining harvest areas. Again, the words of KDFN Elder Dianne Smith are apt here:

When my mother, sister and I go out on the land, we find plants dying due to over harvest or over-use of the area. There is less and less to harvest, and we have to go further and further. When you know about the traditional plants it is hurtful to see them suffering, ripped up or run over. You look at your grandchildren, and the only teaching you can offer them is that you cannot harvest here today because the plants need time to heal. (qtd. Panchyshyn 2020, 10)

Her words demonstrate how poor planning has corrosive impacts on not only the environment, but also food security, cultural transmission, and community cohesion. There is also no ignoring the ways this neglect perpetuates the colonial suppression of Indigenous land, food, and governance rights.

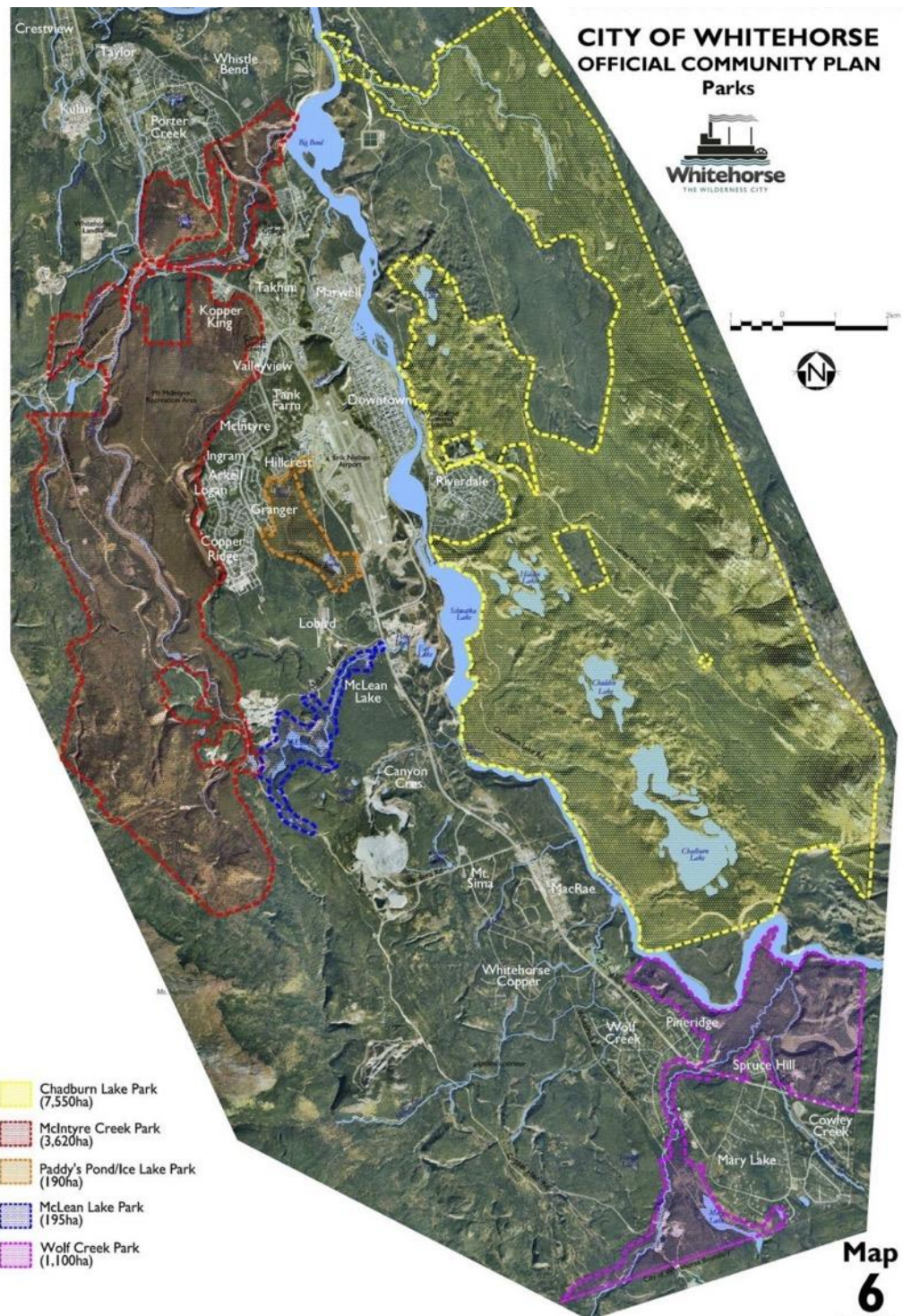


Figure 4: Map of Whitehorse (City of Whitehorse 2010, 101).

Compounding the issue of less space for safe and sustainable foraging is the increased pressure it places on the time and resources of harvesters. As more residents enter the wage

economy, they have less time and flexibility needed to conduct harvest which increases the popularity of harvest spaces close to the city like Łu Zil Män. Consequently, concerns around the over-harvest of such spaces are rising (Panchyshyn 2020, 9-10, 12-13). If left unaddressed, the lack of planning around wild harvest spaces will increase the time and resources required for the practice. This change poses greater threats to Indigenous northerners who statistically face higher rates of food insecurity and economic constraint than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Food Secure Canada 2021; Leblanc-Laurendeau 2020; Tarasuk & Mitchell 2020, 13-17). This reality was captured in a recent study involving 2463 northern Indigenous households, which identified cost as one of the most widespread barriers to hunting and gathering, followed by time restrictions due to schooling or employment (Natcher et al. 2016, 1156). These findings were echoed in the “Kwanlin Dün First Nation Traditional Territory Land Vision,” which notes that “for many citizens there is simply less time and opportunity to experience the land, and when on the land, citizens now face direct competition” (2017, 23). Elenore Stephenson and George Wenzel attribute this disparity to the ways colonial institutions have “dramatically re-shaped northern food-systems” towards the disempowerment of Indigenous Peoples (2017, 50). Thus, more equitable access to harvest has a meaningful role to play in decolonization efforts. Similarly, threats to harvest only increase Whitehorse’s dependency on southern foods and cultures, subsequently weakening its autonomy and collective resiliency (Buttler Walker et al. 2017, 37). To improve food security for all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments and communities will need to work together on solutions that account for the region’s unique geographical, political, and cultural landscape. As a life-long resident of Whitehorse, and as a harvester, I am eager to contribute my skills as a researcher towards this aim.

1.2.1 How this Project Came to Be

After completing my undergraduate education, I began working in a division of YG responsible for implementing Land Claims and fostering collaboration with Indigenous governments. This role had me spending a great deal of time within co-management realms. Co-management processes are understood broadly as local or regional scale arrangements “intended to share some measure of control and authority for decisions about specific resources (commonly wildlife, fisheries, lands, protected areas, and water)” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments and resource users (Clarke & Jo-Stark 2017, 71). Though not exclusively linked, these arrangements often emerge from the implementation of modern Land Claims and Self-Government Agreements, a key function of which is to identify and protect interests shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. However, when reviewing a broad range of co-management materials specific to the Whitehorse region, I was surprised to discover the absence of planning measures in support of wild plant harvest, a practice embraced by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous northerners. This was alarming given that I and many fellow foragers had begun to observe the negative impacts resulting from increased development and use of harvest areas.

Eager to address this gap, I successfully applied to be a part of the Jane Glassco Northern Fellowship where I explored opportunities for inclusion of plant harvest in collaborative food planning initiatives between the municipal and First Nations governments of Whitehorse.³ Here I drew on my background in Cultural Studies to approach planning documents and policies in need of critical analysis through a decolonial and feminist lens. I then worked with local harvesters to develop possible solutions for the inclusion of wild harvest in the city’s food planning. Through the advocacy work of the harvest community, TKC and KDFN, a

³ The Jane Glassco Northern Fellowship is a two-year program designed to recognize the leadership and policy expertise of northern Canadians between 25-35 years of age. Each candidate works both independently, and in conjunction with other members of their cohort, to tackling the latest policy issues to face the north.

section on wild food harvest was incorporated into the latest municipal food strategy and includes a commitment to the implementation of solutions raised by my fellowship work, as well as recognition for the impact colonial systems have had, and continue to have, on Indigenous harvesting rights (City of Whitehorse 2020, 23). The key now, is to ensure these policies are also mirrored in the region's land planning implementation.

It is through my Fellowship research that I first developed a working relationship with the Lands, Heritage and Resources Department at KDFN. Eager to dive deeper into the values and challenges surrounding plant harvest for my Master's research, I approached them about a potential partnership. Together we agreed to move the focus of my work away from municipal food planning and towards territorial land planning, a shift that allowed us to take advantage of the newly launched planning process for the Łu Zil Män (Fish Lake) area (see Figure 5). While the area remains just outside of the city's jurisdiction, it is used often by Whitehorse residents. For this reason, the city will still be engaged in the planning and implementation process, though not as an official party to the agreement. When working as a Planner for the City, Erica Beasley, aptly noted that “[w]here Whitehorse residents are having an impact on plant harvesting areas, especially in areas reached by public trails, the City has a role to play in finding solutions” (qtd. Panchyshyn 2020, 15). This means that any recommendations explored by this project will focus on plant harvest supports that can be adopted by YG and KDFN, but that also make room for the involvement of other partners.

Made possible by Section 30 of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement, Local Area Plans (LAPs) facilitate cooperative management between KDFN and YG on lands where the parties share interests and responsibilities (2005, 51-55). In March of 2020, KDFN and YG officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining their commitment to developing a plan for the 460 square kilometers in the Łu Zil Män area by 2022. Several of the Łu Zil Män LAP objectives include: minimizing potential conflict between land users; recognizing and promoting the history and culture of Indigenous Peoples in the area;

understanding and acknowledging past and present use in the area; balancing the diversity of interests in the area and ensure all users are fairly represented in the plan; drawing on the knowledge and experience of Indigenous people and other residents towards effective planning; and, advancing public learning, awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of Łu Zil Män (Government of Yukon 2020, 2). As I will discuss in Chapter Five, not only did the research team and I find that an inquiry into harvest practices and spaces could contribute to these aims, but it is in fact essential to achieving them.

The LAP also offered a chance to explore our questions and test out solutions on a manageable scale. By this I mean that the selected location is small enough to keep data collection narrow but popular enough to produce findings that will be relevant elsewhere in the region. Similarly, the two-year timeline gave me a chance to be involved from start to finish, an option not possible under the decade long timeframes of more substantial projects. However, the modest size and scope of the LAP did not limit the impact of our research. LAPs are designed to feed into larger regional plans and often end up setting the tone for smaller planning

initiatives. Thus, through our involvement in the LAP process, we were well positioned to create ripples within the territory's land planning circles.

The history of Łu Zil Măn also makes it an excellent place to conduct this project. Indigenous Peoples have accessed the area for social gatherings and food collection for

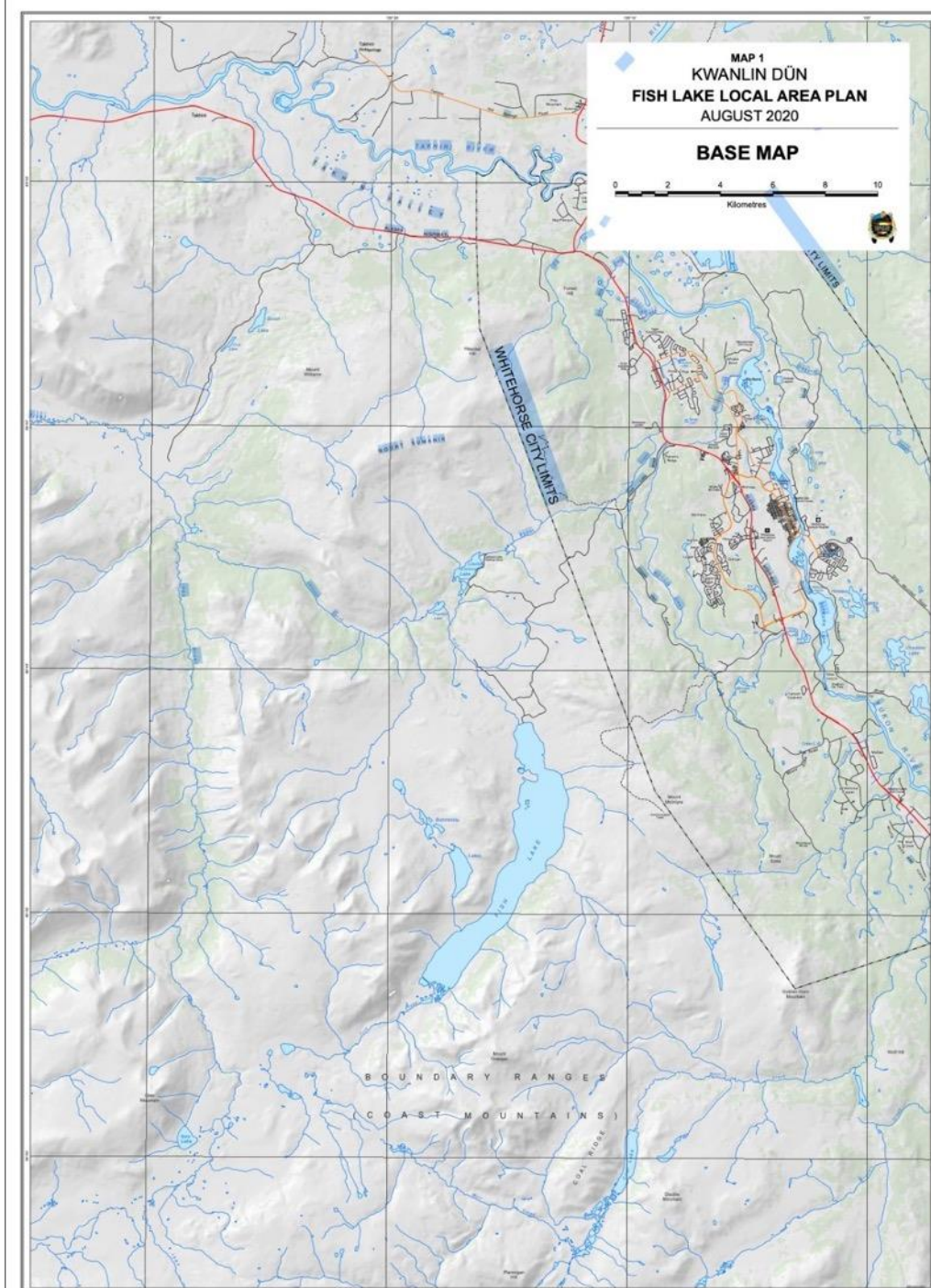


Figure 5: Map of Łu Zil Măn (Fish Lake) planning area © Kwanlin Dūn First Nation, 2021. Used with permission.

millennia. Ruth Gotthardt's work on the traditional use of Łu Zil Män illustrates the importance of the area for the harvest of berries, bear root, balsam (known locally as such but more widely recognized as alpine fir) bark, spruce pitch, willow, and labrador tea by TKC and KDFN families (2020, 9-10). Recent archeological research also indicates that Indigenous ties to the area date back at least 8000 years (Gotthardt 2020, 19-28). Today, the area continues to be used by Indigenous peoples. As Elder Smith notes "it's a very popular place for our traditional medicine" (Elder's Meeting 2021a). The area is a favorite for non-Indigenous residents of Whitehorse as well. Its location, as a vast expanse of wilderness less than 25 minutes away from the city's downtown core, have made it a desirable site for harvesters, tourism operators and recreational users. In recent years, however, its popularity has led to several conflicts and concerns between Indigenous and non-Indigenous users. The two-year accelerated time frame of the LAP project is in fact due to the frustration expressed by KDFN citizens in the lack of planning in the area and the level of environmental degradation that has taken place. As Elder McKay explains:

I can tell you, any family can tell you: the changes that have taken place are catastrophic! It's shocking. That area is used for healing, to get away from home, and out of town for everyone...if you overuse it, it's going to be ruined, and you can't replace it. (Elder's Meeting 2021a)

The responsibility for managing these issues falls largely to both KDFN and YG. Each of these factors made Łu Zil Män an excellent environment for our investigation of wild plant foraging and its potential incorporation into co-management plans.

1.3 Situating the Self in Research

My name is Kelly Panchyshyn, and I live, research, and harvest on the Traditional Territories of TKC and KDFN, in an area recognized as Kwanlin, but perhaps more widely known as Whitehorse, Yukon (as I have described above). To the Indigenous Peoples of the area, I am known as Guch'an, signaling that I am a Settler in the region. My own ancestry is primarily a mix of Eastern and Western European, however, I have what I describe as 'displaced Cree ancestry' through adoption on my paternal side. Although, I must note that my connection

to this part of my family lineage is tenuous. I use the term 'displaced' to signal at the ways adoption has severed my family's knowledge of and access to the people and places we have ancestral ties to. I recognize this part of my heritage to honour the family members who passed it along to me and to resist the forces that have sought to erase their presence as Indigenous people.

Unraveling one's intimate personal identity and family history in a professional academic space is uncomfortable for me, so much so that I wrote this section last. At times, I was tempted to identify as a Settler-scholar, rather than open my confusing positionality up for critique. I am also wary of the ways colonial powers have used my presence within their institutions to 'check a box', imagined or real, of superficial obligation to Indigenous Peoples. Over the years, I have become increasingly aware of how my perceived subjecthood, as a non-threatening middle-class White woman with Indigenous heritage, has been used to justify a lack of meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous ways of knowing. However, acknowledging one's background is key to conducting critically aware research. And so, I made my best attempt to string together the words that might capture my positionality for others.

Let me be clear: I do not set out to represent Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous ways of knowing here. Instead, I seek to acknowledge that as a researcher and harvester, working on lands I am not Indigenous to, I have a responsibility to confront the colonial dynamics of power embedded within the systems of knowledge production and land management in which I participate. As part of that responsibility, I must continually untangle the ways my own research perspectives and land relations are both limited and informed by the complexity of my being. I must engage in academic bushwhacking until I find or invent tools that help me to articulate a research standpoint inclusive of all aspects of myself (Absolon 2011, 111-12). In traversing a new path, I must recognize my own experiences as a valid site of theorizing while remaining responsive to theorizing already done by others in my field. It also requires a willingness to diverge from existing models of being, while welcoming critique and staying accountable to my

research partners and fellow scholars. As someone who is not Indigenous to the Whitehorse region, but whose relations of being are interwoven with the communities of plants and people living there, I must also take up this work as part of learning to become a good relative (Wall Kimmerer 2013, 205-15). This project has given me a chance to embark on that journey and to enact my responsibility to the lands I inhabit and to the Indigenous Peoples who have been stewards within them for centuries.

While it is still difficult to find the right words, one metaphor that perhaps best reflects who I am, relative to my research, is that of the Ukrainian floral crown, known as a vinok (see Figure 6 & 7). In April of 2021, I returned home to Whitehorse to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. At the same time, I began to weave a vinok in preparation for my defense, using only northern forest materials. There are no hard or fast rules around when a vinok can be weaved or worn, but it is often donned to mark important moments in the wearer's life. Knowing I would be returning to Kelowna for my defense, I wanted something to have with me that reminded me of home and the important relationships between plants and people that my work set out to highlight. However, when I began gathering materials, it became clear that the vinok would serve a much greater purpose.

In the vinok, I see how my process of gathering and weaving knowledges and experiences together creates a research pathway for myself. As the name suggests, the crown is normally constructed using flowers, but April in the Yukon has little to offer in this department. So, I improvised. To begin, I gathered what I could from my winter stores, while collecting the rest from what stood out against the receding snowpack. In this way, the vinok embodies my situatedness within Ukrainian Canadian and northern contexts but also captures the challenges inherent in such a pairing. The components of the finished vinok included plants like red willow, sweetgrass, and soap berry trimmings. My knowledge of each plant, along with the ethical harvesting techniques used in its collection, were introduced to me through the generosity of TKC and KDFN knowledge holders, along with several non-Indigenous northerners. To build my

vinok, I needed to draw on the intellectual traditions of my Ukrainian ancestry, along with that of local experts. In this way the vinok, like my research, was made possible through community knowledge networks. Similarly, both my vinok and my research would not have materialized without the land and those who have taken care of it.



Figure 6: Vinok woven from bedstraw, willow, sweet grass, purple reedgrass, rough fescue, and soapberry bush © K. Panchyshyn, 2021.

The vinok can also symbolize the entanglement of my Ukrainian settlement on the Indigenous lands I now live on and harvest from, an entanglement that privileges the first over the latter. It is through harvest, however, that I have also sought to sow some connection to my family's 'displaced' Indigenous ties. Though only three letters separate 'displaced' from 'placed' the distance feels insurmountable at times. I have tried several approaches to navigate this gap, but most have eventually felt awkward or disingenuous in some way. Yet, I feel at home in the

practice of foraging for wild foods and medicines. When I harvest, the persistent ache of longing and uncertainty subsides temporarily. This is perhaps because the practice itself fulfills multiple aspects of my being simultaneously. When I harvest, I feel a closeness to my Ukrainian relatives both living and deceased, to my northern family and friends, and to something else I can't quite describe. With this, the space left between the folded willow and braided grass become an expression of the work that remains to be done in unpacking my relationality. These gaps can also represent room for growth and an acknowledgment of the epistemological connections I have yet to revive, reclaim or reimagine. In this way, the vinok makes room for individuals like me, who are working to take their place within decolonial movements. Finally, above all else, the physicality of my vinok gives life to the aspects of my being that I am not yet able to articulate in written or spoken word.

While I am committed to critically engaging with my standpoint and the way it shapes my research, the process is far from flawless. As Kathleen Absolon points out, any research that involves decolonization “is arduous work and full of contradiction” (2011, 19). There is no denying the Eurocentric and heteropatriarchal Western discourses that “presuppose our existence as scholars within academia”; yet, acknowledging this fact does not strip my research of value (Morten-Robinson 2013, 339). Such an acknowledgment simply highlights the complex and rigorous nature of the work I must take on as a researcher situated within decolonizing and anti-oppressive frameworks. In fact, I believe it is this complexity and rigor that make the work worth doing. In the next section, I will begin to dive into this endeavor by situating my project within the existing research on northern plant harvest.



Figure 7: Kelly Panchyshyn wearing her vinok © K. Panchyshyn, 2021.

1.4 Literature Review

My research draws on a growing body of scholarship dedicated to the contemporary relationship between northern peoples and wild plants. Scholars working within this field do not hesitate to address the historical underrepresentation of wild plant harvest within research involving northern foodways. In their article “Berry Plants and Berry Picking in Inuit Nunangat: Traditions in a Changing Socio-Ecological Landscape”, authors Boulanger-Lapointe et al. explain that historical accounts of arctic and sub-arctic life often promoted the colonial assumption that “plants are only important for societies involved in agriculture” while dismissing the significance of Indigenous wild plant harvest (2019, 81-82). Similarly, Brenda Parlee notes that early ethnographic research on Gwich’in people presupposed berries and other plant-based foods played a very minor role in traditional diets, and thus Gwich’in foraging practices received little academic attention (2006, 65). Despite the historical dismissal of plant harvest, there is much to be gained from the study of it today.

Current research highlights the tremendous value attached to human-plant relations in the north. For instance, Boulanger-Lapointe et al. assert that berry picking continues to be a fundamental contributor to Inuit health, culture, and community (2009, 86-89). Comparably, Parlee’s works identified berries as a key source of food and medicine for the Gwich’in, past and present. She also highlights the ability for harvest to advance individual and collective well-being, social connectivity, cultural continuity, socio-ecological stewardship, self-government, and spirituality (2006, 65-80). Building on the work of Parlee, Janelle Marie Baker notes that the networks of gathering and distribution linked to subarctic berry practices have been key to supporting community cohesion and reciprocal land relations for the Bigstone Cree and Fort McKay communities of northern Alberta (2020, 6). In illustrating the complex and multi-dimensional value of northern harvest practices, Boulanger-Lapointe et al., Parlee and Baker highlight the potential for strengthening the prosperity of northern communities. As I will discuss in Chapter Three & Five, my work with the Whitehorse harvest community also highlights this

potential. In these chapters, I explore how the practice contributes to the holistic health and wellbeing of harvester and their families. I will also explore how the practice can promote community partnerships and advance environmental projects.

A great deal of the literature on northern plant harvest also draws attention to the changing economies and environments that threaten wild harvest. In their article “The Impacts of Climate and Social Changes on Cloudberry (Bakeapple) Picking: A Case Study from Southeastern Labrador,” Anderson et al. highlight how climate change has disrupted the temporal and spatial distribution of ripening Cloudberry (2018). This has subsequently increased the financial cost and time required of NunatuKavut harvesters. To make things worse, changing weather patterns and the rigid work schedules associated with the local wage economy have narrowed opportunities for harvesters. Taken together these factors have reduced the amount of harvest brought in and restricted the social benefits of harvest by making it harder for families to forage together (Anderson et al. 2018, 857). Parlee also argues that while wild plant resources may appear abundant, the increases in dramatic weather events have harvesters concerned about scarcity and ecological uncertainty (2006; 76, 125, 138). Multiple scholars also note that the productivity of berry patches across Yukon and Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Labrador, are being restricted by encroaching tree and shrub growth (Parlee et al. 2005; Guyot et al. 2006; Cuerrier et al. 2015 qtd. in Anderson et al. 2018, 889; Boulanger-Lapointe et al. 2019, 90; Parlee 2006, 123). Climate change and ecological variability, however, do not appear to be the only threats to wild plant harvest.

For example, Baker describes how harvesters with the Bigstone Cree and Fort McKay communities are “feeling the strain of having to travel the long distances required to harvest berries” due to development and contamination (2020, 12). Expanding on this, she notes that even “when berries grow near Fort McKay, people do not want to harvest them due to pollution, and so they travel farther and farther away in order to find berries and other medicines they can trust” (2020, 12). Consequently, local knowledge holders fear neglected, or disrespected, berry

patches will disappear altogether (2020, 12). Baker also points out how “many people lack the funds for fuel and/or access to the necessary vehicles and float planes to travel to ‘clean’ areas” and are thus “increasingly being severed from a culturally and nutritionally essential food supply” (2020, 12). Supporting Baker’s observations, Boulanger-Lapointe et al. explain that the cumulative effects of development and pollution have reduced Inuit access to quality berry patches (2019, 89-90). While existing research has consistently documented the importance of plant harvest to northern communities, along with the substantial threat it faces, very little research has been conducted in the Whitehorse area on this subject. My work addresses this gap by examining the role harvest plays in the lives of Whitehorse residents and by investigating the possible cascade of environmental and social barriers faced by those foraging in the area.

Research on wild plant harvest in the north also emphasizes the need for greater consideration for the practice within community governance projects. Unfortunately, as noted in my introduction, harvest patches are not often given adequate attention in impact assessment and land-use planning, placing them at risk for further decline (Boulanger-Lapointe et al. 2020, 90; Panchyshyn 2020). On this matter, Kimberley Anne Maher suggests that the lack of consideration for harvest has the potential to cause greater problems down the road. In a study on the foraging activities of interior Alaska, Maher points out that as energy costs rise in the north, the distance that harvesters are willing to travel shrinks, thus increasing the concentration of harvesting activities around large northern city centers (2013, 27). She insists that without coordinated management measures such an influx will increase the risk of overharvest and the chance for conflict between harvesters, other forest resource users and development projects (Maher 2013, 54-55). Both Boulanger-Lapointe et al. and Maher advocate for the inclusion of harvest in planning by pointing out that easy access to berry harvest provides residents with a low cost, low impact, land-based activity that offers a valuable source of nutrition and cultural sustenance for a broad cross-section of the northern residents (2019, 90-91; 2013, 52). Parlee also discusses the tremendous knowledge that harvesters typically acquire about ecological

uncertainty and resiliency through their practice and highlights how many use this knowledge to conduct their own land stewardship initiatives (2006, 136-138). Her work thus highlights the vital knowledge harvesters have to offer to socially and environmentally sustainable planning. I draw on the work of these authors as I explore the contributions harvesters have to offer to the Łu Zil Män LAP and potential strategies for their involvement in Chapter Four.

It is worth noting that much of the research conducted to date has focused on the foraging foodways of those Indigenous to the region of study. This work has been crucial in centering the traditional and contemporary harvest relations of northern Indigenous Peoples. It has also helped to illuminate how Settler scholars, governments and corporations have neglected, misrepresented or violently disrupted Indigenous food systems by denying both the knowledges and rights connected to plant harvest. While I believe this is essential work, I also think it is necessary to address the unique social, political, and cultural contexts of blended northern communities like Whitehorse by including people from other Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups in the study. The decision to include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in the study was made by the research team and I and has allowed us to better explore governance solutions that incorporate both shared interests and engage unresolved tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters. Working with a participant group that includes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the Whitehorse community, has also enabled us to develop recommendation that KDFN can pursue in collaboration with local municipal and territorial governments. In seeking these collaborations, we work towards the aim of reducing conflict and advancing social and ecological cohesion in and around Łu Zil Män.

In this Chapter, I have introduced my partnership with KDFN, outlined the motivations behind “Collaborative and Creative Land Planning in Canada’s North”, established the project’s research questions, and offered background information on my position as a researcher. I have also conducted a review of the latest academic literature about northern plant harvest. In the following Chapter, I will describe the theoretical framework, methodologies and methods

grounding this work, along with the ethics and approaches used in interpreting the information gathered by the project. In Chapter Three, I offer a detailed summary of the project findings. Building on these findings in Chapter Four, I analyze the systemic dynamics at play in the challenges faced by harvesters. In Chapter Five, I highlight why and how harvest can be included in northern land planning projects like the Łu Zil Măn LAP. As part of this discussion, I list the strategies for supporting harvest spaces and practices that were developed by our research team members and participants. I will follow this by evaluating the project's limitations and strengths and offer my concluding thoughts.

Chapter 2: Theory, Methodology & Method

In this chapter, I first describe my Indigenous Feminist research framework in Section 2.1 to give the reader an idea of the theoretical thinking behind my work. I follow this with a description of the participatory methodology used in designing the “Collaborative & Creative Food Planning in Canada’s North” project in Section 2.2. After this, I walk through the methods used to gather the knowledge and experience of project participants in Section 2.3. In Section 2.4 I discuss participant selection, and use 2.5 to outline my research ethics. Finally, in Section 2.6, I discuss my approach to analysing the information collected by the project.

2.1 An Indigenous Feminist Theoretical Framework

Through the writing of Margaret Kovach, I have come to understand a theoretical framework as a tool for illustrating “‘the thinking’ behind ‘the doing’” (2009, 39). My actions as a researcher, then, are greatly informed by the thinking of Indigenous Feminists. As a body of theory, Indigenous Feminism interrogates the power relations experienced by Indigenous communities, paying special mind to the gendered nature of Settler-colonialism (Green 2017, 16; Arvin et al. 2013, 9). Research guided by Indigenous Feminism seeks to motivate “theoretically informed, politically self-conscious activism” that centers Indigenous womxn and works towards a decolonized future (Green 2017, 16-17). My project takes on this work by analyzing the overlapping colonial and patriarchal modes of domination informing northern land planning. This analysis helps to identify several of the systemic factors contributing to the lack of consideration given to harvest (see Section 2.1). I then use Indigenous Feminism to guide both the implementation of my research and aid in the development of community-led solutions for harvest protections (see Section 2.2).

2.1.1 Using Indigenous Feminism to Assess the Issue

To tackle the issue of wld harvest exclusion, our project must engage with the ideologies and agendas informing who and what is assigned value within northern land planning.

Indigenous Feminist frameworks foster an awareness of the entangled nature of colonization, heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism and how these factors contribute to the exclusion of wld harvest. Heteropatriarchy is an ideology that naturalizes heterosexuality and patriarchy as a 'normal' and 'advantageous' means of grouping individuals and families (Arvin et al. 2013, 13). By extension, heteropaternalism views heteropatriarchal and nuclear domestic arrangements as an ideal model for broader structures of society and state (2013, 13). Both lean heavily on "very narrow definitions of the male/female binary, in which the male gender is perceived as strong, capable, wise, and composed" while "the female gender is perceived as weak, incompetent, naïve, and confused" (2013, 13). In essence, both are logics that naturalize social hierarchies, justifying unequal power distribution and domination, not just along lines of gender, sex, and sexuality, but of race, ability and human or non-human status (TallBear 2015, 232-34; TallBear 2019). Consequently, it is through the imposition or amplification of strict family arrangements and gender roles that Settler nations have historically disrupted Indigenous methods of governance and restricted existing claims to land (Arvin et al. 2013, 15).

Today, the heteropatriarchal and paternalistic logics of Settler colonialism persist in the north through the underrepresentation of Indigenous womxn (along with other northern womxn) in research and planning around land (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 110 -11). The most obvious manifestation of this logic is perhaps witnessed in the representational make-up of planning boards. A survey of 40+ northern co-management boards (each responsible for bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities together to manage renewable resources, development, and land-use planning) revealed that only 34 of their 210 board members identified as womxn (Staples & Natcher 2015, 140). The organizers of this study, point out that between the three territories, womxn in Yukon had the highest level of involvement on co-

management boards, make-up 18% of board membership (2015, 140). Research conducted by Brenda Parlee and Kristine Wray suggests that this disparity is even more glaring for Indigenous womxn. Of the six boards they surveyed, only one of the 44 board positions was occupied by an Indigenous womxn (2016, 184).

Indigenous Feminists have consistently highlighted how the marginalization of Indigenous womxn (and other northern womxn) effect land-use priorities. As Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez discuss, research and action on land-use has focused predominantly on “male-dominated activities, and as a result we have relatively scant understanding of the role that women play in the gathering and processing of resources” (2016, 12). They argue that this disregard reflects the “systems of domination that shape women’s interactions with the land, environment, community, and knowledge production,” adding that “these systems have rendered Indigenous women’s knowledge invisible and politically marginal” in discussions on food planning and resource management (2016, 5). Altamirano-Jiménez research with the Inuit reveals that “women’s involvement [in planning] is often limited because they are not considered knowers” and planning “usually focus on the spaces used by men to hunt and fish without considering the extent to which women have been involved in making these activities a success” (2013, 110). Similarly, Zoe Todd stresses that northern and Indigenous “women’s involvement in hunting and fishing together with the knowledge that women shape, mobilize, and share through these and related activities is an integral part of the food security equation”; yet the value of their subsistence labour and knowledge is not recognized by formal planning initiatives (2016, 196). However, as Staples and Natcher stress, even when they gain “a place at the table” Indigenous and non-Indigenous womxn are not always guaranteed “a voice at the table”, meaning that their perspectives are not always included in board operations (2015, 148-152,150).

Reflected in this exclusion is the heteropatriarchal assumption that through their interactions with the land men provide for households and communities through activities like

hunting or mining, and, thus, their use of the land is the most valuable. This assumption then serves to justify the heteropaternal belief that through their roles as providers men hold expertise and authority over land and community and are the most eligible decision makers or knowledge holders. While such ideologies dictate whose bodies and knowledges are included in research and decision making around land, they also influence which uses of land are considered worthy of attention. When activities like the trapping of small animals or plant foraging are deemed feminine or fail to serve prescribed gender roles (by disrupting the notion of 'male as provider') they are left out of land planning on the reasoning that they cannot or do not contribute adequately to the cultural, economic, and physical 'development' of the community (Staples & Natcher 2015, 147-148).⁴ An Indigenous Feminist framework thus positions the lack of consideration for harvest as a symptom of larger systems of colonial and patriarchal influence.

Planning that does not consider wild plant activities subsequently threatens to displace those who practice it from the land and their rights to it. In this way, heteropatriarchal and heteropaternal systems of land management serve the agendas of Settler nations by centralizing power over land and limiting the diverse claims that Indigenous communities have to the land. While not all land planning projects set out to replicate colonial expressions of

⁴ Participant and Research Team member, Rae Mombourquette often spoke on how the fishing, hunting, and trapping of small animals (like ptarmigan, grouse, hare, grayling, trout, marmot, fowl, muskrat, beaver, and porcupine) have been excluded from the planning process as well. Her own historical work with KDFN Elders suggests that this sort of activity constituted a primary food source while the harvest of larger animals (like moose, caribou, bear and sheep) took place more sporadically and only gained in popularity after the Settler introduction of riffles, trains, motorized boats and cars, and the rise of commercial markets around large hide, fur and meat during the Klondike era. Mombourquette has witnessed Elders of all genders raise small animal harvest as a priority, only to be dismissed. She explains that the Western emphasis on large animal management in land-use has set the tone of Indigenous Research in the region, noting that interviews and transcript records have been skewed away from discussions around 'every-day life' to emphasize the harvest of large animals (personal communication, email, July 2, 2021). The harvest of small animals was carried out by all members of the family, regardless of age and gender, and thus, challenges colonial narratives of the male head of house as sole hunter and thus sole provider (to be discussed further in Section 4.1). Its role in everyday subsistence also resists the capitalist push towards commodification and resource accumulation (to be discussed further in Section 4.1). Both of these threats to colonial heteropatriarchy are damped by the practices exclusion from planning and historical record.

patriarchy, the pervasive exclusion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous womxn does little to disrupt these systems, and thus risks contributing to the continued exploitation of Indigenous lands and communities. In taking up an Indigenous Feminist framework, I have sought to confront this exploitation, and the oppressive logics behind it, by highlighting the voices of Indigenous womxn in my research.

2.1.2 Using Indigenous Feminism to Inform Action

Recognizing Indigenous womxn's ontology and epistemology is integral to decolonizing research and activism around issues of land (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez 2016, 4). As noted above, heteropatriarchal assumptions around northern land-use have contributed to a lack of research involving Indigenous womxn on the subject. This exclusion bolsters colonial attempts to disempower Indigenous people through the erasure of knowledge that does not reinforce the legitimacy of Western dominance (Battiste 2016; Moreton-Robinson 2015, 131; Smith 2012). I have chosen to counter this erasure by foregrounding "Indigenous women's ways of being and belonging" in my research as participants and as members of the research team (Moreton-Robinson & Walter 2009, 5). Doing so makes visible their role "as active producers of knowledge [who] participate in complex socio-environmental community processes" (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez 2016, 4). Further, it is a direct acknowledgement of their presence on the land, along with the rights and responsibilities they have to its governance.

In taking up an Indigenous Feminist framework, I also seek to counter the heteropaternal belief that Indigenous womxn are inconsequential to the planning process. The exclusion of harvest and the exclusion of Indigenous womxn are inextricably linked by the forces of colonization and patriarchy that have deemed them irrelevant or sought to dampen the threat they pose to Western interests. Therefore, there is no way of shifting what is valued within the planning process without first shifting who is valued. This project seeks to do exactly that by centering Indigenous womxn within community-led interventions on plant harvest exclusion. My

project also aims to take up the work of Indigenous Feminism by exploring solutions that do not rely on the dominance or permanence of a colonial nation-state. Instead, this research aims to explore models of governance based in relationality and mutual responsibility over those that privilege colonial and patriarchal notions of ownership and control (Arvin et al. 2013, 16-17; Coulthard 2014, 78; Dhamoon 2015, 27). I also aim to make space for solutions that encourage community-led grassroots stewardship, and do not depend purely on top-down state-centric models of governance. Envisioning alternatives to these systems, however small, constitutes a critical step on the path towards a decolonized future.

Studying Indigenous womxn's relationship to land, community, and knowledge production, along with the marginalization of their presence within such realms, has the potential to confront more than just colonization and heteropatriarchy. Within the context of colonization, gender cannot be separated from other avenues of oppression (Dhamoon 2015, 30). Indigenous Feminist analysis critiques White supremacy, capitalism, imperialism and their reciprocal links to both colonization and patriarchy. The aim of this work, then, is not to 'save' Indigenous womxn from the oppression they face, but rather to draw on their experience, knowledge, and leadership in resisting the systems of domination listed above. Indeed, the experiences and intellectual contributions of Indigenous womxn are not mere add-ons to the work of Whiteman feminism, but "an invisible presence in the center, hidden by the gendered logics of settler colonialism for over 500 years" (Arvin et al. 2013, 14). In this way, Indigenous womxn have been pushing back against oppression "within and beyond their own communities' boundaries" for as long as there has been a need to do so (15). In re-centering Indigenous feminism and the voices of Indigenous womxn, my research works to dismantle oppression on multiple fronts.

Although the exclusion of harvest from land planning cannot be separated from the exclusion of Indigenous womxn, they are not the only ones impacted by this issue. As mentioned earlier, wild harvest is popular among non-Indigenous residents. Similarly, non-

Indigenous womxn are frequently left out of land planning. While these womxn possess Settler privilege, they are not entirely shielded from the harms of capitalist and patriarchal conceptions of wealth and land. Thus, while the project highlights voices of Indigenous womxn, the research team and I have included harvesters of all backgrounds in the study. As it stands, Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters share many of the same patches (both on and off Settlement Lands). The decision to bring both groups into this project was done to 1) develop a holistic understanding of the practice and 2) to study both the tensions and opportunities that emerge from this shared interest. Bringing the groups together also encouraged the formation of solutions that emphasized the joint responsibilities of Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens and governments. An Indigenous Feminist standpoint approach has been useful in navigating this process.

An Indigenous Feminist standpoint approach requires acknowledging the ways in which broader relations “of privilege and penalty” are at play in my research (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez 2016, 4). With this, I critically examine how I, as researcher and a harvester, reinforce, reflect, or challenge interlocking power dynamics through my “individual and collective interactions” with and between participants, community partners and the land (Starblanket 2017, 37). As a researcher working out of a Western institution, in a region I am not Indigenous to, there was a risk of replicating extractive research relations wherein information is collected from northern and Indigenous communities for my own benefit or for that of Settler institutions. As I am working with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, there was also a risk of having non-Indigenous voices dominate the discussion or draw attention away from Indigenous womxn. However, through standpoint theory “our everyday relationships are our primary state of political action” and thus the relationships I formed and facilitated through my research have become an important axis for enacting change on this front (Starblanket 2017, 37). To support relations that confront dynamics of oppression around food and land, I have sought to decolonize my interactions with KDFN and the harvest community through the redistribution of power.

For me, the redistribution of power first involved establishing a research team of KDFN staff and citizens with project oversight. When conducting research, I prioritized the perspectives and solutions brought forward by Indigenous womxn, intervened in moments when group discussions were dominated by non-Indigenous voices or the voices of our male KDFN staff, and offered Indigenous participants the chance to talk to me without the presence of non-Indigenous people or men. When possible, I also invited non-Indigenous participants to reflect on the way their Settler privilege influenced their practice of harvest, or their role in the study. In my writing process, I took special care to ensure Indigenous participants were cited evenly throughout my work and just as often (or more often) than non-Indigenous participants. I also ensured that all participants had final say over the way their knowledge and experience was represented in project materials. While I discuss this process further in Section 2.3 on methodology, these steps are part of an Indigenous Feminist ethic of ‘standing with’ community over ‘giving back’.

As Kim TallBear explains, the notion of giving back through research depends on a “boundary erected long ago between those who know versus those from whom the raw materials of knowledge production are extracted”—one that must be softened if we are to embrace “the research process as a relationship-building process” (2014). TallBear goes on to add that a “researcher who is willing to learn how to ‘stand with’ a community” is “willing to be altered, to revise her stakes in the knowledge to be produced” (2014). By standing with community, I see my interactions with them as an “opportunity for conversation and sharing of knowledge, not simply data gathering” (2014). With this, I continually allow my relationships to take precedence over the research outputs. Such a process requires humility, accountability, and a commitment to relationship-building that both precedes and extends beyond the project timeline. In my case, the relationship building process began prior to my entry into graduate school and will continue after I defend my thesis. By this I mean, I have made myself available to participants and community partners after the formal conclusion of the project and will

continue to work with KDFN on the inclusion of harvest in the Łu Zil Măn LAP. I recognize that this kind of commitment to relationship building is not available to all students working within the standard Master's timeline and I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to take it on. As a community-based researcher, it is this practice of building relationships towards change that helps me to link the theory and practice of Indigenous Feminism. It is this link that I explore in the following section, where I connect the project's theoretical framework with its participatory methodology.

2.2 Participatory Action Methodology

My exploration of wild plant harvest is guided by Participatory Action Research (PAR). As a community-based research methodology, PAR seeks to engage community partners as co-investigators (Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 51). In the context of this project, my co-investigators are the staff and citizens of KDFN. By engaging in community-based methods for research, as mentioned above, this project seeks to center Indigenous involvement in local food and land planning efforts and move away from the notion that knowledge production is the sole domain of academic researchers or colonial authorities (Caine & Mill 2016, 124-125; Smith 2012, 117-121). As a type of action research, PAR also has the researcher work with co-investigators to design and implement the project around the goal of transformative change. This project is focused on creating change around land management through both practical and critical approaches to action research. By this, I mean that it seeks to 1) enhance existing structures, while 2) challenging overarching power dynamics (Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 53-58). Ultimately, our goal is to generate research that will support the inclusion of foragers in present-day planning initiatives like the Łu Zil Măn LAP, while also highlighting new ways of conducting conflict resolution and land planning.

I have chosen this approach because it aligns with the principles of feminist and decolonizing research in four key ways: 1) it shares in the aim of motivating structural change by

uncovering the systems of power and oppression contributing to the problem at hand (Green 2017, 7-12; Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 49; Kovach 2010, 80-83); 2) it makes space for voices typically left out of research and decision making (Frisby, Maguire & Reid 2009, 24-25; Green 2017, 7-9); 3) it draws on relationship building as a guiding ethic, under which great care is taken to ensure the research does not exploit those involved (Kovach 2010, 32-38; Smith 2012, 142-145; Stringer qtd. Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 52; TallBear 2014); and 4) finally, it acknowledges the relationality of knowledge production (Caine & Mill 2016, 96; Kovach 2010, 33-34, 47; Morten-Robinson & Walter 2009). I would like to acknowledge however, that the use of PAR is never a guarantee against problematic research.

Despite its efforts to challenge patriarchal and Eurocentric approaches to knowledge production, PAR is not entirely free of these systems. As a UBC researcher, I am still accountable to institutional and structural systems that grant power to an authority external to the community. Similarly, time and resource limitations often placed on community-based graduate projects can easily lead to “flash-bang” partnerships that replicate extractive dynamics between Indigenous communities and Western institutions (Wiebe et al. 2016, 131). Indigenous scholars have also been quick to point PAR projects have a habit of framing Indigenous partners as “trusted informants, confidants, and advisors” rather than “holders and authors of knowledge” (Riddell et al. 2017, 5). Unlike Indigenous methodologies, PAR is also not rooted in Indigenous protocols. I took each of these critiques to heart when considering the project’s design. Ultimately, we choose PAR because, while KDFN hopes to one day establish an official KDFN-centric Indigenous research approach, they have not yet had the chance to do so. Given the time constraints of the LAP and of graduate school, we had to find a tool that offered us a flexible starting point. PAR allowed us to engage our participants and their knowledges in the absence of an Indigenous-specific methodology, and to adapt our approach as needed.

2.2.1 Project Design

As explained above, the aim and structure of this research was jointly developed by myself and the members of my community research team. The team first began with John Meikle and Roy Neilson, Planners with the KDFN Lands, Heritage and Resources Department. As the project moved forward, we were able to recruit KDFN Elders Judy Anderson, Margaret McKay, and Dianne Smith along with KDFN citizen and project participant Rae Mombourquette. Our work together was supported by the creation of a community research agreement that set out project goals, ethical guidelines, and shared responsibilities (see Appendix B). In alignment with community-based methodologies we agreed to use a spiral cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to adapt our approach as the project unfolded (Kuhne & Quigley qtd. Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 51).

In prioritizing flexibility, we also sought to embrace a model of change-making promoted by local Indigenous leader, Chief Mark Wedge, from the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Chief Wedge was a mentor for those of us in the Jane Glassco Fellowship program. During one of our gatherings, he explained how:

Western society tends to focus on solving problems. There are advantages to this approach, and policy generally follows Western philosophy. Indigenous Peoples, however, are opportunists. We had to be – we might go out into the bush to set a net and notice fresh moose tracks. Seizing the opportunity to follow those moose tracks is a matter of survival for us. (qtd. Dragon-Smith 2020, 3)

An emphasis on seizing opportunity also mirrored the mindset of harvesters taking part in the study. As one participant noted, “I have just learned to keep a zip lock bag in my backpack and then if we come across a really good patch, we can stop and take some time to pick those berries” (Taylor 2020a). Like our participants, we sought to make the most of what was available to us. This meant keeping an eye out for the practical and immediate avenues of change available to us. So, while the critical frames informing the project sought to disrupt overarching structures of injustice around land, gender, governance in the long term, our opportunistic lens allowed us to adopt an appreciative approach in the short-term. Appreciative

inquiry is all about asking what already works and what resources are already available. Like an opportunistic approach, it does not focus on diagnosing problems, and instead seeks to enhance those systems that already serve the community well (Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 55-56).

2.3 Methods

In line with community-based research practices, I worked with members of the research team to approve our modes of participant recruitment, data collection and analysis. As we were conducting this research during the COVID-19 pandemic, within northern, Indigenous, and land-based contexts, the team felt our methods should be both diverse and responsive to shifting opportunities and barriers. We initially determined that the methods best suited for this task were: semi-structured interviews, observations, focus groups, participatory mapping, and archival research. Having multiple modes of data collection at our disposal allowed us to continue our research even when revised COVID-19 restrictions limited our ability to meet in-person. For example, while we could not meet all our participants for on-the-land observations, we were still able to get a sense of their land relations through our zoom mapping sessions. As the study progressed, our ability to draw on different data sources also provided us with the chance to explore harvest from a variety of perspectives, capturing a diverse array of spatial, social, and cultural relations attached to the practice of harvest. Ultimately, the use of multiple data collection methods and multiple data sources also allowed us to weave data triangulation into our research process, a practice that strengthens the quality and validity of our findings (Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 245). What follows is a more detailed description of each approach that flowed from our collaborations.

2.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Within semi-structured interviews, the researcher works with participants to explore a foundational set of questions, allowing the discussion to unfold in a flexible, conversational manner (Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 110-11). To adopt this approach, I first established a core set of

questions with the research team prior to the interviews taking place. Each question was aimed at understanding the participant's harvest practice within the Łu Zil Män, with topics ranging from what, where and how they harvested to why the practice is important to them (see Appendix C). However, the semi-structured format allowed me to adapt questions around participant responses, seeking clarification where needed or following related topic threads as they emerged. Ultimately, the research team and I chose this method because it provided an effective balance between structure and flexibility by generating a shared dataset to compare and contrast while still granting participants and I the ability to shape our conversations around their specific interests.

In total, I conducted an interview with each of the nine participants, each lasting 45 minutes to 1hr 30min. After one interview, I had a great deal of follow-up questions. When I shared these questions with the participant in an email, they agreed to do a second interview, where we dove into my questions and explored thoughts that had come up for them after our first discussion. All but two of the interviews took place over the phone or zoom. In-person interviews took place outside, where both participants and I adhered to a strict COVID-19 safety protocol (see Appendix D).

2.3.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups require the researcher to gather individuals with knowledge or experience on the research topic at hand for a group-style interview (Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 114). The research team and I felt this would be an excellent way to share our work with participants, while also bringing people of differing backgrounds together to discuss a topic of shared interest. As part of the study, I hosted two focus group sessions over zoom, each taking two hours, involving members of the research team and a total of four participants overall, all of whom had previously taken part in one-on-one interviews.

These focus groups were designed as a form of collective member checks (Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 114). Towards this aim, I used each session to share preliminary findings, and then had participants confirm, enrich, or challenge these findings by asking questions like: does this reflect your experience or understanding of the topic at hand? Is there anything you find interesting or confusing? Is there anything you would like to discuss further? Anything you would like to highlight or expand on? Is there anything missing or misrepresented? As noted above, members of the research team were also able to join both focus groups, and helped to support discussion, share their perspectives, and answer questions from the group.

The focus groups became an excellent way to address lingering questions or dive into gaps within the data. The team and I also used them as an opportunity to spark dialogue between KDFN and non-KDFN citizens on possible recommendations. By fostering interactions both between participants, and between participants and members of the research team, the focus groups generated data not found in one-on-one interviews (Hennink qtd. Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 114). Data generated from group interactions was useful in considering how to develop harvest solutions that promoted harmonious relationships between planners and harvesters, Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the harvest community, and between harvesters and Łu Zil Män. It also helped to identify potential options for improving relationships between harvesters and other land users, such as hunters, motorists, mountain bikers, and tourism operators.

2.3.3 Relational Mapping

It is important to note that the aim of this project is not to document the location of harvest resources, but to map the community's relationship to harvest, to generate a more in-depth picture of its role in shaping local food dynamics. This involves shifting our focus from food systems to foodways. Unlike food systems, foodways reflect the intersections of food and identity and thus are "fluid and subject to patterns of historical and social change" (Watson

2007, 134). Framing Whitehorse's wild plant harvest practices through the lens of foodways resists the tendency to position modern Indigenous harvest practices in opposition to an "authentic and untouchable Indigenous past" by focusing instead on the delicate negotiation that exist between "traditional subsistence activities and contemporary realities" (Todd 2016, 197). Acknowledging this negotiation within our mapping efforts also allows us to think about space as a site for the "meeting-up of histories" (Massey qtd. Goeman 2013, 6). By conceptualizing Łu Zil Män in this way, we have generated a more in-depth picture of the way wild plant harvest shapes and reflects the social and political dynamics around food and land between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. With this understanding, members of the research team and I worked with participants to develop solutions that promote community cohesion through more culturally relevant and socially responsible approaches to land planning. It is also important to note however, that despite our aim of avoiding static representations of land-use, the two-dimensional nature of our maps mean that the visuals produce by the project appear to emphasize connections to specific locations at specific points in time, and thus, do not reflect the seasonality or complexity of Indigenous relations to land. The team and I have done our best to make space for this nuance to come through in our interviews and on-the-land observations with participants.

Building on the geographic experience of John and Roy, we chose to use participatory mapping methods to produce a visual representation of the community's harvest relationship to Łu Zil Män. Our decision to use this approach came as part of our commitment to seize on the opportunities that emerged from our combined knowledge and skill (Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 51). In the context of this project, participatory mapping offers a creative avenue for representing diverse place-based practices, like wild harvest, in a way that is accessible to community members and decision makers (Corbett & Keller 2006, 26-27, Elwood et al. 2007, 171-72, Sanderson et al. 2007, 121). By linking community tensions to "identifiable, and subsequently manageable" areas on a map, participatory mapping initiatives can assist in

facilitating discussion around those very tensions (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2009, 11-12). This is not to say that the act of pinpointing areas of conflict guarantees a fix for systemic problems behind them. In fact, within a Settler-colonial context, where overarching histories and structures of land ownership concentrate power with Settler institutions and peoples, it is difficult to resolve conflicts simply by documenting them. However, participatory mapping at least offers a starting point for small-scale place-based conversations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous land users. This approach also helps to place community knowledge at the heart and center of our advocacy efforts (10-11).

Within an Indigenous Feminist framework, mapping can yield “profound insights about Settler-Indigenous relations and may even contribute to a shift in power toward Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups” (Altamirano-Jiménez & Parker 2016, 91). As Mishuana R. Goeman points out, mapping also offers a chance to investigate the “epistemologies that frame our understanding of land and our relationships to it and to other peoples” (2013, 3). Such an investigation can be used to better understand the processes that have come to define “our current spatialities” (3). With this understanding, we can begin to untangle the systems of power embedded in relations to the land and one and another.

2.3.3.1 Participant Mapping

During individual interviews, each participant was asked to complete a mapping exercise. The intention of the exercise was to create a visual representation of their relationship to Łu Zil Män while identifying their priorities and concerns. Towards this aim, the research team and I chose to use the participatory technique of scale mapping. This is where participants are provided with a basic map of the area, then are asked to draw directly on to it, using landmarks like lakes and roads to locate their markings. This approach is exceptionally low cost, relatively quick and easy for participants to learn, and an effective way of collecting local knowledge (IFAD 2009, 14-15).

To complete the mapping exercise, participants were provided with both a physical map of Łu Zil Män and colored markers in advance of remote interviews or at the start of in-person meetings (base map shown in Figure 5). Several participants, however, chose to conduct the mapping exercise using a digital pdf of the map and the doodle function available on most laptops, tablets and smart phones. The digital maps did not always capture as much detail as the physical maps, however, participants with digital maps often made up for this by providing a more detailed oral description of their land relations during the interview.

During the interview, participants were given prompts to help them fill out the map such as “can you indicate which trails or roads you use to access your harvest sites” or “which areas are important to you”, or “where do you experience barriers, tensions or frustration in the area”? These mapping prompts were woven into the core interview questions, found in Appendix C. As they made their marks, I was able to further customize my questions based on what they selected on the map and how they chose to represent that selection. Once complete, all participants took a photo of the map to share with me over email or text.

Once all the maps were collected, I digitally overlaid scanned copies to get a sense of overlapping priorities, then created a single hand drawn scale map and legend. During focus groups, I shared this map with participants to confirm that it reflected their shared interests and concerns. Afterwards, I shared this map with our research team, where Elders Anderson, McKay and Smith provided their knowledge on the areas marked out additional sites of importance to the KDFN community. The final map is featured in Chapter Three, Figure 13 where I walk through its significance in more detail.

2.3.3.2 Creative Mapping

As a researcher working within northern and Indigenous contexts, I wanted to provide participants the chance to express their connection to land in ways that challenged academic and Western mapping techniques. Thus, in addition to individual mapping sessions, our team

had hoped to host a creative community mapping exercise in which participants would be given the opportunity to draw out harvest sites, key pathways, problem areas and future solutions using art supplies. Such an event would have taken place in Łu Zil Män and would have involved materials like beads and dyed fish scales from Łu Zil Män trout. Participants of this event would have also been invited to collect digital photos, videos and audio recordings that captured their harvest interests, concerns, and relationships. Our team would have then worked with participants to link these materials to a specific location on the map. Sadly, COVID restrictions and the compressed timelines brought by the pandemic made an event like this a challenging task to coordinate. In an attempt to offer creative avenues for citizen-led data collection, the team decided instead to invite all participants to share any material, including artwork, photos, videos, writing, recordings, or documents that they felt best captured elements of their harvest practice.

One participant shared an article about the removal of raspberry bushes from city alleyways that they felt captured their frustrations around the lack of consideration for harvesters, along with a documentary that discussed the importance of reclaiming Indigenous foodways. In a similar vein, another participant shared a documentary they had participated in on Nacho Nyak Dun womxn and their practice of berry picking. One also took a photo of an embroidered patch that said “berry picking is a prayer” lying in their favorite berry patch (see Figure 8). Two others requested I take pictures of them in their family berry patch (See Figure 9). Another submitted a photo of quote from a Kluane First Nation Elder that they felt captured their concern over high-use areas in Łu Zil Män (See Figure 10). I was not anticipating secondary sources like articles and documentaries but welcomed all submissions. I invited each participant to tell me about the significance behind each creative contribution. In Chapter Three, I draw on these conversations and contributions to explore the beauty and complexity of harvester-land relations.



Figure 8: Creative submission © M. Holozubiec, 2021. Used with permission.



Figure 9: Participants Emily McDougall and Nikki Dillman harvesting cranberries with family © K. Panchyshyn, 2021. Taken with permission.

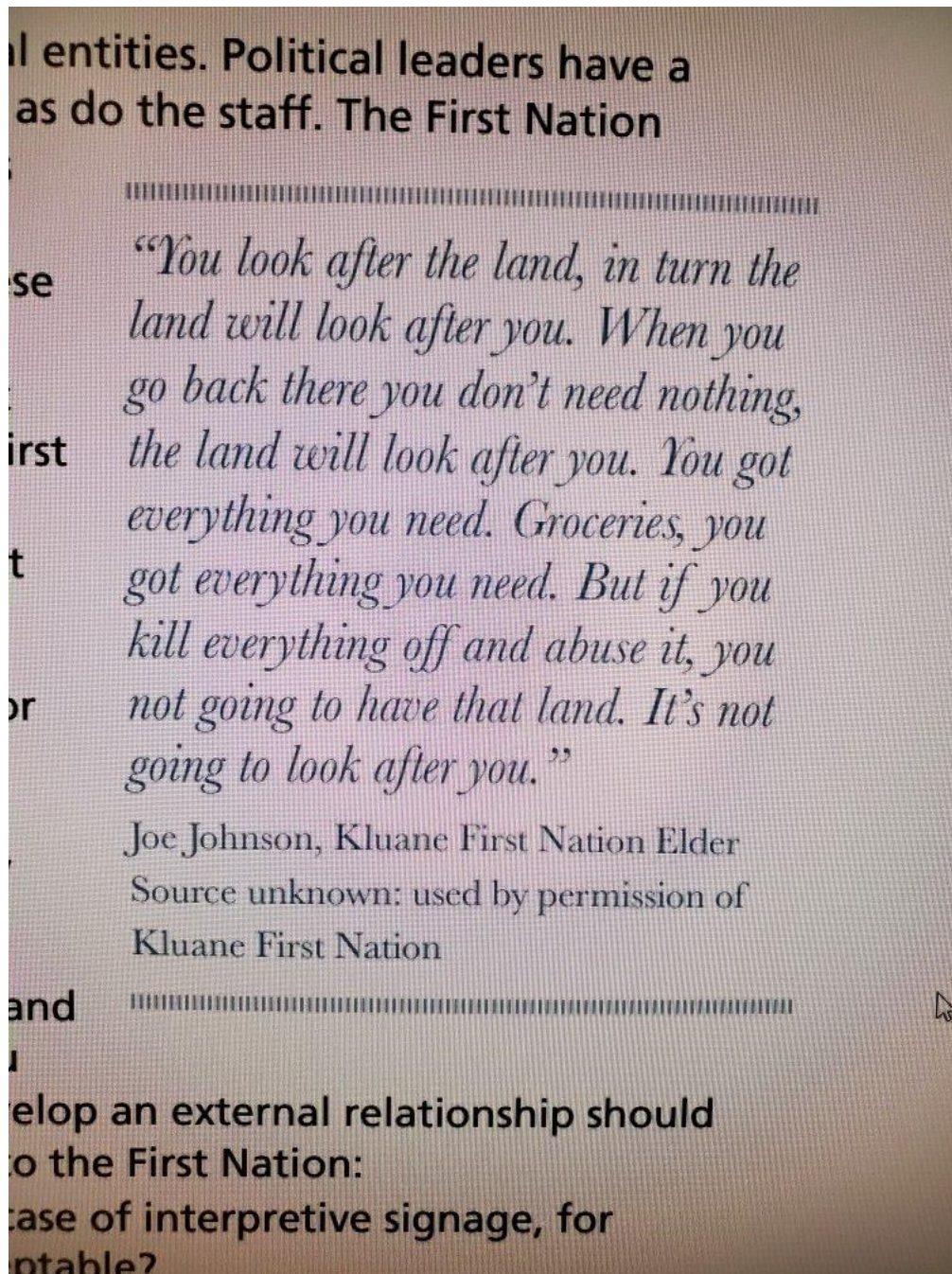


Figure 10: Creative submission © R. Mombourquette, 2021. Used with permission.

2.3.4 On-the-land Observations

Observations invite the researcher to watch and record the happenings of a particular space or event, either as an active participant or quiet onlooker. When conducted in conjunction with interviews, observations can offer valuable context necessary for the researcher to

interpret their participants' experiences. Conversely, interviews can help to illuminate behaviors witnessed in the field that would have otherwise gone overlooked (Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 138-39). For me, however, the most crucial aspect of observations is their potential to include the lands and land-based practices in the process of knowledge production itself.

My background in Indigenous Studies had initially made me weary of using the anthropological technique of participant-observation. The word itself conjured up problematic notions of a removed and 'objective' researcher gazing upon the 'subjects' of research. However, after being introduced to the work of Anthropologist and Métis Feminist scholar, Zoe Todd, and her use of on-the-land observations, I began to see the potential. For Todd, on-the-land observations foster intimacy between the places, practices and peoples involved in a particular project (2016, 202). To my surprise, observations soon became my favorite part of the project. Rather than feeling like an act of empirical study, they felt like time spent harvesting with family and friends or would evoke my childhood memories of sitting alone on the forest floor, watching the world around me. Both of these practices are how I first came to know the people and places of the Whitehorse region, so their inclusion in my research felt natural. In this way, on-the-land observations gave me the chance to revisit the everyday spaces and habits of my harvest practice with renewed curiosity.

2.3.4.1 On-the-land Observations with Participants

Of all the methods of data collection used over the course of this project, I felt the most at home in my collaborative on-the-land observations with participants. This involved visiting harvest spots selected by the participants and conducting activities like scouting for mushrooms or collecting cranberries together. During this time, we would engage in conversation on the topic of harvest, land-use planning or Łu Zil Män. However, occasionally we would sit and harvest together in peaceful silence. These observations became an incredible way to

strengthen our relationships and deepen my understanding of their practice, through shared experience and the reciprocal exchange of story. In her work in Yukon, Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank notes having taken a similar approach, explaining how the act of visiting important spaces with participants helped to bring their stories to life (1990, 57). As Zoe Todd points out, “although interviews offer an efficient means of gathering information, they create a hierarchical relationship between questioner and questioned that can skew the results by privileging certain forms of thinking and knowing” (2016, 202). Drawing on the scholarship of Roy Dilley and Gísli Pálsson, Todd goes on to add that interviews “emphasize cognitive processes at the expense of embodied approaches to learning founded on direct participation in the activities through which knowledge is gained” (2016, 202). On-the-land observations thus compliment interviews by creating space for physical and relational approaches to knowledge exchange. They also invite investigators and participants to collaborate as equal partners in the research process (Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 145). I believe this is why some of the most powerful insights, made by both participants and I, emerged from our time on the land together.

In total, I conducted on-the-land observations with four participants, three of them KDFN citizens. During the observations, all parties involved adhered to the COVID-19 safety protocols used for in-person interviews. So as not to disrupt the natural flow of our harvesting activities, I waited until we had parted ways to record my fieldnotes and reflect on the experience.

As I will discuss in Chapter Three, allowing someone into your ‘secret’ berry patch is a deeply intimate thing. While I had informed participants that we could meet anywhere to harvest, most invited me to their favorite spots (often under the condition that I not disclose the exact location to anyone else). To recognize their generosity, I had hoped to wash, freeze, or dry anything I collected from their patch and return it to them. However, under the COVID-19 restrictions of the day, I did not have approval to carry out this gesture. Instead, I have labelled and stored everything away for the time being and informed participants that I will

deliver these batches back to them as soon as possible. All have told me not to worry about it but that they look forward to the chance to reconnect.

Though most of my observations involved parking and walking to a specific site and staying to pick for roughly 1-3 hours, one observation took an entirely different approach. For her observation, participant and research team member Rae Mombourquette suggested we drive along the roads leading into Łu Zil Män in separate vehicles (due to COVID-19 restrictions). Eager to make the format of our observation as collaborative as possible, I obliged. Over the course of an afternoon, she led as I followed directly behind. As we drove, we used the hands-free call function on our phones to stay connected (another of Mombourquette's ideas). Over the phone, she shared her extensive personal, historical, cultural, and ecological knowledge of the landscape surrounding us. We also stopped to get out and walk, review maps or harvest around key sites. This was an excellent way of covering a great deal of space in a short amount of time, but, as I will discuss in Chapter Three, it was also a great way to study the ways heavy traffic, reckless driving, dumping, dust, noise, and ditch clearing activities are impacting harvest sites in the area.

2.3.4.2 One-the-land Observations without Participants

On four separate occasions, I conducted observations without participants, each in different parts of the Łu Zil Män. Within conventional anthropological settings this type of observation is often recognized as naturalistic observation. As the name might imply, the intention is for the researcher to blend into the setting they wish to observe. The aim is to conduct one's research with as little disruption as possible to the proceedings around them. Each of my visits involved harvesting while hiking, biking, driving, and bird watching, activities that are a part of my day-to-day life and typical of the areas I visited. To diversify my exposure to the area, I also made sure to divide up my visits between weekends and weekdays, daytime, and evening. I used my phone to take pictures (see

Figure 11 below) and kept a notebook in my car to capture my fieldnotes once I completed my observation. For the most part, these visits gave me a chance to quietly observe the flow of people through the space. However, it was not unusual for other harvesters to occasionally wander over and spark up conversation with me. As a harvester, I would not have thought twice about such interactions prior to this project. When filtered through the lens of a researcher, though, these encounters offered beautiful insights about Whitehorse's harvesting culture. I will discuss the ways these interactions revealed information on harvester secrecy, trust, and reciprocity further in Chapter Three.



Figure 11: Łu Zil Män in Fall © K. Panchyshyn, 2021.

2.3.4 Archival Research

To increase my familiarity with Łu Zil Män and the research done on it so far, I read through a selection of related historical documents and government reports from KDFN's digital archives prior to conducting interviews. However, during my one-on one interview and focus groups with KDFN citizens, important stories arose around other traditional wld plant harvest sites. Most notable was a story referencing the destruction of two other important berry harvest sites in the Whitehorse area. These events where not captured in my initial review of the KDFN archives. In an effort to find out more, I worked with participants and KDFN staff to locate archived interview transcripts with Elders that would illustrate the significance of these spaces and the impact of their destruction. Through these documents, members of the research team and I were able to strengthen our understanding of the links between historical land planning trends and the contemporary experiences of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters. This allowed us to better understand the potential social, cultural, and environmental costs of excluding harvest from future land planning projects.

2.4 Participant Selection

Building on connections fostered through my past research with the Jane Glassco Northern Fellowship, the research team and I engaged community organizations, businesses, governments, and residents with interests in wild plant foraging and land-use planning to recruit participants for the study. Working from one-on-one referrals and social media campaigns we were able to recruit our first five participants and used network sampling to expand our group to nine. Our BREB-approved recruitment poster can be viewed in Appendix E. In an effort to enhance data through maximum participant variation, we sought to recruit harvesters with diverse backgrounds, experience levels and plant interests (Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 257). While this project seeks to privilege the voices of Indigenous womxn, we thought it important to capture a wide range of perspectives to better understand how wild harvest influences food security, culture, and community broadly. We also felt that the involvement of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters would help to create a snapshot of local tensions around the issue, while hopefully providing an opportunity to simultaneously enhance community cohesion. As this project draws on an Indigenous Feminist standpoint approach, in which everyday relationships are recognized as a “primary site of political action” we also felt there was power in bringing people together (Starblanket 2017, 37). Thus, while the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the harvest community, between harvesters and the land, and between planners and harvesters, reflect broader power dynamics they can also serve as a site for grass-roots change. Yet, for such relationships to form we needed to create spaces for dialogue between citizens and not just between governments.

2.5 Ethics

The KDFN citizens on the project research team expressed frustration in the way Indigenous knowledges had been ignored through Land Claims negotiations and decades of planning projects. In referring to KDFN land selections, Elder Smith explains:

KDFN does not have very much land resources outside of our land selections, all of it is outside our Traditional Territory, even our forest is outside of the territory. Whoever drew that map must have closed their eyes and just drawn a line, not one citizen or Elder had input on that map, not one! It's all from leadership, they never consulted or talked to us. (Elder Meeting, 2021a)

While our team acknowledged that one small-scale project would not be able to make-up for this history, we sought to take a sharp departure from it.

For the research team and I, adopting a decolonizing approach to knowledge production meant challenging the prominence of Western scientific knowledge within land planning projects. Mirroring the LAP agreement struck between KDFN and YG, our research team established a 'Two ways of Knowing' approach (see Research Agreement in Appendix A for official clause). As our central ethic, this approach involved ensuring that Indigenous Knowledge:

- is given equal (or greater weight), as Western knowledge;
- released with the consent of Indigenous Peoples;
- rooted in an Indigenous context, and not used to supplement, bolster, or validate Western knowledge;
- does not require explanation beyond the Indigenous context in which they are rooted; and
- is presented as living, contemporary knowledge.

As I discussed in Section 2.1.2, a large part of implementing a Two Ways approach meant setting aside time throughout my writing process to work in groups and one-on-one with participants and members of my research team, to ensure that their knowledge received proper representation. However, it also required that I take responsibility for the bias and blind spots that accompany the Western academic perspective I often inhabit. In application, this meant physically highlighting sections of my work where Indigenous knowledge was featured. I would then compare and contrast these sections with places where Western knowledge had been used, asking myself if my writing had met each of the five points listed under the above. I felt it paramount to first attempt this work on my own before asking my Indigenous colleagues for their

review. As I touched on earlier in this chapter, I also sought to ensure that non-Indigenous voices and sources were not used more than Indigenous ones or given greater authority. Finally, when building my arguments for the inclusion of harvest in the LAP, I was careful not to select participants accounts based on their compatibility with Western modes of planning. My goal here was to avoid achieving the projects aims by demonstrating the ability of harvest to serve the status quo. Instead, I sought to demonstrate the need to disrupt Settler understanding of land-use.

2.6 Meaning Making

My approach to sifting through data to develop findings was guided by the words of Absolon, who notes “meaning making is what we do with knowledge, and when we gather berries, we make meaning of those berries by making jam or pies and then we share all that we have gathered with the people. In lieu, of ‘data analysis’, I use the term “making meaning” to refer to the process of sorting the information and interpreting from all that was gathered and harvested” (2011, 22). Her words beautifully capture the overlapping rhythms of research and wild plant harvest. For me the seasonality of these rhythms even came to mirror one and another. Just as I normally would during harvesting season, I spent much of the fall with other harvesters—but instead of berries we collected knowledge and experience together. I then spent the cooler months sorting through these ‘stores’ of information, bringing all that I could together in the creation of something new to return back to the community by spring. Like Absolon, I too have chosen to see my research process of as one of meaning making. What follows is a break-down of that process.

2.6.1 Participant Mapping

Working from interview recordings, I typed up transcripts by hand, and removed false starts or repetition to enhance clarity when necessary. I felt it important to leave in all other verbal ticks and colloquialisms to represent my community and their stories as they were told to

me. On previous research projects, I have been asked to edit such things out on the basis that they were grammatically incorrect or unprofessional and did so with great discomfort. It was a pleasure to reverse this decision and use the transcripts as a way of celebrating northernisms. I also chose to leave in laughter, as banter, teasing and sarcasm are a big part of northern dialogue. As all our participants identified as womxn, this decision also took on a gendered dimension. Because words like girlish, tittering and cackle are routinely used to label the laughter of wmn as childish, annoying, or malicious, and as wmn are often encouraged to edit their laughter out of podcasts or public broadcasts, I felt that making space for my participants' joy constituted an act of feminist resistance (Kosman 2016).

Once I finished the transcription process, I emailed participants a copy and incorporated any feedback or additional information they had to share. It was important to me that these documents represented the conversation as the participant wished them to be represented. These member checks also served to enhance the quality and validity of the data collected (Miriam & Tisdell 2016, 246). As well, the conversations sparked by reviewing the transcripts were often as informative as the initial interview. With their permission, I documented these conversations in my interview notes. Months after, while writing my thesis in the Okanagan, I found myself transported home by the familiar voices and stories captured in these documents. Such an affect serves as a testament to my efforts to remain true to the cultural rhythms of the community I am working with.

Once the participants had confirmed their interview transcripts were correct or complete, I used NVivo, a research coding program, to begin organizing my initial findings. I first reviewed my interview transcripts and observation notes to identify overarching themes or trends. I found it difficult, however, to establish separate themes as each seemed so intertwined with the next. Nevertheless, after a great deal of consultation with my supervisors, co-investigators, and fellow graduate students, I was able to establish three core themes: 1) what is the relationship to harvest and Łu Zil Män? 2) why is this relationship important? and 3) how is it challenged or

supported? Once I organized the data around these questions, I shared a report of my findings with my co-investigators and together we created a list of clarifying questions to ask our focus groups. After we presented our initial findings and questions to the focus groups, I transcribed the focus group recordings and again sorted them using the NVivo coding process. At this point, I brought a full report of my findings to the KDFN citizens on the research team and together we checked assumptions, identified gaps, and finalized recommendations. From here, I created a final report and provided it to both the research team and participants for feedback. With this, we brought our recommendations forward to the Łu Zil Măn planning committee. In the next Chapter, I will share the findings that arose from each step of this process and explore the significance therein.

Chapter 3: Project Findings

As discussed in Chapter Two, the project's findings emerged from a review of interview transcripts, participant maps, creative submissions and my own fieldnotes. Our findings were further shaped in collaboration with participants and research team members through one-on-one check-ins and focus groups. I have chosen to organize these findings into three core themes. The first theme of 'Harvest Relations' (Section 3.1), addresses the projects first research question of: what relationships do harvesters have with the practice of harvest and with Łu Zil Män? The second theme of 'Harvest Benefits' (Section 3.2), explores the importance of harvest relations. Lastly, the theme of 'Harvest Barriers' identifies the challenges presently threatening harvest relationship.

3.1 Harvest Relations

Interestingly, all participants noted that they were introduced to the practice of harvest through friends and family. KDFN citizens consistently noted that family members helped to establish their harvest knowledge base and continue to support their learning today (Dillman 2020a & Focus Group 2020b; Mombourquette 2020a). Emily McDougal describes this as a process of "intergenerational sharing" and of listening to the stories her mother, aunt and grandmother told (2020a). Two citizens added, however, that they have further expanded their knowledge through interactions with other community members or by seeking out information and experience on their own (Dillman 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a & 2020b). This theme of relationality carried over into our discussions with non-KDFN members as well.

It is worth noting that all the participants who were not members of KDFN moved to the north as adults. Nevertheless, their 'new-to-the north' status did not diminish the importance of family and community in establishing their connection to wyld harvest. Several Non-KDFN participants indicated that family introduced them to southern harvesting resources like mushrooms or saskatoon berries (Holozubiec 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a).

When reminiscing about picking blackberries with her parents, Jenny George notes “it has been a part of my life for a long time” (2020a). Other participants explained that their passion for wyld harvest did not kick-off until their move north (Taylor 2020a; McDowell 2020a; McClintock 2020a). Factors contributing to this interest included increased access to wyld spaces, a new awareness of northern food in-security, and their introduction to local food practices (McClintock 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a). However, all of them mentioned learning about northern wyld harvest practices and plants through new friends, neighbours, and colleagues upon arriving in the Yukon (George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McDowell 2020a; McClintock 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a).

Participants of all backgrounds recognized that developing a harvest practice involved constant learning. Even the most experienced harvesters discussed seeking out opportunities to absorb new knowledge (Holozubiec 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Dillman 2020a, Focus Group 2020b). As George describes “I am always receiving little bits of information from here and there about the plants, that I am storing away in my mind” (2020a). Mombourquette used the term “harvester curiosity” to explain how her learning was driven by a sense of playful exploration, a concept that resonated with those in the second focus group (Focus Group 2020b). Interestingly, multiple harvesters also indicated drawing on a kind of “harvesters’ intuition” or inner voice to guide their interactions with plant communities in a respectful way (McDougall 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a). This intuition is often described as an unspoken conversation with plant communities and is recognized within the broader foraging community (Gray 2011, 28-30)

For the four participants who regularly hunt, fish and trap, the harvest of plants was not seen as separate from the harvest of other living things. In our one-on-one and group discussions, these participants grouped activities like hunting and berry picking together under the review category of “acquisition of food” (McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a & 2020b). The Elders on the research team also grouped these activities

together (Elder's Meeting 2021a). Harvesters also typically did not separate the harvest of medicinal plants from the harvest of nutritional plants as well (Taylor 2020a; Focus Group 2020b). As Mary Holozubiec explains:

I pick juniper berry as a medicinal tea and other herbs, but I don't think of them as picking medicine, I just think of them like 'the things I am harvesting are good for me and better than anything, I can get at the grocery store'. So, for me I don't separate them. I am just harvesting. (Focus Group 2020a)

This sentiment lines up with TKC Elder Shirley Jackson's thoughts on the matter: "all plants are food, and all food is medicine; it's just a question of if that medicine is good or bad medicine" (qtd. Panchyshyn 2020, 6). Similarly, one participant highlighted how, like plants, moose meat also has restorative applications within Indigenous medicine (Dillman 2020a). The desire to avoid rigid categories when discussing their practice demonstrated the relational context in which northern plant harvest is situated.

Several of the participants noted that while they plan some harvest outings, there is also an opportunistic element to the practice (Holozubiec 2020a; Taylor 2020a). As Mombourquette notes, "I feel like I am never not harvesting, like I am always prepared, and I always have an eye out, it is so opportunistic. Like, if there is a good spot, I will just pick it, the odd time if it's easy I might tell my mother about it (haha) and bring her out" (Focus Group 2020b). Dillman supports this by saying "it is often something that happens when you go fishing or when you're taking your pet for a walk and then you notice where the ripe berries are and then you might go back with family or a group of people afterwards, but I feel like a big part of the initial exploration, at least for myself, is usually when doing something else" (Focus Group 2020b). Both accounts demonstrate the way harvesting extends beyond the simple act of picking. Harvesters reported spending a great deal of time moving through the landscape, monitoring the changing seasons, and surveying plant growth (Dillman 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a). Some other components of the practice include cultivating networks of fellow harvesters, participating in the exchange of information, securing equipment, coordinating

harvest activities, processing, storing, trading, and distributing collected plants (George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette 2020b; Paszkowska 2020a; Focus Group 2020b). Though harvest is often represented as the physical act of collecting plants, the accounts of participants help to highlight the complexity of the practice.

Another component of participants' relationship to the practice was who they harvested with. Participants discussed harvesting both alone and in the company of others. Several noted having harvested on their own as an intentional means of peaceful escape or because it was easier than coordinating with others (George 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a). However, all spoke of the joy that came from being accompanied by pets, family, or friends (Dillman 2020a; George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a). Participants explained that harvesting in this way allowed for socialization, knowledge exchange, and offered a certain level of security against bears, motorized recreationalists, and hunters. In my observations of Łu Zil Män, I also did not witness any solo harvesters. I only saw groups ranging from two to eight people. These groups often appeared to include couples, families, and friends (Fieldnotes 2020a, 2020b, 2020d & 2020e).

3.1.1 Harvest Relations in Łu Zil Män

Here I will answer the project's first research question of: what relationships do wild plant harvesters have to Łu Zil Män? While many participants enjoyed harvesting in the fields and forests around their neighborhoods, they also appreciated the chance to wander slightly farther afield, to places like Łu Zil Män. Like the practice of harvest itself, several participants were introduced to the area by family or friends but later expanded their familiarity with it through independent excursions (Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a; Focus Group 2020b). As Mombourquette notes "there is a sense of adventure in going into these places" (2020a). Similarly, Margi Paszkowska explains that the thrill involved in traveling up to [Mount Macintyre]

is part of what makes berry picking there special: “it’s like an adventure, it takes a while to get up there” (2020a). Like Paszkowska, trips to Łu Zil Män constituted a special occasion for some participants, while others simply worked their harvest into their day-to-day activities. Regardless, the maps produced by participants showed us just how well explored the area was (see Figure 12 for an example of a participant map).

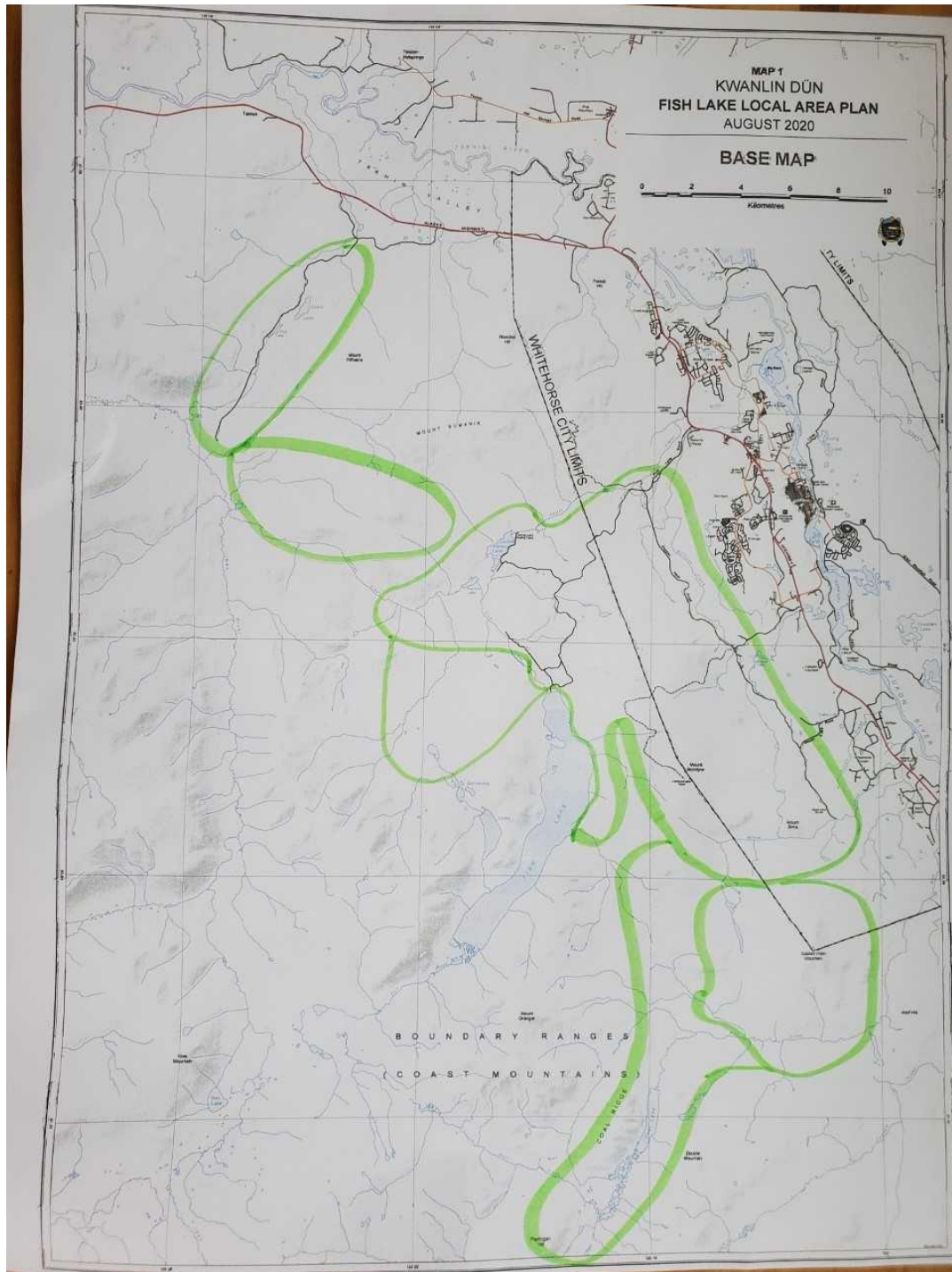


Figure 12: Participant map ©Anonymous (2021), used with permission.

Despite the relatively small number of participants in our study, the group covered a tremendous amount of ground within the Łu Zil Män area. The most popular locations included: the shores of Łu Zil Män, Mount McIntyre (specifically the Blown Away area), the

Bonneville Lakes trail, Knuckle Ridge and along Fish Lake Road (marked in orange and red in Figure 13 to indicate high-use or high levels of concern among participants and research team members). My observational fieldnotes also confirmed that harvesters are typically more prevalent in these areas compared to other areas (Fieldnotes 2020a, 2020b, 2020c & 2020e). However, Copper Haul Road, Heckle Hill, Golden Horn, Coal Lake, and the Ibex Valley were also mentioned as important harvest spots (marked in green and yellow in Figure 13 to indicate low to moderate-use or low to moderate levels of concern). Both the maps and our discussion with harvesters revealed that they all depend on back roads and trail networks to access key harvest sites, by foot, bike, or car (Dillman 2020a; George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a).

While harvesting in and around Łu Zil Män, participants were most often in pursuit of berries, such as: blueberry (known locally by this name but recognized elsewhere as huckleberry or by the Latin names *Vaccinium uliginosum* or *Vaccinium ovalifolium*), bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, *Arctous alpina*, and *Arctous rubra*), low and high bush cranberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea* and *Vaccinium edule*), juniper (*Juniperus communis* and *Juniperus horizontalis*), mossberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), and soapberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*). However, other popular resources included: the sap, bark or needles of balsam (*Abies lasiocarpa*), spruce (*Picea glauca* and *Picea mariana*), birch (*Betula*) and poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), arnica (*Arnica cordifolia*), colt's foot (*Petasites frigidus*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), lungwort (*Mertensia paniculata*), wyld sage or caribou weed (*Artemisia frigida* and *Artemisia tilesii*), labrador tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum* and *Rhododendron tomentosum*), fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), golden rod (*Solidago*), honey suckle (known locally by this name but recognized elsewhere as the flowers of kinnikinnick, bearberry or *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), wyld rose (*Rosa acicularis*) petals and hips, wyld onion (*Allium schoenoprasum*), wyld rhubarb (*Aconogonon alaskanum*), devil's club (*Oplopanax*

horridus), and mushrooms of all varieties, but most commonly wild oyster (*Pleurotus ostreatus*), morels (*Morchella*), shaggy mains (*Coprinus comatus*) and boletus (*Leccium*) (Dillman 2020a; George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a & 2020b; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a; Elder Meeting 2021; Felid Notes 2020c & 2020g).⁵

For participants, spring, summer, and fall were the most popular times to visit Łu Zil Män. When asked why they liked harvesting around Łu Zil Män, participants emphasized its year-round accessibility, noting that it was closer to town than other popular recreational areas and easy to reach after work or on weekends (George 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Taylor 2020a). Participant accounts also highlight the rich diversity of foods available there, with plants commonly found in alpine conditions close by those typical of lower areas. Here Mombourquette notes:

It has an abundance of a lot of things, there is a lot of gophers if you know where to look for them, generally a lot of rabbits, there is a lot of moose, which people will still hunt around the southern end, and there is sheep that come down. I have also seen caribou on top of Mount Mac. It also has naturally occurring morels, so you don't have to go out to a burn site. (Focus Group 2020b)

Łu Zil Män also offered participants the chance to bundle their foraging practice with other activities like biking, bird watching, camping, fishing, hiking, dog walking, hunting, and trapping (George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a). Finally, Łu Zil Män offered the wide-open spaces needed for friends and family to gather together: “It’s all about an event and sort of a celebratory thing, but it’s also a hike and a harvest for the winter, and harvest with friends, those sorts of

⁵ When working with a given community, I believe it is important use the plant names that they use locally, rather than the name the plant is known by within broader circles. The names given to plants reflect the relationships they hold to people, and for this project in particular, I think it is important to document these local relationships. However, I have offered up Latin or secondary names to help those not from the Whitehorse region better understand which plants I am referring too. In future, the research team and I hope to have the names for these plants listed in the Southern Tutchone language to further illustrate the relationships between people, plants and the lands where they grow.

social things. I have never been up there by myself” (McDowell 2020a). It appears that Łu Zil Män’s accessibility, diversity of harvest resources, and capacity to support large groups and various forms of recreation help to distinguish it from other harvesting locations.

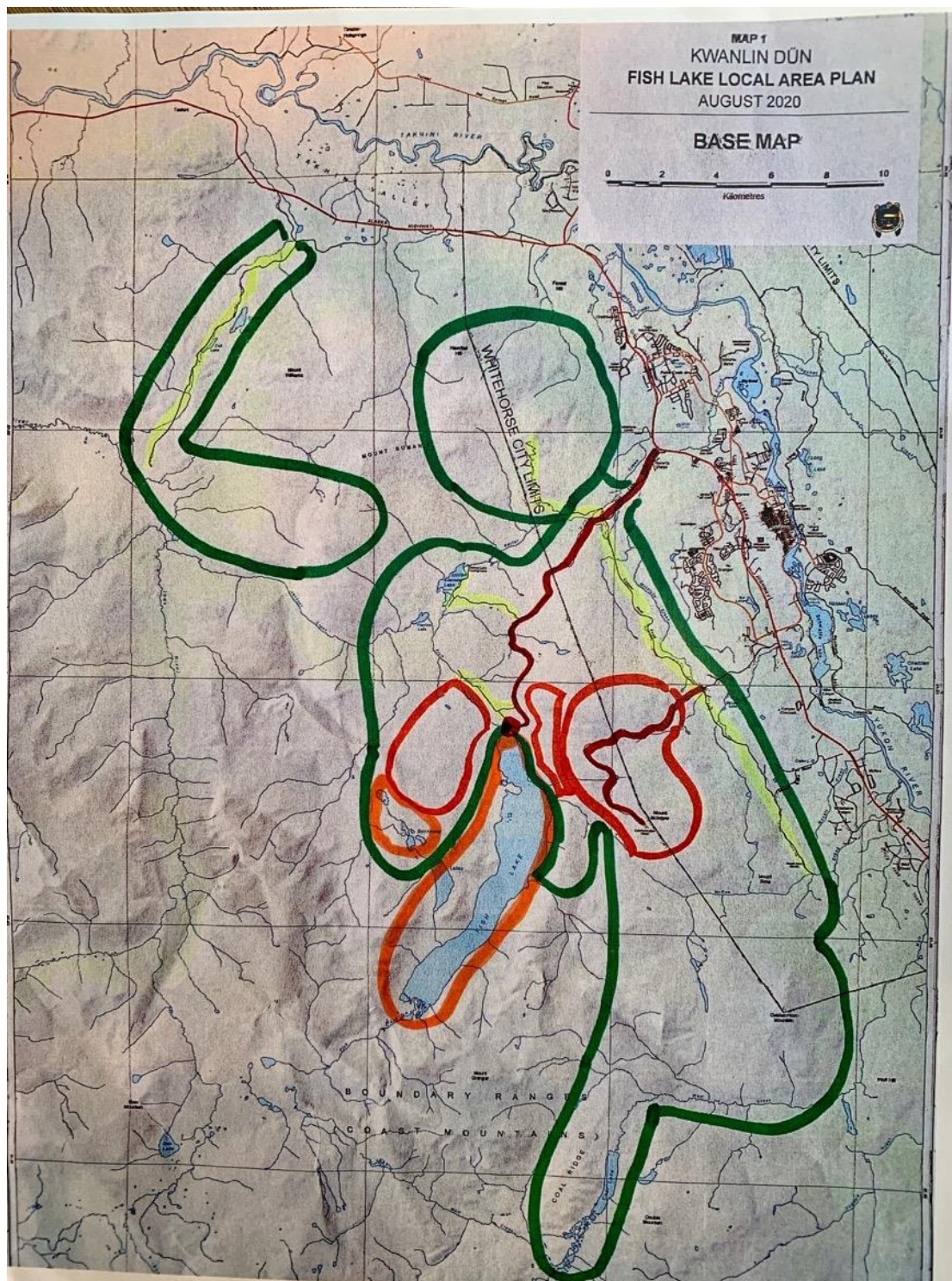


Figure 13: Final Map of Harvest Relations in Łu Zil Män © K. Panchyshyn, 2021

3.2 Importance of Harvest Relations

3.2.1 Health and Well-being

Project findings suggest that wyld plant harvest is a holistic practice of well-being for participants. On the physical side, harvest is an opportunity for participants to get outside, have fun and exercise with friends and family (George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Taylor 2020a). Participants also spoke of the mental health benefits of harvest, noting that it offered an outlet for relaxation (Holozubiec 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a). As Lauren McClintock explains, “being out on the land is therapeutic in itself” and berry picking is “a nice quiet meditative way to be outside” (2020a). While the term meditation maybe associated with individual well-being, Amanda Taylor’s words remind us that harvesting provides an opportunity for group relaxation as well: “I have been out there with friends where we are totally silent for hours because we are just focused on the berries” (2020a). Mombourquette echoed this sentiment by noting that harvest offered “this sense of being alone but with others, you know, as a family” (2020a). Speaking on a similar topic, Mary Holozubiec shared a photo of an embroidered patch gifted to her by the group of wmn she picks with. The patch reads “Berry Picking is a Prayer” (see Figure 8). To Holozubiec, this patch was both a testament to her faithful dedication to the practice and to the way she found herself completely enveloped in its soothing rhythm (2020a). When presented with these findings Elder Smith added:

Yeah, it’s like a spiritual thing, when you leave the city limits you can just feel it, you’re like ‘all my worries are gone’ and it’s back to a traditional way of life, it’s a beautiful thing to walk on mother earth, drink water and take plants, and make jam. (Elder’s Meeting 2021a)

The harmonious connection to land, mind, body, and community discussed by participants and Elders, highlighted the intangible elements of harvest.

As noted earlier, all participants touched on the immensely social side of harvest. For many the practice helped to build new ties, while staying connected to existing ones. Nikki

Dillman characterized it as “something that brings people together” (2020a). Expanding on this point, Taylor emphasized how “it almost feels wrong to go alone. It’s this community thing” adding that “I use berry picking as a way to connect with people who I haven’t seen in a while, or to connect with people who I don’t know” (2020a). This dynamic came to life in my on-the-land observations, where I watched harvesters join in lively discussions with myself or with one and another (August 2020a, 2020b, 2020c & 2020f). On one such occasion, I overheard the father of one participant note that he did not find picking very interesting but enjoyed the opportunity to visit with others. In a perfect example of the playful banter that often arises when Yukon families gather, his wife quickly responded by saying “don’t just stand there then, start picking!” (2020c). This remark was followed by a chorus of laughter from the rest of the group.

Another way harvest contributes to community well-being is through networks of sharing. Nearly all participants discussed the importance of offering their harvest to others. In some cases, this habit emerged out of a sense of obligation or protocol. In others, it was simply something they enjoyed doing. As Holozubiec explains “it adds a personal touch to a meal if you’re bringing it to someone’s house” (2020a). Regardless of their motivation, most harvesters took pride in providing for others. As George explains: “I take a great deal of satisfaction in collecting my ingredients, to cook and share with my family” (2020a). On this subject, McDougall offered a beautiful description:

I think that is the beautiful thing about harvesting...meals where you have gathered the ingredients with your own hands, it just feels so much more special and when you are consuming that. You feel so enriched. It is rooted and grounded in love (of land, ingredients and people), you love preparing it, you love sharing it with people and feeding people, it is reciprocity, people coming together to eat. (2020a)

Building on a similar theme, Jocelyn McDowell recounts having shared wyld foods as an intimate expression of care:

I had a family tragedy about ten years ago in my circle, and the people that remained after this tragic fire, the parents that remained (I have been tending to them for years now), and right away after the fire I remember sending cranberries to both those families. (2020a)

McDowell's desire to share wyld foods with those who are experiencing hard times, is a testament to the value they hold in her life. For harvesters, this desire to share reached beyond family lines and into the broader community. Holozubiec discussed how excited she was to share her cranberries with a local care facility for Thanksgiving dinner (Focus Group 2020a). Like her, many harvesters were eager to share with fellow community members, especially those who did not have the opportunity to harvest for themselves (Focus Group 2020b). This desire emerged as a prominent theme in our focus group discussions on potential supports for harvesters and will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Our research also suggests that wyld harvest practices support the multifaceted nature of food security. Food security is widely recognized as physical and economic access to safe and sustainable sources of food that meet both the nutritional needs and cultural preferences of individuals and communities (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2006, 1). Several participants indicated that harvest supported the economic aspects of their food security by reducing their grocery bills and by producing a commodity that could be traded for other things (Focus Group 2020b; George 2020a). Participants also categorized harvest as an empowering avenue for securing local and environmentally sustainable foods (Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a, Taylor 2020a). When describing this element of their practice, harvesters used the term 'self-sufficiency' repeatedly. Curious about what or who exactly harvesters sought independence from, we asked the focus group participants for clarification. Dillman responded by saying:

Being self-sufficient means being self-sufficient from major grocery chains or food produced not in the Yukon. And then I guess you could take it a step further and say food that you don't have to pay for. I think it is important, like I am sure everyone who has lived up here realizes, how far your food has to come. Even the fresh vegetables we have that aren't so fresh by the time they get up to the Yukon, so being able to have access to local food you can harvest yourself is really important. (Focus Group 2020b)

In response to the same question, Holozubiec spoke of Whitehorse's dependency on food transported from the south: "we are not in a place we can be completely self-sufficient here but

whatever we can do to lessen that reliance on what is a fragile link. I am always trying to increase a little bit more each year” (Focus Group 2020a). In this way, harvest helps participants maintain a sense of control over their food systems.

For KDFN participants, however, the commitment to self-sufficiency went deeper than a dependency on southern economies. As Mombourquette explains:

In my pantry right now, I have my canned goods, and then shelves dedicated just for jars of wild mushrooms that I have dehydrated and jams, jellies, and dried fish. So, it really is helping to support my daily intake of food, but there is this broader larger level of self-sufficiency away from colonization. (Focus Group 2020b).

Expanding on this point, she talked about how her practice celebrated KDFN food traditions while resisting the colonial processes that have sought to gain control over Indigenous Peoples by suppressing their food security and sovereignty (Focus Group 2020b). Seeking to express a similar point, McDougall shared the trailer for *Gather* (2020), a documentary that focuses on the reclamation of Indigenous cultural, political, and spiritual identities through decolonizing food movements.

Both Mombourquette and McDougall’s contributions to the project helped to highlight the connection between harvest and Indigenous food sovereignty on a personal scale. Food sovereignty is broadly thought of as a community’s ability to govern their food systems without outside interference. However, on the personal level it is one’s ability to participate in decision making around the food networks that they depend on (Armstrong 2020, 37). For Indigenous Peoples, food sovereignty on both levels is an integral part of Indigenous self-determination. Again, Mombourquette’s words are apt here:

For me there is also a slight maybe sense of the autonomy to practice. Like, the chapters of my Self-Government that speak to Land Claims, and yes, we have a department that is classified Heritage, Lands and Resources, but I feel like there is often a disconnect between the citizens and the government. So, we have government and acts and policies and processes, and really other than a few consultations here and there, I don’t see a huge role of the citizens in that, but I find that harvesting for me means that it gives me a sense of autonomy as a citizen of KDFN to survey my own settlement lands or my own Traditional Territory. It provides for me the development of my own land management strategies, in terms of plants, fish and wildlife and how I interact with them, how often I harvest, whether or not I choose to harvest from an area,

is all part of a strategic and intentional plan. Just because there may be an abundance of something, I am equating in so many different factors into the decision of if I harvest there or not...We often see the words land-use and land-use planning, and I am engaging in my own land-use and my own land management, and the practice of that. It has nothing to do with the government and the policies, rules, regulations, and guidelines that KDFN has set out nor the government of Canada. This is my own constitution. (Focus Group 2020b)

For Mombourquette and McDougall, participation in traditional harvesting practices offer a means of transcending institutional governments and rematriating their responsibilities within food systems. This is particularly meaningful for Indigenous wmn, a group routinely ignored by existing planning bodies. While I believe there is a need for local governments to make space for Indigenous wmn and harvesters within land planning processes, I also think it is important to recognize the validity of grass-roots stewardship initiatives that take place independent of state centric governance systems.

3.2.2 Community, Culture, Place, and Identity

In addition to fulfilling the aspects of food security that involve affordability and sustainability, harvest provided a source of nutrition consistent with the cultural values of participants. As McClintock notes “it’s so intertwined, it’s not just getting nutrition, it’s a cultural practice” (2020a). This connection to culture through food was raised by participants of all backgrounds. As McDougall tells us, “I felt so much more connected to my ancestors because of that connection of going out feeding yourself, getting food for the winter, providing food for your family” (2020a). Dillman took this a step further in illustrating the practice’s capacity to facilitate multiple cultural traditions: “I really see it as a joining of my two halves. I am very German and English, and I also have my Indigenous heritage and with harvesting plants and practicing botany I get to explore both of them and honor both of them”. She also spoke about being “someone who wasn’t really raised in an Indigenous house, like my grandma never taught her children the language and wasn’t really traditional” but reported finding a way to reclaim her KDFN heritage through harvest (2020a). Similarly, when discussing the process of learning

about her own Indigenous heritage, McClintock noted that harvest was “a way to connect with a part of myself I didn’t really know” (2020a). Here, I found my own experience of displacement and reclamation reflected in the stories shared by Dillman and McClintock. Being of Slavic-Canadian heritage myself, I was also able to relate to Paszkowska’s cultural ties to foraging. In discussing her connection to harvest, she declared “I think it’s in my blood. I am a first generation Canadian of Polish ancestry, so I remember being dragged out every late summer early fall to go north of Toronto to go looking for mushrooms” (2020a). The practice’s ability to embody a diverse range of cultural traditions makes it remarkable part of the Whitehorse community.

Our findings also suggest that harvest plays a role in supporting a regional identity specific to the Yukon. This theme first emerged in my interview with George, who explained: “Harvesting cranberries, in particular, are a part of my identity as a northern resident, I guess. I think so many people enjoy and know what it means to harvest cranberries, so I definitely feel it is a way to connect with the community” (2020a). This link between harvest and northern identities was especially obvious for those who were not immersed in the Whitehorse community from a young age. As noted above, several indicated that berry picking was part of their introduction to northern living (George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a). In discussing her move to Whitehorse, Taylor notes “I was like ‘people berry pick in the fall? Okay!’. I was fresh to the Yukon and wanted to do all the Yukon things” (2020a). When asked how she started foraging, McClintock gave us a very similar account:

It was more of just a social thing when I first moved up here. Like ‘oh everyone is going berry picking’. Like ‘it’s the Yukon thing to do’. Yep, it kind of started out as joining in the social activity, but now it’s turned into more of a thing that I really love doing. It’s interesting it’s like a community activity, it brings people in, like in the big cities you don’t necessary have activities like that as easily. (2020a)

Now experienced harvesters and long-term residents, all three of these wmn use harvest to welcome visitors and new members into the Whitehorse community.

In fact, many participants discussed using berry picking to introduce others to the territory's cultural and environmental landscapes. On this topic, Dillman emphasized how meaningful it was "to share that knowledge with your neighbor who might not be from here and is interested in local traditions" (2020a). Taylor also reflected on the significance of participating in her friend's first berry harvest: "The act of sharing food foraging with someone, and how to do it, I think that is a neat thing to share with someone. It is a special experience" (2020a). Similarly, George reminisced about learning to harvest cranberries from friends, then passing this experience along to others in her family: "I taught my partner when he moved up here, and now I am teaching my son" (2020a). The way foragers pass their practice onto those 'new-to-the-north', is yet another demonstration of how the practice supports community-building and the development of kinship ties.

Participants also spoke of the way harvest helped to develop a positive relationship to place. Most of our participants expressed an affinity with the spaces they harvested, but for KDFN citizens this link is deeply ancestral. As Dillman beautifully illustrates:

Something you can take pride in is knowing it was your grandmother and your great grandmother and your great, great grandmother who all harvested in this area, which is pretty special, and then knowing your daughter is going to learn and harvest in this area too, which is pretty amazing. (2020a)

McDougall also told us about how harvest provides her with a sense of belonging: "it makes me feel connected to myself my family, my ancestors, the land and place" (2020a). Paszkowska also talked about introducing a delegation of Indigenous youth from across Yukon to the biking trails and berry patches around Mount McIntyre. She told me about how the beauty of the place inspired visible outbursts of pride in those who are from the area: "it was nice for those kids who were from Whitehorse to be like 'this is our home'" (2020a). Harvest appears to also help those who did not grow up in the area develop attachments to new landscapes. As Taylor notes "I think it has been one of the only ways I have actually been able to connect so much to a place that I have lived in" (2020a). Like Taylor, many non-KDFN harvesters reflected on how berry

picking helped them to cultivate a sense of home after relocating to the north (George 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDowell 2020a). It is important to note however, that one clear difference between KDFN and non-KDFN harvesters emerged around the subject of place. While KDFN participants indicated harvesting to develop and maintain overlapping ties to the land and to their ancestors, non-KDFN participants spoke of harvesting to nourish one tie or the other but did not explicitly link the two. Regardless, participants of all backgrounds spoke of harvest as a tool for contextualizing oneself in relation to the land and to those around you. Thus, the exclusion of harvest from land planning prevents harvesters from developing or maintaining a sense of belonging within place and within community. For Indigenous harvesters this removal from place and community is linked to historical and ongoing colonial attempts to extinguish Indigeneity. I will discuss the impact of this displacement further in Chapters Four and Five.

Our interviews and observations also illuminated the multi-generational dimensions of harvest. Almost all participants spoke of the social and educational benefits of harvesting with partners, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or grandparents (Dillman 2020a; George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor 2020a). Three of our participants also stressed the importance of including children in their practice. For George, this inclusion was about spending time together: “now that I have young children it is an easy outdoor activity for my whole family to do for a couple of hours” (2020a). Others spoke about harvest as an opportunity to introduce their children to wyld plant foods. Describing her harvest excursions with her baby daughter, Dillman notes: “She likes to taste the berries and touch the leaves” (2020a). Similarly, McDowell described her motivation for bringing her son out each year: “when you become a provider you also are leaning into the modeling role. I really want my kid to see the harvest and see that that’s a thing we do” (McDowell 2020a).

Interestingly, two of our participants also spoke of harvesting with the youth they work with. Paszkowska told me about wanting to give her students a chance to pick up new skills and

connect with their ecological and cultural surroundings (2020a). For George however, harvesting with students was a chance for her to learn: “many of my students were born and raised in the area, so they were able to show me which plants were which” (2020a). On a similar note, Mombourquette mentioned having collected new information to share with older family members (2020b). Having foragers of all ages picking side-by-side appears to assist the exchange of knowledge from one generation to the next. Further, the experience of George and Mombourquette demonstrate how this exchange can flow, not just from old to young, but in all directions. Our participants’ stories also demonstrated the appeal and accessibility of harvest to different age groups, and how it strengthens connections between generations regardless of blood relation. The development of such ties is yet another testament to the practice’s role in community building.

3.2.3 Knowledge Building

Participants described having used harvest to help them develop a detailed geographic understanding of their surroundings. McDowell explains how harvest helps her navigate the forest: “when I pull into the Kwanlin Dün village and go back down that road, even if it’s winter and I go there to ski, I am always placing my landmarks there that have to do with the berries” (2020a). Indeed, this detailed understanding showed up in our mapping sessions and on-the-land observations. Harvesters would use subtle features like fallen trees or moss clumps to locate their favorite patches amongst dense forest or large swaths of open alpine terrain (Holozubiec September 14; Taylor September 4, 2020; Fieldnotes September 2020c & 2020g). Harvesters could also easily recall in detail how the spaces they visited had changed over the years (Holozubiec 2020a; McDougall 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020b; Paszkowska 2020a). In connection with their advanced geographical awareness, participants also appeared to have collected a great deal of ecological knowledge through their practice.

Many discussed the way harvest brought them into conversation with their environments (Dillman 2020a, George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McDougall 2020a). As Mombourquette told us:

It's like a commune with animals and also I think the landscape. There is kinda a relationship built over time. For me, anyway, if I go to a place fairly regularly, just to get out of my home office, I will drive the same trail, the same beat, and it became like a patrol, and I started to have more of an understanding of the animals using the area. You know, seeing fresh bear root dug out along the roads in the same places that I was looking for morels and understanding that the bears didn't seem interested in the morels at all. (Focus Group 2020b)

It is these relationships that assist in the collection and production of ecological knowledge. On this subject, Mombourquette added that:

I think most harvesters have a relationship with the places they are harvesting so they have an understanding of the changes happening in that environment over time, they have an understanding of things that are happening within that environment, so it is not just seeing a thing and saying, 'I am going to pick it', there is a whole range of relationships that evolve between the harvester and the landscape, and the rocks, and plants and even the use in that area. (2020a)

It appears that harvesters use this enhanced awareness of and connection to surrounding ecology to care for their harvest spaces and those who share it with them.

Several participants had developed or inherited guidelines, from family or harvest mentors, on how to avoid harming plant communities and establish a reciprocal relationship with the land and fellow users (Dillman 2020a; George 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a). As McDougall detailed:

I am always very respectful when I am out on the land, whether it's picking berries or harvesting animals...There is a spirit to everything, so you don't want to trample on top of something or be disrespectful or speak poorly of an animal or something because it may not present itself to you and similarly with plants and trees and that sort of thing. Just being respectful and viewing the land as something you have to take care of, and it will take care of you. (2020a)

She was also cautious in the fall not to take more than she needs, explaining that "you also want to think that it's also time for the bears to fatten up and get some berries, along with the birds and mice. Yeah, you don't want to be, like, greedy" (2020a). Her words demonstrate the capacity for harvest to serve as a bridge between the social worlds of human and non-humans.

Participants also used their plant knowledge to support the intentional cultivation of their harvest spaces. In some cases, this involved rotating which patches they visited, clearing garbage and debris, offering thanks and acknowledgements, or collecting and disrupting seeds and spores. Other actions involved promoting the growth of some species by trimming or shaking branches or by avoiding harvesting from new growth, while simultaneously discouraging the growth of harmful species by pulling up their roots or creating unfavorable growing conditions by increasing sun or shade exposure in the area (Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a). For some, stewardship also meant visiting the same patches over and over each year. During an observation, the relative of one KDFN harvester noted “[the cranberries] are large here because we have been picking here for years, they have been cultivated” (Fieldnotes 2020c). I noticed that harvesters seemed to be more protective of the areas they cultivated. It is possible that the more time harvesters spend cultivating a space, the more they feel responsible for its health. This type of relation to land, built on the maintenance of the ecological and social ties linked to a particular place, is an example of stewardship. Stewardship is understood locally as caring for one’s relationship to place, rather than simply managing the resources found there. Within Indigenous context stewardship emerges from a deep ancestral connection to place and is guided by the knowledge one generation passes to the next. As I will discuss further in Chapter Five, participants, members of the research team, and I are looking for solutions that approach the protection of harvest spaces through the lens of stewardship rather than through the lens of resource management.

Participants also often demonstrated a sense of reciprocity for fellow harvesters. Taylor noted that while she sometimes worries about competition, ultimately, she believes “the land is something you share together” (September 4, 2020). The collegial responsibility harvesters felt to one another also manifested in the way they shared information. While I touched on this earlier in Section 3.2.1 when discussing regional identity, harvest is a source of social and

ecological knowledge transmission within the Whitehorse community. As George notes, “When you are engaging in harvesting you are always learning and teaching”, adding that “I think there is something special about that relationship” (2020a). Harvesters discussed turning to physical and online communities to swap information on edible plants, as well as harvest condition in particular locations (Dillman 2020a; Mombourquette, October 31 & Focus Group 2020b; Holozubiec 2020a). When we picked together, harvesters would generously share cultural or familial stories linked to the space or the practice, along with information on local plants or the natural history of our present surroundings (Fieldnotes 2020c, 2020f & 2020g). It is here that I observed first-hand the role harvest plays in knowledge dissemination.

In connection with its role in the production and exchange of knowledge, harvest also aids in processes of memory. For example, George explained how: “As you are harvesting in an area, you are building a memory of that space and building a more intimate knowledge of the area. It is a way of developing a layered knowledge of a particular area, like where the trails are, where they go, what grows along them and what each season brings. But you are also connecting the people you harvest with, and your memories of them, to that area as well”. Expanding on her early point, she notes “anytime I pick those plants I think of those people or when I cook and eat with that plant it sparks memories those when I harvested them, or past harvest outings. Like when I pulled last season’s cranberries out of the freezer, I thought of how I took my son and his grandmother out harvesting, how beautiful it was out there and how lovely it was that they could spend that time together and connect in that way” (2020a). Like George, many participants—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—spoke of their berry patches or berry hauls as archives for information (Holozubiec 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020). When we brought this finding to the focus groups, Dillman added that “the berries bring up memories, not just when they are in the freezer but when they are consumed, that is a big time that we share memories from picking is when you know, I have gone to pick something, and my

Aunty, who likes to cook, especially with the low bush cranberries, will come over with some jam or a coffee cake and it's like 'oh, that was from that big harvest that we found in such and such area'. That's when it's a special thing to remember, these good times we had" (Focus Group 2020b). Though this kind of connection to harvest was not entirely unexpected, it was still remarkable to see just how frequently the theme of memory emerged.

Participants also used harvest to collapse the distance they felt between them and the people, places and times they cherished. One of the most touching examples of this came in my conversation with McDowell. In speaking of her late mother, she notes: "when I pick berries, I am really, literally channeling my mother. I know it. She is right there with me" (2020a). McDowell story strikes a deep chord in me. As a Ukrainian Canadian, I am constantly using food to bridge the distance the people and places our past and present. As Ukrainian Canadian author Marusya Bociurkiw explains, the acts of remembrance embedded in Ukrainian rituals of cooking and eating serve as "a kind of memory machine" that has the power to "evoke spectral presence". She adds that through food the "ghosts of the dead are always with us; the border between this life and the next permeable as a cloud" (2007, 59). Having lost my Gedo (Ukrainian Canadian term for Grandfather) this winter, I find myself eagerly awaiting the mushroom picking season so that I might find myself in his company once again. With regard to collapsing physical distance, Holozubiec recounts how she and her husband traveled around the southern United States after retiring: "we took a few jars of my high bush cranberry jelly... even though it doesn't winter or even fall down there, every time we opened one it would remind us of home". Later-on she also spoke of how each time she opens her preserves she is transported to the warmer months of summer and fall, "to me there is just a distinct smell and taste, and it brings you back to the place... So, it's a physical feeling an emotional feeling and a mental story too" adding that "especially in the dead of winter it helps to break up that monotony that winter can bring" (2020a).

Also related to the practice's role in knowledge production was harvest's role in time keeping. Participants spoke of harvest as a tool for marking the passage of time, allowing them to embrace the best of each season while preparing for the next. McDowell spoke about using her raspberries as a summer calendar: "I watch those bushes all summer waiting for mid-august when it's time" (2020a). Holozubiec talked about visiting Łu Zil Măn to celebrate particular seasonal transitions: "Fish Lake is always one of the first places we go hiking in the spring, and always a fall place. It marks a rite of passage in our life every year" (2020a). Others talked about using fall harvesting to make the most of the remaining warmth and light outside before the dark, cold and quiet of winter arrives: "berry picking really marks the changing of seasons. I guess September and October are the berry picking months and it really helps me make the transition from summer to winter (even though I really love winter), it makes it a lot more enjoyable and exciting, it's like such a highlight of the fall from me, going out to berry pick or forage with friends, that time of year wouldn't be the same, it wouldn't have the significance that it does to me if it wasn't foraging season, so yeah it really marks a special time of year for me" (Taylor September 4, 2020). The ritual seasonality of food foraging lends itself to the maintenance of social and cultural traditions, however, it also feeds into the collection of ecological knowledge. Participants demonstrated extensive recollection of how temperature or precipitation varied year to year and correlated these factors with good or bad harvest seasons. Cataloguing weather patterns in this way helped them to adjust their harvest approach, accordingly, spreading out in bad years and building reserves in good ones (Dillman 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McDougall 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Mombourquette 2020b; Paszkowska 2020a).

While personal experience and past research had helped me to develop a general awareness of the importance of harvest, I was still surprised by how dynamic a role it played in the lives of participants. While organizing these findings around core themes helps to present them within an academic setting, I want to make clear that these findings are more relational

than these themes can represent. For example, it is very difficult to separate the role harvest plays in building one's attachment to place and its role in both memory-making and knowledge dissemination. As mentioned in Section 3.2.1 Dillman spoke on the pride she found in teaching her daughter to harvest in the same region that generations of her family's matriarchs. Dillman's connection to this place is linked to the way her family has shared knowledge on her ancestors' presence there. In remembering their ancestors' connection to this place Dillman and her family maintain their own connection to it as well. Similarly, their understanding of place is defined by the knowledge of those family members linked to it. In continuing to harvest in these places, they also build on an intimate place-based knowledge inherited from past generations, a knowledge that is developed through layered memory. This connection to place is then further reaffirmed each time they pass down the stories of these wmn and enact their harvest teachings. Their knowledge of that space is also furthered when Dillman and her daughter create new memories of it each year. This complexity is one of the reasons that harvest relationships cannot continue to be overlooked by planning projects.

3.3 Barriers to Harvest

3.3.1 Popularity of Łu Zil Män

In addition to talking about their connections to the practice and to Łu Zil Män, harvesters also spoke on the factors hindering that relationship. Several participants noted that the increasing popularity of the area had made it more challenging to harvest there in recent years. Mombourquette reflected on her experience of being pushed out of the harvesting areas around the north end of the lake:

I remember the Fish Lake area being a hot spot for my family, but this is when I was pretty little, when my grandfather was still alive.... but it didn't seem like such a huge recreational hub back then, like maybe in the mid to late 80's and early 90's. As soon as recreation started ramping up there, we stopped going and started going to other places. (2020a)

In correlation with Łu Zil Män's rising popularity, she described witnessing a distinct shift in the way users interact with the space and with each other:

We used to see other people, other First Nation families out along the Fish Lake Road, when I was a kid, doing exactly the same thing, whether its shooting rabbits, or whatever else, and there was a sense of sharing with that and a sense of visiting, and there was a respectfulness. But now, I am pulled over on the side of the road (to harvest) and cars are just whipping past me and dirt and rocks are flying up, and that's just the nature and environment. I am used to it now, and I have adapted to harvest even in those situations, but there is a violence and an entitlement that is being displayed now that I don't think existed in the past. (2020a)

As I discovered on my outings with participants, the combination of multiple blind corners, increased traffic levels and aggressive driving tactics made it difficult to find a safe space to park or cross the road to access harvest sites in the area (Fieldnotes 2020b, 2020f and 2020g).

Each of the Elders on the research team reported experiencing similar issues with seeing other users driving recklessly along the roads in the area: "speed is another thing. Oh my god, I don't know how many times I just about got run off the road" (Smith qtd. Elder's Meeting 2021a). They also commented on how other users often did not consider harvesters when venturing on trails: "its dogs, people, 4x4s and vehicles, driving all over the place, any old place it doesn't matter, they drive all over your berry patch" (McKay qtd. Elder's Meeting 2021a). Elder McKay linked this issue to the changing social dynamics around Łu Zil Män that Mombourquette observed. As she explained:

You can feel the energy from the plants and the animals and the water out there. It's clean and fresh and you can smell it too, at the end of the lake along the path along the mountain, you can smell the moss there. Its humble and spiritual. It's a connection. I think if I was going out for sports and I wasn't connected in that way or settled in that idea or mechanism, it would be different. When we go out, we are going out there with an open, calm spirt, but when others go they are going for ACTIVITY and to raise a little hell (haha), and it's a completely different perspective. (Elder's Meeting 2021a)

This shift in the social climate surrounding Łu Zil Män has made it increasingly difficult to safely access harvest sites in the area. And, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four, the different values and perspectives around Łu Zil Män can be attributed to ongoing tension between

harvesters and other users, and between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in the area.

Harvesters also felt that the increase in traffic in the Mount McIntyre and Heckle Hill area had degraded roads to the point that they were impossible to traverse without an off-road vehicle or difficult to do so with small children onboard. This meant that those with children or without off-road vehicles had limited access to key patches (George 2020a; Mombourquette September 19, 2020; Paszkowska 2020a). While cranberry harvesting with me, Dillman and McDougall also reflected on how the deep ruts and turned up rocks left by ATVs had made the path to their favorite patch more challenging to navigate in recent years (September 2, 2020).

Other issues around access included finding the time to make the trip out to Łu Zil Män. Some discussed how work schedules or family obligations made it difficult to find time to get out during daylight hours or to find people to go with. Related to this was the potential for bear encounters in Łu Zil Män. To prevent negative encounters, harvesters pack bear spray or bells and try to go with others or use popular areas. Sometimes, however, not having others to go with, only being able to go during low traffic times, or only being able to reach less popular areas has prevented them from harvesting in Łu Zil Män. When access to Łu Zil Män is restricted by any of the issues above, harvesters opt for spaces closer to home (George 2020a, McDowell 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a). For this reason, our group felt it was important for any future harvest planning in Whitehorse to maintain small harvest corridors close to residential areas in addition to those in Łu Zil Män.

3.3.2 Conflict with other Users

All participants reported having largely positive interactions with other harvesters; however, Mombourquette did express frustration at the over-harvest of balsam in Łu Zil Män. Elders Anderson, McKay and Smith also raised concerns about the over-harvest of balsam in the area. After bringing me to one of two balsam stands in the area, Mombourquette noted that:

There is hardly a tree that doesn't have slashing or cut marks on it or branches noticeably missing. I don't know what the long-term impacts of overharvesting that area is going to be over time.... What we saw there is probably a good indication of harvesting over the last 30 years for sure but probably overharvesting in the last 20 years. (Focus Group 2020b).

In response to over-harvest in the area, Mombourquette has had to adjust her own harvest practice. She explains that the bark and sap are equally potent, but that it is easier to collect the sap without disturbing the tree. She doubts however, that others will change their methods even if information on how to avoid over-harvest is disseminated, adding that for KDFN the use of the bark is traditional and thus, it is the most desirable part of the tree. Although, she also points out that "if we are going to do things traditionally, then we also have to avoid taking too much as well" (September 19, 2020). I will return to this point again in Chapters Five when I discuss strategies for promoting respectful harvest.

Tensions between harvesters also emerged in the way local practices around harvest secrecy limited participants willingness to disclose harvest locations with us or with others. Most were comfortable marking out the broad swath of land in which they harvest, or to show me in person they just preferred not to pinpoint exact locations of their spots on maps or have them recorded in transcripts. We noted that both Indigenous and non-indigenous harvests attached varying levels of furtiveness to their practice, ranging from being selective about the information they share, to hiding trails and harvesting silently at dusk (Fieldnotes 2020c & 2020g). KDFN participants indicated picking up these habits from family members, while non-KDFN participants noted that this was a habit they picked up when they arrived in the north (Dillman August 25, 2020; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020). Team members Neilson and Meikle noted that they encountered this secrecy in their work, when consulting KDFN citizens on all types of harvest practices not just plant harvest (Focus Group 2020b).

When asked if she engages with other people accessing the area she harvests in, McDougall explained:

Not so much, like you may see other users, like other hikers or dog walkers but I feel like with the berry patches you're trying to be more secretive about it (haha). You're not like 'hey I am picking berries over here, come on join us. You feel like this is my secret patch over here, and you try and keep it to yourself or keep it to your mom or someone close. (2020a)

Like McDougall, most harvesters seemed to be far more comfortable sharing their secret patches with close family and friends (George 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020).

Participants also explained that some areas are more important to hide than others. Large obvious patches used by many people are not kept secret but small, productive, patches in secluded and convenient locations were more likely to be kept secret (Focus Group 2020b). As George notes "in a large area as well known for berry picking as Mount Mac, I don't worry too much about sharing the location with others, but in the small and less popular harvesting areas...where I seem to be one of the only people picking, I am more careful about disclosing that location. I have brought friends to pick there, but I am more protective of the area" (2020a). When asked about the reasoning behind their secrecy, some participants explained that it was motivated by a sense of resource scarcity or competition, while others felt it was a means of protecting delicate areas or of moderating over-harvest (Focus Group 2020b).

Holozubiec also discussed having kept her favorite patches secret for both these reasons, but having changed her approach during the pandemic after seeing others demonstrate a willingness to share their harvest patches:

Some [people] are like... 'everybody is going to be out there and there is none left' but then these people who obviously feel very secure in their harvesting are like 'let's have people go out and enjoy and let's direct them to where we know there is stuff, so there not disappointed if they're excited to go pick'. I am going to join the latter group. (2020a)

For her, sharing patches was about looking out for her fellow community members by supporting their efforts to develop more sustainable and self-sufficient food practices. Three participants also expressed a willingness to support the harvesting activities of acquaintance by sharing general directions to their favorite harvest patches (ex. in the forest along Copper Haul

Rd. or on the left ridge of Mount McIntyre), noting that only the most dedicated harvesters would put the time in to look for or know how to find choice harvesting spots (Mombourquette 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020). It was clear that they did not feel threatened by other dedicated harvesters, trusting them to pick respectfully. If we broaden our understanding of kin beyond the biogenetic to include those who have “mutual connectivity, shared responsibility, and interdependent well-being,” then how harvesters share or withhold information may also be a way of establishing kinship with other humans, non-humans, and the land (Shorter qtd. TallBear 2018, 159).

Secrecy was often a source of much teasing and laughter; for example, many jokes were made about using invisible ink to mark out patches on the map or about circling the whole map to avoid specification (McClintock 2020a; McDowell 2020a). During one observation, I heard one KDFN matriarch joke that I would need to sign a blood pack promising not to disclose the coordinates of her secret family berry patch (Fieldnotes September 2, 2020). However, I also witnessed a more serious side to these discussions. For Mombourquette, secrecy was linked to the legacy left from the historical banning and policing of Indigenous foodways:

There is something so engrained about keeping these things a secret, to hide what we are doing, and I think it really does go back to these [foraging, hunting and potlatch] bans and being under a constant microscope and being told that what we are doing is *wrong* or *dirty*. (2020a)

In speaking on this topic with a Focus Group, she also described how secrecy around food was used to survive and undermine violent systems of oppression:

I think of my grandmother, who went to the Chootla Residential School in Carcross, and she often told stories, specifically during the war years of how horrible the food conditions were, where the children were often starving...so collectively as a group there was this resistance, you know like the ‘rebel alliance’, who was sneaking out and trapping gophers, ptarmigan, and rabbits...hiding in the forest beyond the school, cooking these things on terribly small fires... There was also instances in which the older children would walk a certain distance to a [secret] meeting point and family members would meet them, and there would be an exchange of meat. (Focus Group 2020b)

After hearing Mombourquette speak, the group agreed that secrecy could be in part a reflection of the region’s colonial past and present. Both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous group

members followed this conversation by underscoring the need for planning that addressed the ways Indigenous foodways have been targeted by colonial authorities (Focus Group 2020b).

Harvesters noted that the activities of other users occasionally prevented them from enjoying their own practice. Mombourquette spoke on how tourism operations like the Sky-High Wilderness Ranch are having a noticeable impact on Łu Zil Män. She noted:

You see it in the trails left by the horses that they say are not free feeding but there is clearly trails all over the place. And those horse hooves are having a tremendous impact on the landscape...there is dogs that they are running in carts during the summer and sleds in the winter. There are tremendous amounts of dog and horse feces in the area. Again, these things are having a prolonged impact on the environment and the landscape, and it does impact harvesting. It's not just the erosion to the landscape, it's the ecological footprint left by continuous tourism operations involving domestic animals. (Focus Group 2020b)

Members of the research team were also stressed by the degradation of trails (typically used for harvest) caused by tourism operators in the area: “they’re taking over foot trails that we have had for generations. After you drive a bunch of equipment, horses, and people through there, it just becomes a mud whole” (Anderson qtd. Elder’s Meeting 2021a).

The Elders and several participants also remarked on the unpleasant noise created by ATVs (Dillman 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020). Speaking on this subject, McDougall explained:

Something that you become more aware of when you’re out doing an activity like berry picking, out on the land your senses become so attuned to your surroundings, you can hear better, like all your senses are heightened, so when you are in that space and then there is maybe motorized users, those are the people you feel are more disruptive to your activities. (2020a)

Harvesters also expressed concern about the impact these machines left on ground dwelling mushrooms, mosses, lichen, berry bushes and shrubs anytime they left established trails (George 2020a; Holozubiec September 14; Mombourquette 2020b; Paszkowska 2020a). Elder Smith echoed this concern as well: “You look at all the ATV, skidoos and motorboats, they just destroy all the plants, all the food. In the wintertime, they pack down the snow so hard the moose can’t eat” (Elder’s Meeting 2021a). While I watched most ATVs in the Mount McIntyre

area stick to pre-existing paths and roads, I recorded one instance of a quad spotted off the main trail and in the vicinity of harvesters. I also spotted quad tracks in and around other popular blueberry sites in the area (Fieldnotes 2020a).

While it was not raised as a concern by participants, all three Elders on the research team expressed frustration with fluctuation water levels caused by the dam near Łu Zil Män. They noted that these changes were impacting shoreline plants. As Elder McKay explains, “there is lungwort along the banks of the river and with the water going up and down it gets washed away and ruined” (Elder’s Meeting 2021a). They also highlighted how the disruption of plants along the banks of creeks and lakes in the area was resulting in harm to local fish and wildlife who use these plants for food and protection.

Although no harvesters spoke of dangerous encounters with other users in the Łu Zil Män, a few discussed potential safety concerns with me. Because harvesting is a slow, quiet activity that often takes place low to the ground, they felt it was easy to go unnoticed, especially by those moving at high speeds on loud machines. Subsequently, they feared that harvesters were vulnerable to run-ins or near misses involving motorized sports (George 2020a; McDowell 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020). The research team Elders registered this same concern: “there are all sorts of roads back there that go back up behind Fish Lake, and we are picking berries and all the sudden a biker come flying through our berry patch (haha) you know?!” (Smith qtd. Elder’s Meeting 2020a). A few harvesters also registered concern around gun-use in the area (Holozubiec 2020a; McDowell 2020a). Though most popular harvest sites are too close to roads to allow for gun-use, it is not unheard of for these regulations to be broken. Two harvesters mentioned hearing of a close call two years back, between a mountain biker and someone scoping their riffle near the Blown Away trail (George 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020). My fieldnotes also record finding gun casings along Mount McIntyre Road near Blown Away (2020a). While the participants were not present for the incident, they spoke on how it has created some low-level anxiety around harvesting in the area. However, despite their concerns

around motorized recreation and gun-use, many harvesters were optimistic about finding better ways to share the space and eagerly brought forward potential solutions on how to do so safely at our focus group discussions (see Chapter Five for more).

A significant number of participants also remarked on their frustration with encountering garbage along roads and trails in Łu Zil Män. They reported seeing everything from scattered cans and bottles to abandoned vehicles, furniture and appliances, household waste and larger items like wood scraps and tires. These items were most often found along the trails and roadways that they used to access their harvest sites but were occasionally found in the bush as well (George 2020a; McClintock 2020a; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette September 28; Paszkowska 2020a). My fieldnotes also document at least two abandoned vehicles and a lite scattering of garbage along most roads in the area (2020a, 2020b, 2020e & 2020f). All KDFN participants noted that they witnessed an increase in illegal dumping around their harvest spaces after tipping fees at the city landfill increased (Fieldnotes 2020c; Mombourquette, personal communication, email July 2, 2021).

While they did not place blame on any particular group, harvesters explained that reckless waste disposal was impacting their practice. Paszkowska spoke on the intense emotions she experienced around this very issue: “It drives me crazy when you find garbage, I can understand if you find one random piece, maybe it blew out of someone’s truck or bag and they didn’t notice, but purposeful dumping... stuff like that really bothers me” (2020a). Like Paszkowska, George was also willing to forgive the odd piece of garbage but underscored how that was not the main issue:

I often associate the wrapper with someone who was having fun out on the trails, and simply had it slip out of their pocket, so I don’t mind picking it up on their behalf. But sometimes, I sense the garbage along the road is intentionally left or something people simply don’t want to take back with them and that bothers me. (2020)

She explained that this made her feel “disgusted and upset. I am not sure how to describe it best, but it also feels less natural, like I go to enjoy the natural beauty of the outdoors and now I

am dealing with someone's garbage" (2020a). The Elders and two participants also reported excessive amounts of dog, horse, and human waste, along with toilet paper and diapers in popular areas like Mount McIntyre, Bonneville Lakes, and around the north end of Łu Zil Män (Elder's Meeting 2021a; George 2020a; Mombourquette September 28 & 2020b).

Mombourquette later explained that this type of disposal left her with concerns around the safety of harvesting in such places, so she often ended up avoiding them (Focus Group 2020b).

No matter the form of waste, its presence on the land had an emotional impact on harvesting community. McDougall recounted feeling a sense of disrespect or lack of acknowledgement for the practice of harvest and the importance of harvest spaces:

When you're out for a walk with your dogs or you're berry picking and there is garbage and waste that's when you feel people are not respecting that that's a site where people go to pick berries or recreate and enjoy nature. We have noticed that more in recent years. (2020a)

Participants also spoke on how these encounters harmed their view of other users, fostering emotions like confusion, anger, and distrust (George 2020a; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette 2020b; Paszkowska 2020a). Together, participants made it clear that the reckless disposal had both social and environmental consequences.

3.3.3 Dismissal and Disrespect

Sadly, harvesters felt that the lack of acknowledgement that harvest received from recreational users, was amplified in local land planning and management approaches. Several people expressed frustrations at the dismissal or lack of consideration held by planners and government officials responsible not just for the Łu Zil Män, but for green spaces all over the Whitehorse region. Two participants brought up the municipal government's sudden removal of wyld rose and raspberry bushes from a popular neighborhood alleyway. Having enjoyed spending time collecting berries in this very alley, alone or with her neighbours, McDowell told me: "it just seems so murderous to take wyld food away like that" (2020a). Upset by the lack of consideration for informal public harvest sites, McDougall notes, "To the workers it was just a

job done, but the people living in the area were devastated” (2020a). When submitting her map, she also emailed me a web article on this incident (Plonka 2020). In reviewing the piece, I was struck by how perfectly the article’s comments section reflected the harsh backlash harvesters reported facing when defending the importance of their practice.

Two common threads emerged, the first being that harvesters should simply go somewhere else: “plant your plants on your property.... or.... move to the country...build you a home...plant a little garden” (Atom July 10, 2020, commented on Plonka 2020). Though perhaps made in jest, as these are similar to John Prine song lyrics (Spanish Pipedream), comments like this entirely miss the point of wyld harvest, and dismiss how spaces like these contribute to food security. No matter how small, the destruction of alleyway rose bushes and raspberries removes an avenue of sustainable, local, and culturally relevant food harvest, available at low to no cost, and accessible to those living outside country residential areas. Comments like this also dismiss the communal value of harvest. Speaking on this subject, McDowell notes, “a lot of the response to the story was, ‘it’s public space so they’re not your berries, grow your own berries,’ but your home does include more than your 100 square ft. or whatever. Your home is your neighborhood” (2020a). Here, she raises a crucial point, harvesting is more than the practice of gathering food, it brings community together in the creation of shared place, memory, and identity. Thus, the disruption of harvest spaces harms both the social and subsistence networks attached to them. Like McDowell, Holozubiec also discussed what it was like to lose a harvest space: “I do remember my dad was an avid picker. I actually grew up in the states, and where he took me to pick, I took my husband back there, and it’s a shopping mall now (ha), and as I say that I can even feel my eyes watering up a little” (2020a). Although she no longer lives close to this harvest space, nor depends on it for subsistence, she still carries the impact of having been permanently separated from it. Holozubiec’s experience here helps to demonstrate the social value of these spaces. If we connect this to the role harvest plays in memory making, the destruction of a harvest sites can be understood as the destruction of living archives. McDowell

and Holozubiec can no longer use these sites to connect to old memories or to build new ones. Thus, their access to their family or community archives have been denied.

The second thread of comments that emerged from the article claimed that the uproar about this removal was unwarranted: “relax folks, they’ll grow back.... slow news day” (Woodcutter July 13, 2020, commented on Plonka 2020). The irony here is that harvesters are perfectly accustomed to the ebbs and flows of plant life cycles. The issues raised by the harvesters in the article are less about whether the growth will return and more about the damage already done. The idea that plants are replaceable, in combination with the notion that plant harvesters can go elsewhere, serves to excuse the harm done to plant communities and those dependent on them. Mombourquette offered many potent words to illustrate this point. As she stressed:

Not just harvesters but animals - anything that is relying on these natural resources, are constantly giving way to others. We are just told ‘make way for development and recreational activity and whatever else. I got to put my dirt bike on these roads, I got to drive my ATV somewhere, who cares if I am tearing up Labrador tea, it’s the Yukon, go anywhere else. (2020a)

It is also never a guarantee that disturbed plants will return. Several comments on this article also indicated that similar events had taken place in other parts of the city over the years, and one suggested it had a permanent impact:

They won’t grow back. The whole end of Marsh Lake along that straight stretch was a giant raspberry patch that people and bears would be picking on at the same time. The highway straight stretch came along and now try and find raspberries there. (Greasy Tex July 15, 2020, commented on Plonka 2020)

Sadly, the attitudes expressed by fellow community members often mirror those of planning officials.

The assumption that plant resources are expendable, and that the practice of foraging is completely detached from place, helps to justify the lack of consideration given to harvesting in land planning and land management. Here again, Mombourquette’s experience helped to demonstrate this point. She describes alerting the municipal government to the destruction of a

local harvest area by reckless and un-authorized campers: “several times I had mentioned ‘and this is an area that I collect boletus’ like ‘I want that to be a part of the report’ and the city official told me that that just wasn’t important in terms of their investigation. To summarize, she added “my voice as a harvester is not heard” (2020a).

Mombourquette also felt that even when included in planning approaches, the priorities of harvesters were never taken seriously. After reviewing the list to challenges brought forward by harvesters in this study, she responded with the following observation:

For me, the things that fuel a level of concern is that none of the things that you have listed are new. Elders that were interviewed in 1996 about the area when Fish Lake was having its very first land-use planning session, these are the same types of concerns that came up then, and I would say that 80% of those Elders have passed away, so 80% of KDFN Elders who participated in the ‘96 survey on the Fish Lake area never saw a completion or a change, and we are still facing the same problems that they were facing then. (Focus Group 2020b)

She points out how the lack of action taken to protect harvest areas builds on years of dismissal.⁶ In discussing Whitehorse’s Schwatka Lake dam, Mombourquette mentioned:

There are several audio records and files that talk about how that used to be a prolific berry site, and not just one Elder mentioned it, several Elders mentioned it. But that wasn’t going to delay the development of that dam. Nobody took that into consideration when they built that there, likewise, nobody took into consideration that the area around the Yukon College was a prolific and well-known cranberry spot. They just put that there. These were known areas that several First Nation families relied on a fairly consistent and seasonal, as in they were there to pick cranberries... but that’s just a good example of how no one is going to delay the development of the College and the Arts Centre and the archives, it’s the perfect place for those things but nobody takes into account the impact on harvesting in that area. (2020a)

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the historical neglect of harvest spaces has had a cumulative impact on today's harvesters. With fewer spaces for wyld harvest the social, cultural and

⁶ Mombourquette’s comments here also prompted reflection on my role in decolonization. As a researcher, how can I avoid creating yet another report that goes ignored? I am not entirely certain how to answer this question, but one step that comes to mind is ensuring that the project’s advocacy efforts are not just directed at government authorities. As a research I need to look for solutions that do not depend only on state ‘recognition’ and invite Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the harvest community to take ownership of our findings. Building on the momentum of this project requires me to continue my conversations with participants and community partners, even after my research has concluded, and to take direction from them on what actions they want to see next.

subsistence benefits of the practice are under threat. If the value of wyld plants and the practice of wyld harvest continue to be ignored or misunderstood by planners or Whitehorse community members, then the challenges faced by harvesters will continue to be overlooked. Nothing will change until the myth that both are dispensable is dispelled, and the presence of harvesters on the land and in the community formally validated. It is with this mind that our research team and participants began to explore ways of fostering greater awareness for wyld harvest and supports that recognize both the values attached to the practice and the challenges it faces. I have captured our recommendations in the Chapter that follows.

Chapter 4: Analysis

In following an Indigenous Feminist framework, it is necessary to analyze the colonial gender dynamics surrounding the issues raised by harvesters in Chapter Three. The systemic and social dismissal that harvesters experience can be understood as a symptom of colonial and patriarchal relationships to land. In Chapter Two, I discussed how these systems broadly influence northern land planning in a manner that restricts the power and authority of Indigenous women while reinforcing the legitimacy of heteropatriarchal Settler modes of land governance. I now expand that analysis by linking dynamics of colonial heteropatriarchy directly to the personal observations of project participants and research team members. In making this link, I aim to address the project's second and third research questions, first exploring how the region's ongoing legacy of colonization has shaped its residents' relationship to the practice of wild harvest and to each other in Section 4.1 and following with an evaluation of the tensions and opportunities that exist within the convergence and divergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous wild harvest foodways in section 4.2.

4.1 Harvest Relations within a Colonial Context

Under the current approach to northern land management, development becomes synonymous with support for capitalist expansion and colonial sovereignty. In building on the work of D.A. Rossiter, Pamela Spalding explains that the Settler colonial ideologies surrounding land management justify land 'ownership' through narrow definitions of land 'improvement' to guarantee the "dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources and their repossession by newcomers as enclosed agricultural spaces, private residential lands, and state-owned timber and mining resources" (2020, 371). As Armstrong explains, whether land is opened for public or private development, "Indigenous food sources are always at stake and are unprotected in the apparent codependency between government and corporate interests" (2020, 37). The KDFN Elders on the research team are keenly aware of this pattern and have continually expressed

frustration with it. In discussing the development process, Elder Smith noted that “it doesn’t matter what we say or do as First Nation’s people, our voices are not heard” (Elder’s Meeting 2021a).

Even when included as a planning consideration, the voices of Indigenous People and the harvest of wld foods are often muted in pursuit of ‘development’. For example, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) is tasked with reviewing proposed development activities and approving those that do not endanger the social and ecological health of the Yukon and as one of the most prominent co-management authorities in the territory. The Board voices a strong commitment to Indigenous Peoples and recognizes their rights to harvest “forest resources” (2018, 4). However, participant accounts of having their harvests site removed or disrupted by development suggest that wild harvest, a practice that both contributes to and is dependent on socio-ecological well-being, is not a priority within existing frameworks (4). Therefore, addressing Indigenous access to wld food sources is a matter of confronting the way development is understood and prioritized within Eurocentric planning approaches.

KDFN staff were confronted with the pervasive logics of Settler development when they first initiated the LAP process for Łu Zil Män with YG. As Neilson explained, a YG’s planning *Request for Proposals (RFP): Fish Lake Local Area Plan Background Report* document represented the area as a swath of largely “undeveloped” land (Government of Yukon 2020, 13). KDFN disputed the claim by pointing out that the Indigenous Peoples of the area had used the site for over 8000 years (Neilson, personal communication, email, June 3, 2021).

Throughout their extremely longstanding relationship to Łu Zil Män, Indigenous Peoples have altered the landscape to live, gather, and support their foodways (Gotthardt 2020). In excluding Indigenous types of land modification and use, Settler governments like YG erase the presence of Indigenous Peoples on the land, along with their rights to that land (Turner, Spalding & Deur 2020, 9). Such a designation also serves to present the space as empty and ungoverned, thus

naturalizing settlement in the area and the violence involved in the process of colonization.

Despite KDFN's comments on the language of "undeveloped" remained in the document on the rationale that the term referred exclusively to Western understandings of development. However, the document's lack of acknowledgement or space for Indigenous definitions of development offered a glimpse at the colonial assumptions underwriting local land planning approaches.

Now how does a colonial fixation with development translate to the dismissal of plant harvest? The actions that constitute wild harvest fail to serve the colonial patterns of land appropriation and capitalist expansion described above. This means that land modifications made by harvesters are not recognized as the kind of land 'improvement' used to justify land 'ownership'. Thus foragers, and especially Indigenous foragers, are not granted the access and authority that 'ownership' entails, subsequently extinguishing the threat such activities pose to the imperialist agenda of Settler states. On this topic, Spalding points out that the plant practices of Indigenous Peoples historically "did not reflect Canada's sovereign identity" which depended on "European style cultivation, plantation forestry, privatization of land and resources, and centralized government" (2020, 377). In other words, the practice of foraging does not involve the production mechanisms, timelines, or outputs necessary to bolster the capitalist objectives of Settler-nation states, and thus it is not considered the best possible use of the land (Turner, Spalding & Deur 2020, 9-10). Similarly, because harvest activities do not develop the land in a manner that acquires capital, harvesters do not propagate the national "myth of progress" used to justify and fund the imposition of colonial rule (Vowel 2017, 117-122). Only those who modify the land in a way that is productive to the joint endeavors of colonization and capitalism are recognized as valued users of the land and granted visibility within the planning process.

In addition to securing Settler power over land and resources, the systemic corrosion of subsistence is also a tool for controlling labour. Rauna Kuokkanen links the expansion of colonial and capitalist economic frameworks with the corrosion of subsistence practices around the globe. In her work on northern subsistence economies, she points out that a "systematic and

rigorous discursive ‘war against subsistence’” gained momentum in the post-World War II era (2011, 223). In an effort to restabilize the political and economic power of the state, post-war Settler nations like Canada sought to bolster development by bringing more bodies and lands under their authority: “only by destroying their capacity to subsist are people brought under the complete control and power of capital” (Kuokkanen 2011, 223). Restricting access to land, disrupting avenues of knowledge transmission, and criminalizing Indigenous foodways allowed Settler states to increase reliance on the wage economy, and restrict the social, economic, epistemological, and political autonomy that emerges from subsistence (Kuokkanen 2011, 223; Armstrong 2020, 44-45). The dismissal of subsistence work has also historically made it easier for Settler states to deny Indigenous ties to the vast swaths of land needed for the practice of wild plant harvest (Turner, Spalding, Deur 2020, 18-20). This joint control of land and labour is key to the success of the Settler state.

The accounts of participants in Section 3.2.1 indicate that they are strongly aware of the agency their subsistence work provides them against imperialist modes of oppression.

However, as Mombourquette suggests, this way of life is not the accepted norm:

I think there is a level of power in not having to pay for food, but also just being able to nourish yourself, your family, and your friends, from off the land. It just seems so weird to be able to do that, and we haven’t really gotten to a place as a society where it is normalized. (Focus Group 2020b).

Her comments hint at the hegemonic discursive forces accompanying the physical and structural policing of harvest practices. Capitalist narratives of food procurement often prevail at the expense of subsistence practices. The act of purchasing food through commercial avenues is given permanence as the only ‘civilized’, or ‘efficient’ method of food procurement. Eliminating wild foods from our foodways is thus understood as a natural progression towards modernity, and in our best interest as northern and Indigenous Peoples. Mombourquette explains:

There is also something in the weighted assumptions from others that I must have LOADS of time on my hands... and nothing better to do than to tromp around like a forest nymph. Or there is marked pity in their voice... like ‘awe, she must be too poor to buy salad and medicines... poor dear, if she only worked more instead of spending all

her time frolicking in the woods like some Bilbo Baggins, she would have more disposable income.⁷ (Personal communication, January 18, 2021)

Here we see the way anti-subsistence discourse labels harvest as leisure, instead of the vital act of food procurement that it is (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 178). Mombourquette's reflection also captures the way harvest is positioned as an inefficient use of time and an unwillingness to embrace 'modern' advancement. When harvest is represented as counter to the development agenda, it is easier to justify its dismissal along with the Indigenous rights associated with it.

Anti-subsistence efforts have also helped to secure the patriarchal labour relations required for successful Settler expansion. In presenting wage labor as "the only meaningful, viable labor relationship" the prevailing logics of Settler colonialism have successfully rendered all other forms of work "either invisible or insignificant" (Kuokkanen 2011, 224). In this way, the practice of subsistence harvesting has been folded into the domestic realm of unpaid 'womxn's work', where it can be used to "subsidize and uphold the process of capital accumulation" in the north (Kuokkanen 2011, 224-226). Historically, unpaid subsistence work has helped to ensure governments and corporations are not held responsible for the true cost of northern living (Kuokkanen 2011, 225-26). As a result, northern subsistence and cash economies are increasingly interdependent today, however, little attention is given to how the paid and unpaid labour of womxn often upholds both (Kuokkanen 2011, 224; Todd 2016 197-200). For example, the wages of womxn often help to cover the cost of equipment and fuel needed for subsistence activities. Simultaneously, womxn's participation in subsistence work often helps to subsidize household grocery bills (Kuokkanen 2011, 225-26; Todd 2016, 207, also see Section 3.2.1).

Womxn, and most notably Indigenous womxn, play pivotal roles within northern subsistence networks, yet their contributions are continually reduced to the "limited one-

⁷ Bilbo Baggins is a fictional character from J.R.R Tolkien's *The Hobbit: Or, There and Back Again* (1937). He is a member of the Hobbit community, a fantastical peace-loving and flaneur society. Hobbits are often thought of as endearing yet lazy or unremarkable in contrast to the warriors and intellects of other Middle-earth communities. Mombourquette's reference is meant to convey the way in which harvest is seen as a whimsical pursuit and harvesters as people who should not be taken seriously.

dimensional” conception of ‘womxn-the-gatherer’ (Kuokkanen 2011, 227). I would argue that this association is less about recognizing the important work Indigenous womxn carry out in stewarding plant knowledges and plant communities, and more about maintaining the hierarchal labour relations needed for colonial, patriarchal and capitalist regimes. In confronting assumptions about the ‘traditional’ role of womxn in southern Yukon, TKC Elder Shirley Adamson explains that traditional plant harvest was once something all members of her community learned about and participated in, regardless of gender (personal communication, email, June 2, 2021). Similarly, Mombourquette notes that responsibilities around the harvest of plants and animals are not divided along gender lines within her family and continue to be shared by all (Focus Group 2020b). When planning frameworks reduce wmn’s involvement in subsistence to plant harvest their labour within hunting and fishing vanishes. It also masculinizes these activities by reducing them to the individual act of killing, rather than the long list of community-orientated tasks that go into making food procurement successful (like organizing and outfitting expeditions, maintaining base camp, skinning, processing, preserving, cooking, and distributing the catch) (Altamirano- Jiménez 2013, 110; Parlee & Wray 2016, 172; Todd 2016, 196-97). Moreover, when not entirely concealed, womxn’s labour on the land is positioned as a mere extension of their domestic duties, ‘complimentary’ to, but separate from the masculine work of nation building (Altamirano- Jiménez 2013, 112-14). The lack of consideration given to harvesters then is part of the systematic corrosion of Indigenous governance through the creation of hierarchal uses of the land and corresponding hierarchies of authority over land. Though fishing and hunting are not as conducive to Settler agendas as extractive industries like mining, they can be manipulated to serve as justification for heteropaternal authority over land and resources when they are represented as the sole domain of men and as the primary source of food (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 111). Thus, this type of land-use and land user remains marginally visible within Settler-informed planning frameworks.

In discussing what happens when a few male hunters show up to community consultation events on land planning projects, Mombourquette notes that:

What they say is treated as absolute gold and yet there is a contingent of women that are constantly saying things, and the planners, who are also mostly men, aren't taking it seriously. [They're] like 'okay, so we are only going to focus on big game' and I am like there is more to harvesting than big game. (2020b)

She also explains that KDFN hunters have successfully convinced KDFN to erect signs that instruct users of the Bonneville Lake trails to respect hunting in the area, but that she has been unsuccessful in her campaign for similar signage around plant harvest (personal communication, email, July 2, 2021). Her comments point to the ongoing dismissal of both womxn and wld plants within contemporary planning frameworks in favor of male-centric harvesting.

I must stress again that the exclusion of harvest cannot be read simply as a careless oversight. Dismissing womxn's role in hunting and fishing, while dampening the importance of plant foraging, works to extinguish the power womxn yield within their communities. So long as colonial heteropatriarchy persists in social and institutional understandings of land, labour and food, decisions around wld harvest will continue to carry political connotations. Thus, harvest relations within Whitehorse press up against notions of capital accumulation and sovereignty in both subversive and compliant ways. On this subject, Elder McKay pushes for stewardship over ownership: "[Lu Zil Män] doesn't belong to us, but it still has to be taken care of. I guess recognition of that has to take place, to the government from the people" (Elder's Meeting 2021a). I will continue my discussion of these themes and their links to northern foodways in the next section, where I explore how Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvest practices overlap and depart from one and another.

4.2 Convergence & Divergence of Indigenous & Non-Indigenous Foodways

While the primary target of colonial anti-subsistence efforts has undoubtedly been Indigenous self-determination, I do think it is important to consider how these ideologies affect

other communities that rely on subsistence to care for the immediate needs of their community - needs often neglected by the dominant socio-economic class. For example, Ukrainian Canadian families (like my own) who lived in rural and largely self-sufficient communities, relied heavily on the domestic production of hemp as a vital source of nutrition, medicine, fabric, and fuel (Fodchuk 2007, 85-89). However, after the criminalization of hemp in 1937, under the Narcotic Control Act, they found themselves increasingly dependent on the wage economy (Fodchuk 2007, 90). The employment options available to Ukrainians (more specifically Ukrainian men) at this time were often limited to low-paying jobs or employment arrangements that allowed for 'labour in lieu' of taxation (Fodchuk 2007, 93). My own relatives tell of how jobs like these, taken outside of the Ukrainian Canadian community, placed them at greater risk of exploitation and discrimination. This type of work also involved expanding the nation's roads, rails, factories and agricultural developments, work that aided in securing Canada's sovereignty (over Indigenous lands) and increased the economic prosperity of the Anglo upper-class (Mycak 1996, 69-70). In this way, anti-subsistence practices have historically ensured that marginalized immigrant communities are engaged in the work of Settler imperialism. That said, I do want to stress that unlike Indigenous and racialized peoples today, Ukrainian-Canadians are celebrated for their 'nation building' efforts and have been able to "slide" into the box of White-Settler, benefiting from the immense power and privilege associated with this title and from the past and present exploitation of the land and of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities (Ahmed 2004, 120, 117; Kostash 1994, 4-5). It is thus necessary to unpack the different ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters experience the systems of exclusion explored above in Section 4.1. Doing so allows for an exploration of the different tensions and opportunities that emerge from the ways Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvest practices overlap and divide from one and another. With this information we can work towards planning interventions that remain responsive to the diversity of experience had by harvesters

within colonial and patriarchal frameworks but do not replicate Settler privilege over Indigenous Peoples.

4.2.1 Tensions around Harvest Practices

The capitalist, White-supremacist and patriarchal systems serves colonization, produce oppressive conditions for many people othered along long lines of race, gender, sexuality, ability, class and human status; however, Indigenous Peoples are specifically targeted because of the primary Settler imperative to control land. While the folk harvest traditions of non-Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous womxn may not align perfectly with capitalist or heteropatriarchal agendas, the presence of Settler bodies on the land do not threaten these systems in the way Indigenous bodies do. As Leanne Simpson explains:

Colonizers want land, but Indigenous bodies forming nations are in the way because they have a strong attachment to land and because they replicate Indigeneity. All Indigenous genders as political orders also replicate Indigenous nationhood, but the colonizers are looking through the eyes of heteropatriarchy, so they see Indigenous women's and girls' bodies as the bodies that reproduce nations, and they see 2SQ bodies as the biggest threat to their assimilation and dispossession project.⁸ (2017, 87)

While the exclusion of harvest impacts both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, it builds on the ongoing displacement and oppression of Indigenous Peoples. The presence of Indigenous bodies on the land and their involvement in Indigenous food systems poses a threat to Settler sovereignty because this replicates Indigenous claims to land, reinforces Indigenous autonomy and challenges the all-encompassing authority of the Settler state. By contrast, Settlers can be more easily be brought under the authority of colonial governments and their foraging practices construed to serve a narrative of Settler belonging within or ownership over Indigenous lands and cultures. Though they may experience peripheral impacts, non-Indigenous harvesters are not the target of Settler modes of control and as such can access systems of privilege not available to their Indigenous counterparts.

⁸ 2SQ is an acronym for Two-Spirited and Queer people.

The contrast in the way Settler relations to land are valued over Indigenous ones are often reflected in the way social capital around harvest circulates. This is another keyway in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvest ways can differ from one and another. Mombourquette recalls being labelled “crazy,” “reckless,” or “stupid” on numerous occasions for spending time in the “dangerous wilderness” and for harvesting edible plants (personal communication, email, January 18, 2021). However, Taylor, a non-Indigenous harvester, experiences something entirely different:

I almost feel like berry picking is a ‘cool thing to do’ amongst a lot of the friends I have up here. I feel like there is a culture in my generation around being a foodie.... I do enjoy it, but the group of people that I associate myself with, because we are so focused on good local food, I do feel a little bit of social pressure almost to go and berry pick, and I don’t see that as a negative thing, but it is something I have noticed, that is where some of the motivation comes... Maybe in a way it has become a gentrified activity... Like a First Nations woman may have traditional ties to the activity that others don’t. But it is interesting how it’s become like a White person thing to do. (2020a)

Touching on the shifting social dynamics around harvest, McDougall explains that her KDFN ancestors did not view the practice of hunting and gathering as the “luxury and leisure it is today, it was a necessity” (2020a). Here she highlights how fewer and fewer people have the time and resources to harvest, meaning the activity has become increasingly dominated by those of higher socio-economic status. McDougall and Dillman also joke about the potential for a *Portlandia*-style skit on selling their berries to “bougie” consumers by emphasizing the fact that they had been picked from a location used by four generations of Indigenous women in their family (Fieldnotes 2020c).⁹ This joke hints at the way ‘storied’ food trends from ‘local’, ‘wild’, ‘ethical’, ‘sustainable’, ‘organic’ and ‘farm-to-table’ sources have become fetishized commodities.

Mombourquette has observed how shifting values around harvest are becoming increasingly visible within the digital spaces she occupies. She explains that her social media

⁹ *Portlandia* (2011) is a sketch comedy television show known for its satirical representation of life in Portland, Oregon, and the eccentricities of its hype, young or leftist residents.

posts on harvest garner a great deal of attention from individuals looking to commodify and exploit her labour and knowledge:

I have received multiple solicitations for me to take groups of 'bougie' people out for a fun foraging tour for free, or do a documentary for free to show people how to harvest and where and how to process – and that this would increase my own following (which I don't care about) and would boost the notoriety of Indigenous foraging... I was also asked to "collaborate" on a local beer – by supplying all the natural foraged ingredients for free; there was also something about me writing a WHOLE cookbook for free (but would get royalties from the sale) to highlight the land-to-table French fusion cooking I do...I've also been asked to do Indigenous French Fusion catering for free or at a discount to promote... "my brand" like... as if I have a brand or am making some kind of lucrative living off my foraging and culinary skills! There is something so entitled about the way I have been approached...like I somehow have more worth as a forager and fusion cook [as opposed to my work as a researcher and analyst]... but that these things are actually worthless to them because I should be doing it for free or for a discount – If I bring up the point about how small scale my foraging is, that it takes a long time to harvest these things, and it's like not enough to sustain a business, I'm told to just outsource the local foraging...there is ZERO connection in their minds about the act of foraging (getting out and communing with the land), it's all about the potential for bougie products that I would supposedly make SO much money off of or become an online influencer from. (Personal communication, email, July 2, 2021)

McDowell also believes that harvest is becoming a symbol of social status online:

I am proud to say I pick berries. I see others on social media sharing pictures of their harvest, which is not my deal...I think it's just generally, that sort of self-promotion or branding that happens on social media, and I guess I don't approve of it as a healthy way to be in the world. I don't object specifically to the show of harvest or whatever, it just feels like a part of that branding thing which makes me squirm. (2020a)

Though not all social media posts about harvest carry this intention, McDowell illuminates how harvest has gained the ability to signify sets of social values or traits. As noted earlier, McDougall points on how harvest is increasingly becoming a luxury, suggest that its presence in someone's social media indicate access to the necessary time and resources needed for the practice. Similarly, McDougall and Dillman's joke highlights how harvest may also signal one's preference in or commitment to the 'social and environmentally conscious' eating trends often associated with Whiteness and wealth, or how in its departure from the norm, harvest can convey a sense of uniqueness (Brenton 2017, 871-874). Together these traits convey social and economic membership within the youthful upper-middle class of the Settler bourgeois. Furthermore, Mombourquette's online experience indicates that some people view the practice

of harvest purely as a means of advancing oneself by making money of those seeking to fetishize Indigenous knowledges or affiliate themselves with the Settler bourgeois.

The above accounts from participant reflect a growing tension within the harvesting community. By way of conspicuous consumption, relations to land can quickly be appropriated into a marketable commodity rather than a source of embedded relationality and responsibility. In other words, this form of consumption often takes place outside the framework of relational accountability, where individuals and groups see their well-being as linked to the wellbeing of land and to the human and more than human communities associated with it. Furthermore, the exploitation of northern Indigenous harvest practices and spaces for the social and economic gain of Settlers is an undeniable continuation of colonization.

4.2.2 Tensions around Harvest Places

A full evaluation of the tensions surrounding harvest cannot be done without careful consideration for the ways such tensions play out over physical space. When considered side-by-side, the question of how colonization has shaped harvest relations and the question of what tensions exist around those harvest relations, prompt reflection on the reciprocal relations between people and place. Working within Stó:lō Coastal Salish, Amanda Fehr notes that place has a vital role to play “in validating social and political status and determining personal and collective identities” (2018, 62).¹⁰ As she explains “the reciprocal relationships between people and their places illustrates how individuals gain power and authority from belonging to certain places, and how they in turn use that power to maintain connections with those places in the present and for the future” (Fehr 2018, 62). In other words, identities often emerge from relation to place and these identities in turn shape the stories we tell about ourselves and the collectives

¹⁰ Fehr notes having built on the work of Sonny McHalsie, Bruce Miller, Keith Thor Carlson, David Schaepe, Wayne Shuttles and Crisca Beirwert to make this claim.

to which we belong. Further, these stories determine how we define either the responsibility we hold to the land or the or entitlements we believe to have over it.

The security of a particular identity and the strength of its claim to land are reinforced by one and another in a cyclical fashion - the greater the access to land, the more a particular group can practice their relationship to land; and the more this relationship to land is practiced, the stronger the claim to land; the stronger the claim to land, the more access a group has to land. For this reason, tensions between harvesters and other users of Łu Zil Män (like those explored in Section 3.3) cannot simply be reduced to competition over resources and must also be understood as a struggle over “controlling the meaning of place and who has control over that meaning” (Fehr 2018, 72). Fehr also points out that often, where groups have conflicting claims to land, one will seek to diminish the claim of the other to affirm their own (2018, 67-68). On this topic, Altamirano-Jiménez argues that:

Struggles involving place are struggles over who controls how place is lived and imagined. How place is represented, what stories are heard, in what forums they are told, and for what purposes are political phenomena. Thus, the issue of which stories are recovered, and which ones are erased has consequences for different groups of people. (2013, 7)

Therefore, the relationships to land that are protected through northern land planning are indicative of which identities are valued and thus allowed to thrive. So, if the stories of wld foragers are not valued within land planning then whose stories receive representation? What identities are promoted through the denial of wld plant harvest? And how does this denial define the meaning assigned to northern places like Łu Zil Män?

I argue that the denial of wld plant harvest is linked to the prominent portrayal of northern identities as hyper-masculine, a portrayal dependent on notions of domination that influence the way policy around land planning is formed and applied. When relations to land are defined through narrow conceptions of development and labour, the construction of equally narrow sets of identities arise. The way in which we use the land, or rather the way in which our relationship to the land as northern peoples is represented, is often funneled through a narrative of

adventurous, independent, unconstrained, and prosperous frontier masculinity. In my time as a northern resident, I have witnessed this association in the territory's tourism campaigns, in advertising for local breweries, major television productions like Gold Rush and Yukon Gold, and the canonical works of Jack London or Robert Service.¹¹ Collectively, these productions influence local and global conceptions of what it means to live in the Yukon. As Mombourquette notes:

Yukon ruggedness is like a commodity, and they're like entitled to it, like 'I have, and ATV and I have a RV, so I am going to go out and be a redneck on the land and no one is going to tell me that I can't do this'. There is an entitlement there, you can see it in the way people drive on the roads. (2020a)

Regardless of who practices these activities, hunting, mining, motorized or self-propelled backcountry sports work to uphold the 'pioneering spirit' of the Klondike days (Frey 2016; Kikkert & Lackenbaur 2017). This narrative aligns with both the heteropatrial and Settler notions underwriting discourse around northern land planning. If our relationship to northern places and northern lands are defined by our ability to master them against all odds, then the identity that emerges is one of conquest. If we story ourselves in this way then our obligation to that place, to that land, is one of domination over dependency, freedom over responsibility and occupation over subjugation. Under this definition greater access to land is given to activities that fulfill this expression of northern identity. The more this relationship to land is practiced the stronger its claim to land, and the greater its ability to displace the claims of those who challenge it.

4.2.3 Opportunities for Indigenous & Non-Indigenous Collaboration

In leaving out wild harvest, current approaches to land planning privilege a Settler-patriarchal story of land. Our efforts to map the relationships that harvesters hold to land is an

¹¹ See "[Don't wait for someone to relive the Klondike Gold Rush](#)" or "[Don't wait for someone to take the trip of your dreams](#)" advertisement by Travel Yukon (2018), the "[Beer worth freezing for](#)" (2021) and [early campaigns](#) (2007) by Yukon Brewing for examples.

effort to privilege their identities, stories, understandings of and obligations to land. The practice of “restoring landscape” around wild plant harvest emphasizes the importance of “community ways of sharing knowledge, acts of remembering, land centered literacies, and the intimacy of everyday actions” (Cornthassel 2020, 352). It is this everydayness that gives harvest the power to support Indigenous resurgence and destabilize the “colonial status quo” in a manner that shifts “public performativities to embodied practices” (Cornthassel 2020, 355). As Simpson points out:

When resistance [within an Indigenous context] is defined solely as large-scale political mobilization, we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive. We have those things today because our ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children to occupy and use our land as we always have. (2011, 16)

Though practiced on a day-to-day and deeply personal scale, the resistance embodied by harvesters radiate into broader political realms of power and authority. The resurgence of Indigenous and folk foodways loosen the capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal grasp on land governance. This move has the potential to support cascading waves of liberation for other groups restricted by these modes of oppression.

While the goal unsettling the oppressive underpinnings of contemporary land planning may be difficult to achieve through short term projects like the Łu Zil Män LAP, our research team believes that making space for Indigenous women and the practice of harvest is a powerful starting point. The practice is forever interwoven with issues of land, labour, and food, three factors used in the maintenance of Settler control, and thus can be mobilized against this agenda. As Kuokkanen points out, subsistence activities like harvest offer “a means of resisting the global capitalist economy and its patriarchal, colonial control over women, means of production, and the land” (2011, 228). Just as participants demonstrated in Section 3.2, engaging in everyday subsistence activities and educating others in the practice offered a means of advancing their individual and collective sense of autonomy, agency, and economic self-sufficiency within northern settings. Kuokkanen also notes that movements towards

reclaiming and upholding subsistence spaces and practices around the globe are most often led by Indigenous womn (2011, 228). On a similar note, Linda Black Elk argues, it is through harvest “that we are practicing resistance as a form of caring for, and tending to, our relationships with people and other species” (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 174). Our research suggests that efforts to support harvest can bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities together to challenge inequitable land-use dynamics, promote eco-social kinship building, and work to uphold Indigenous womxn’s legacies of resistance. I will address this potential in the next chapter, where I explore the project’s remaining research questions: what resources does the harvest community need to thrive in Łu Zil Mǎn and elsewhere; and how can Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments work with this information to develop collaborative supports for the practice? My work with participants and research team members in designing solutions that address existing tensions and opportunities around harvest spaces and practices has been instrumental in developing a response to both these questions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter, I respond to each of the project's five research questions:

1. What relationships do wild plant harvesters have with the practice of harvest and with Łu Zil Män?
2. How has the region's ongoing legacy of colonization shaped its residents' relationship to the practice of wild harvest and to each other?
3. What tensions and opportunities exist within the convergence and divergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvest foodways?
4. What resources does the harvest community need to thrive in Łu Zil Män and elsewhere?
5. How can Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments work with this information to develop collaborative supports for the practice?

As part of my exploration of these research questions, I present our group's collaborative recommendations on how to support harvest and address issues around the practice. Following this, I evaluate the project's limitations and strengths, touching here in the challenges and benefits of conducting community-based research in the era of COVID-19. Afterwards, I will discuss how this research contributes to the existing literature on northern plant harvest. I will also comment briefly on potential areas for further investigation. Finally, I will conclude with my thoughts on the radical potential of relationship building around wyld harvest.

5.1 Revisiting our Research Questions

Up to this point, I have presented our findings on the first three research questions. I will now briefly revisit each of these questions to demonstrate how the research team and I have answered them, after which I will move into an exploration of our fourth and final question. In Chapter Three, I addressed the project's first research question: What relationships do wild plant harvesters have with the practice of harvest and with Łu Zil Män? Here I outlined the relationships wyld plant harvesters have to the practice of harvest and to Łu Zil Män. I established that the relationships that participants hold to the practice of harvest and to the area

of Łu Zil Män, fulfill their physical, cultural, social, spiritual, and economic needs. These relations are supported by Łu Zil Män's proximity to the city of Whitehorse and by the abundance of diverse harvest resources found there. Two of the factors that made Łu Zil Män particularly special to participants were 1) the ancestral connections that KDFN citizens strengthened through harvesting in the area, and 2) the way the space supported social harvest gatherings. Through our mapping initiative we were also able to create a visual representation of many points of connection harvesters have to Łu Zil Män and identified Mount Macintyre, Bonneville Lakes, and the north end of the lake as popular spots for foraging activities. This map also allowed us to document the points of tension that hinder the health of harvest relations in the area. These issues included heavy traffic along Fish Lake Road, and overuse in and around the north end of the lake. As I will elaborate on in Section 5.3, even though the project only involved a small segment of the harvest community, our research offers valuable insight on how harvesters connect to Łu Zil Män. However, further engagement with a wider range of the harvest community is needed to answer the project's first question in greater detail. That said, the knowledge shared by participants allowed KDFN and I to conduct in-depth analysis on the project's second research question.

In Section 4.1. we asked how the region's ongoing legacy of colonization has shaped its residents' relationship to the practice of wyld harvest and to each other. Together, members of the research team, participants and I have determined that colonial power dynamics have restricted harvest relations through the destruction of harvest spaces, the devaluation of subsistence practices, and the lack of consideration for harvesters had by land planning initiatives. While harvesters feel these constraints, they also recognize the ways in which their practice allows them to work outside of or against forces of colonization, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. The resistance potential of plant harvest was particularly important for Indigenous participants.

The theme of resistance also came up in Section 4.2, where I discuss the tensions and opportunities inherent in the convergence and divergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous foodways. While both Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters are impacted by the dismissal of wld harvest, the north's ongoing legacy of colonization means that this impact is disproportionately felt by Indigenous harvesters. In practicing harvest, Indigenous Peoples assert their rights to land and self-determination - two factors that threaten Settler sovereignty. It is for this reason that Indigenous practices of plant harvest face greater policing within colonial contexts. Acknowledging this difference and the tensions it creates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous land users is key to developing solutions for the protection of wld plant harvest spaces and practices. Our exploration of this question also highlighted the tremendous potential harvesting holds for coalition building and enhanced networks of accountability between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Like question two, engaging a larger group of harvesters would support a more detailed exploration of the tensions and opportunities that emerge from the intricate ways in which harvest Indigenous and non-Indigenous foodways overlap and depart from one and another. Yet, our exploration of this question still generated a great deal of information, and has helped us to answer the project's last two remaining questions: 4) What resources does the harvest community need to thrive in Łu Zil Män, and 5) how can Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments work with this information to develop collaborative supports for the practice? In the next section, I will introduce our findings on this question as part of the project's recommendations.

5.1.1 Recommendations for Supporting Harvest Relations in Łu Zil Män

Over the course of this project, I have worked collaboratively with participants and KDFN citizens on the research team to establish ways for KDFN and YG to support harvest throughout the Łu Zil Män planning process. Together, we have collected several recommendations and organized them into the following categories:

- Improving the way land-use is valued towards the recognition of wyld harvest
- Protecting harvest sites
- Promoting community cohesion through harvest
- Recognizing the knowledge of harvesters in land planning

These recommendations were formed through one-on-one discussions and group meetings with participants and members of the research team. In the section that follows, I will unpack each of these approaches highlighting how best to begin thinking and acting on a commitment to wyld harvest.

5.1.1.1 Improving the Way Land-use is Evaluated

To make room for wyld harvest in northern land planning, Settler patriarchal paradigms must first be challenged in Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance, both independently and in the places where they overlap, as is the case with Łu Zil Män. This means re-assessing who and what is valued within planning frameworks in a way that challenges the primacy of ‘development’ and disrupts heteropatriarchal modes of accumulating power. In taking on this task, we must amplify the voices and practices that assert Indigenous autonomy, represent the perspectives of marginalized groups, and promote more restorative access to land. As part of this shift, community values must be recognized as equal to private property rights. It is not possible to support foraging practices in full until the systems that presently benefit from the exclusion of harvest are removed.

As outlined in Section 3.2.1, our project findings indicated that plant harvest practices help to support a wholistic sense of well-being for those involved in the study. This aligns with the findings of Baker’s research with Sakâwiyiniwak, Dene and Métis Peoples of northern Alberta. She notes that in addition to being a vital source of food and medicine, berry picking, and its associated activities, give rise to a host of important social interactions between harvesters and the land, providing “people with the necessary cultural and environmental knowledge to maintain their cultural identity, health, and well-being” (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 181). Where this work differs from that of Baker’s is in its inclusion of non-Indigenous

harvesters. Though I seek to foreground the harvest rights and relationships that Indigenous Peoples have to the land, I do want to note that harvesters of all backgrounds appear to derive physical, social, spiritual, cultural, and economic benefits from the practice. However, where these foodways may differ is in the depth of their ancestral links to specific lands, a depth that is the source of Indigenous rights and self-determination, and that distinguishes these two groups of harvesters (Corntassel 2020, 350-52).

Beyond being a source of well-being for individuals, harvest also appears to support the collective health of the Whitehorse community. As participants highlighted in Section 3.2.2 harvest practices help them care for the human and other-than-human communities around them. Again, this aligns with Baker's observations: "the literal and metaphorical act of 'checking the berries' is an act of tending to one and another and to the landscape" (Black Elk & Baker 2020,178). Speaking on a similar topic, Armstrong explains that:

Gathering food presents a framework for experiential education that builds community and community mindedness. Working together to harvest food out on the land provides opportunities to embed the ethic of caring for one and another as members of one community and is an essential component of learning the benefit of mutual support... The direct experiencing of protocols of respect in food gathering allows members of the next generation to receive the gift of understanding their role by reclaiming their own unique identity as a valued part of family, community, and land. (2020, 47)

While Armstrong's comments are presented within the context of Indigenous foodways, our findings suggest that the practice is also tool for caring and sharing in non-Indigenous communities. Again, this does not mean that Indigenous and non-Indigenous practices of wyld harvest are one in the same, it simply means that they are not entirely separate, at least in the community of Whitehorse. It is in these moments of convergence where wyld harvest can offer a shared interest for Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the Whitehorse community to gather around. The bridge created by harvest can then serve as a site for decolonial organizing, where Indigenous land relations and modes of governance can be centered, and Settler notions of property and control challenged.

As outlined in Section 3.2.1, wyld plant harvest also offered participants an enhanced sense of food security, and this often translated to an increased sense of food sovereignty, particularly for Indigenous participants. As Armstrong argues, both food security and sovereignty “need to be understood together, today and into the future” within Indigenized and decolonized approaches to land planning because “ensuring the regeneration of food ultimately means both respecting internally how lands are used and, at the same level, protecting the land from external misuse” (2020, 37). Armstrong also stresses that acknowledging Indigenous food sovereignty can help to address injustices against Indigenous Peoples (2020, 37). Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants were eager to see these harms addressed through greater recognition for Indigenous foodways within land planning; however, they also stressed that recognition was not enough.

Action must be taken within planning projects like the LAP for Łu Zil Män to ensure the practice, spaces, and stewards of wyld harvest are incorporated into the planning process in a meaningful way. Speaking broadly on Indigenous involvement in planning, Elder McKay, explains: “what is more important than consultation is participation... we want to see participation”. She goes on to add:

[KDFN citizens and Elders] are adamant about being involved and having an actual say about what gets developed and doesn't, it's been in our families for generations, it's not just the now people. We need to be in the planning level not just at the end of the proposal process. (Elder's Meeting 2021a)

Indeed, both participants and members of the research team agreed that inclusion meant a willingness to change the status quo. Together we have established that this change requires the LAP process to adopt a strategy for wyld plant harvest inclusion, one that involves:

- bringing harvesters together to discuss guidelines for respectful engagement and potential opportunities for their involvement in the plan;
- using the information generated from this project to work with foragers on the creation of harvest supports and to increase awareness of harvesting as a distinct and valued land use activity;

- continuing the work of documenting important harvest sites and access routes, along with harvest interests and concerns; and
- including KDFN Elders, Knowledge Holders, and harvesters in decisions around the specific cultural, ancestral, and historical harvest values in the area.

When working with Elders, we want to stress the importance of involving them throughout the decision-making process. On this subject, Elder Smith notes that “in the structure of family, the Elders were the traditional ones that decided, but now the way it’s run we have no say. We have an Elders council but no power...We work backwards now; they just call us when they need us” (Elders Meeting 2021a). Adding to this Elder McKay explains that “when they need us it’s in a way that doesn’t have any say in the final decision...They want us to sign off so they can say they’ve done their consultation” (Elders Meeting 2021a). Building on the comments of Smith and McKay, Elder Anderson joked that Indigenous Nations have “learned” the art of superficial engagement from crown governments (Elders Meeting 2021a). All three made it clear that they have no interest in continuing this trend and expect more from Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments moving forward.

Participants and research team members would also like to propose that the Łu Zil Män LAP be used to set an example for how to engage and support wild harvesters. We recommend that if the LAP committee embarks on the task of including harvesters, that they document this process and collect feedback from harvesters throughout. This information can then be used to inform policy and advocacy work directed at future projects and larger planning or assessment bodies like YESAB.

In taking steps towards including harvest, the Łu Zil Män LAP committee can better reach its goal of balancing the diverse of interests in the area and of ensuring all users are fairly represented in the plan (Government of Yukon 2020, 2). Engaging with harvesters also helps the committee to better understand and acknowledge past and present use in the area, while at the same time promoting the history and culture of Indigenous Peoples (Government of Yukon

2020, 2). Empowering harvest is an act of empowering Indigenous and northern self-determination, and it is the liberating potential of harvest that makes the practice not just an important consideration for planners but a potential obligation to reflect on. Ultimately, however, a commitment to harvest means a commitment to unsettling the capitalist, colonial and patriarchal ideologies underwriting conventional northern land planning approaches. These ideologies exclude Indigenous Peoples, women and harvesters. So, while the inclusion of harvest can aid the committee on its path towards balance, diversity and recognition for Indigenous people, these goals cannot be achieved without centering those who have been traditionally marginalized by planning frameworks.

5.1.1.2 Protecting Harvest Spaces

There cannot be a commitment to harvesters without a willingness to ensure the areas where they collect plant foods and medicines are not developed, or that their access to these spaces is not impeded by other users. Our research demonstrates that harvesters not only need these places to harvest, but they also need them to support the social, cultural and knowledge systems surrounding the practice. As Fehr points out, bonds to place “often result from familial and interpersonal relationships that were maintained there” and thus, “something is potentially lost when families do not gather [in these places] together...The storytelling, the sharing of memories” (Fehr 2018, 65,67). Similarly, Baker observes how people use wild harvest as an opportunity to “tell stories about their experiences in these places and in general... Sharing stories about life experiences and histories imparts life skills and knowledge to friends, family and especially children and youth” (Table 10.1 in Black Elk & Baker 2020, 179). Expanding on this subject Turner, Spalding and Deur stress that when:

Cherished place[s] or culturally important communities of plants and animals [are] destroyed, communities also find themselves unable to pass on knowledge about this heritage to younger generations. Learning how to find key species, to harvest and process them sustainably, and use associated vocabulary and stories generally takes place through participatory and experiential intergenerational learning. This transmission of knowledge is not possible once the species in the places where they live are

destroyed or become inaccessible. (Snively and Williams 2016; Turner 2005, 2015 qtd. in 2020, 19-20)

Elder Smith commented on not being able to pass along valuable teachings to her grandchildren in Section 1.2 and our participants' accounts of losing their harvest sites in Section 3.3.3, help to illuminate the impact of this separation.

For Indigenous Peoples, the disruption of their wyld harvest practices and spaces builds on colonial attempts to undermine their knowledge production and self-determination. In speaking on the development of the Dakota Access Pipeline, Black Elk captures the devastating cascade of effects brought by the destruction of harvest grounds:

I had visited the site many times and knew these plants well. I consider them friends, allies, and relatives, and I love to share their beauty with my students. Now, this place no longer exists.... If you have ever eaten buffalo berry, you know what a massive loss that is, nutritionally, emotionally, and spiritually. These precious foods and medicines have been stolen from the people of Standing Rock. Their seeds, their genes, and the precious diversity offered by the space have been destroyed forever. The loss to me as an Indigenous woman and as an Ethnobotanist is palpable and profound. (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 183)

It is important to acknowledge Black Elk's use of the phrase "this place no longer exists" (183).

While the geographic location of the space remains constant, once it can no longer host the human and non-human communities brought together there, it ceases to exist as a living, breathing place in the minds of those connected to it (Fehr 2018, 66). As Fehr explains, meaning:

[I]s never simply something ascribed to place—it also exists within them...It is through the process of returning to these places that aspects of memory and identity are regained and new connections with the landscape created, and why the possibility of being denied access to these spaces becomes such a point of contention. (2018, 77)

I would like to add however, that access for harvesters is not simply the ability to be physically present in a space – it is the ability to carry out the activities that support their connection to harvest places. Here, I am reminded of one of my on-the-land observations with Mombourquette, where she gestured to the busy parking lot at the head of Łu Zil Män and stated, "I've been pushed out of so many places around here" (Fieldnotes 2020g). Though she

may still be able to access the area, its popularity has made it difficult for her to continue harvesting there. In other words, she has not just been pushed out of space, but out of place. On this subject, Elder Smith exclaims: “I think that is the most hurtful part of all, it’s like a knife in our heart when something is taken from us” (Elder’s Meeting 2021a).

My interviews with participants made it clear that they are not seeking to claim harvest spaces as their own and no-one else’s. They often stressed that making space and place for harvesters did not depend on the exclusion of others. In fact, harvesters appeared to be incredibly open to sharing with others. Even when expressing concern about the adverse impacts of other types of use, harvesters took care to highlight the potential in sharing space. For example: 1) ATV use meant reduced interactions with bears; 2) mountain bikers, hikers, and runners meant the creation of helpful trails; 3) mining exploration meant the maintenance of access roads; 4) tourism and outdoor recreation meant that more people might build a connection to these spaces and feel compelled to protect them; and 5) allowing for fishing, hunting, and trapping meant more people invested in local food security and sovereignty (Dillman 2020a, McClintock 2020a, McDougall 2020a; Paszkowska 2020a; Taylor September 4, 2020). As I noted in Section 3.1, participants also enjoyed bundling their harvest practice with some of the activities listed above.

Rather than push anyone out, wyld harvesters are looking to ensure their practice receives equal respect and recognition through the maintenance of safe and sustainable access to their spaces. Participants felt that steps towards this aim involved:

- Using the spatial information collected by this project and drawing on the guidance of harvesters in the selection and protection of key sites or species.
- Explore all existing policy and management options, for the protection of harvest sites, big and small. This may involve converting segments of the planning area into regional parks. This recommendation was important to the Elder’s on the project research team. As Elders McKay and Smith explain that parks offer more protection from development,

and if set up properly can ensure greater Indigenous involvement in the space's governance (Elder's Meeting 2021a).

- Ensuring that harvesters have the roads and trails needed to access their harvest sights safely.
- Considering how the impacts of development and recreation effect harvesters' ability to access and forage in these spaces, then planning to prevent these impacts. For example, a site cannot be considered protected if chemical run-off from a nearby construction site threatens harvester safety.
- Investigate, maps and alert harvesters to potential contamination risks in the area.
- Identifying popular or delicate harvest locations and access routes such as Blown-Away or Bonneville Lakes trail and use these as sites for interventions and knowledge dissemination around harvest or eco-social etiquette. Participants in the focus groups determined that berry patches around Blown-Away and Bonneville Lakes trails are not kept a secret and would make excellent 'community harvest sites' for educational programing. Interventions could be as big as a stewardship program or monitoring project, or as simple as signs asking dog walkers to pick up after their animals. When commenting on the over harvest of balsam around Łu Zil Män, Elder McKay emphasized the need for strategies that educate over penalize "balsam grows in a certain area because it needs a certain type of soil, so we could put up sign there telling people why this is a special area and how not to over harvest, just take what you need. It's simple, they don't grow everywhere" (Elder's Meeting 2021a).
- Increasing the visibility and legitimacy of harvest around Łu Zil Män by making other users aware that harvesters are present, possibly through social media advisories or formal signage. These notifications could also be used to inform others on how best to share the space with harvesters. For example, signs could be placed along the Fish Lake Road. to remind drivers to slow down around popular crossing spots.
- Working with harvesters to identify harvest sites that could be impacted by the expansion of existing roads or the clearing of trees around the road. Even the removal of 2m of vegetation in these areas could result in the complete elimination of important mushroom patches or balsam stands.
- Installing infrastructure like outhouses and garbage bins in high-use problem areas like Mount Macintyre (Blown Away), Bonneville Lakes Trail, and the north end of Łu Zil Män. This would support plant harvesters but would also likely address challenges faced by other users as well.

- Working with the city to address the issue of garbage disposal and remediation. Harvesters sympathize with those who are not able to afford the cost of using the landfill but are increasingly anxious about the way KDFN settlement lands and harvesting sites appear to be a target for illegal dumping, the cost of which is so often carried by the KDFN government and its citizens.
- Documenting how many harvest spaces are lost to development and the potential impact of this decision on nearby harvest sites. Planners should also build flexibility into the selection of harvest sites to anticipate changes to the ecology or landscape over time. This means considering what will happen if a berry site is lost to encroaching shrub growth or to flooding: are there alternative places that harvesters will be able to go? Will these spaces be able to support the community?

While some of these recommendations fall outside the purview of the LAP process, participants and research team members felt it was important to articulate both the steps that could be placed in motion by the planning process and those that could follow through YG and KDFN programming. When taken on together, our group believes these recommendations will help the Łu Zil Män project in its aim of reducing conflict between users and subsequently help to enhance public enjoyment of the space (Government of Yukon 2020, 2).

5.1.1.3 Promoting Community Cohesion through Harvest

In addition to implementing supports directed at alleviating tension between users, participants and team members also want to see initiatives that actively promote community cohesion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters, and between harvesters and other community members. We believe that there is plenty of opportunity to advance connection through supports for wild harvesters, starting by:

- Bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members together to create digital and physical resources around ‘best practices for harvesting’ broadly and in Łu Zil Män. An example of this may be guidelines on how many berries to leave on a bush for social and ecological reasons like the health of the plant, other animals, and other users.
- Bringing community members together to create digital and physical resources around sharing harvest knowledge respectfully. This might look like guidelines on how to engage Knowledge Holders respectfully, how to care for that knowledge and how to

practice reciprocity. Or it might look like clear statements on which areas are for everyone, what to do if you have been told about a 'secret spot', and why that's important.

- Hosting community harvest events and workshops in popular areas to connect the community, to educate new harvesters or to introduce people to the space. Harvesters pointed out that this could also help to establish a more collegial tone rather than a competitive one.
- Looking for collaborations with other user groups like Contagious Mountain Biking, Yukon Hiking, and the Reckless Raven 50 Mile Ultra & Relay to collaborate on issues like trail conditions, transportation, contamination, and safety. For example, Dillman noted how great it would be to have an outlet for mountain bikers, who often travel along alpine berry patches, to post berry updates for those who do not have the time, resources, or mobility to make multiple trips to check on the favorite sites. Drawing on her work as an Occupational Therapist, McClintock also talked about the potential to collaborate with disability advocacy groups and Elder care facilities in order to create more accessible trails for harvesters of all mobilities (2020a).
- Developing a food sharing program where harvesters can contribute to community members who do not have easy access to wyld foods. Harvesters acknowledged that there were incredible bureaucratic barriers around sharing wyld food but were universally enthused by the idea of using their practice to provide nutritional and cultural sustenance for others.

Should a community center be built in the area, participants would also like to see it used to house an equipment-sharing program for drying baskets, dehydrators, and freeze dryers, as well as canning and jarring tools, so that foragers can process their harvest on site as a community or loan out equipment they may not be able to afford on their own. Such a center could also be used to distribute the educational resources described in Section 5.2.1, to host community events, or to offer childcare service and carpooling programs for harvesters and others accessing the area. These suggestions call on KDFN and YG to take on responsibility in supporting harvest; however, they also allow harvesters and the broader community to assert agency and influence over how harvest spaces are protected and promoted. Each of these

recommendations also help in the LAP goal of advancing public learning, awareness, appreciation, and enjoyment of Łu Zil Män (Government of Yukon 2020, 2).

5.1.1.4 Recognize the Socio-environmental Knowledge of Harvesters

As noted above, the Łu Zil Män LAP process seeks to embrace the knowledge and experience of Indigenous Peoples and other residents towards more effective planning (Government of Yukon 2020, 2). The members of this project argue that wyld plant harvesters have a great deal of knowledge to offer in pursuit of this aim. As noted in Section 3.2.3, harvesters have a vast wealth of local knowledge on the social and environmental networks linked to harvest areas, both within Łu Zil Män and beyond. As Baker argues, wyld harvest connects “people with the plant world in important, reciprocal ways and provides opportunities both to determine when environmental integrity is being breached and to inform others who are not so closely tied to the land about issues of contamination and pollution” (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 181). Sadly, harvesting is too often trivialized as a recreational outlet rather than a source of knowledge procurement and production. She notes that:

I often get the sense that, when we go out to pick berries as a part of ethno-ecological research and monitoring in Alberta’s oil sands region, our projects are relegated by oil company staff, consultants, and scientists to a recreational category, separate from and not as relevant as the often biased, but privileged, scientific monitoring occurring in the region. (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 178).

Both Baker’s research, and our own research, respond to this trivialization by outlining the many “land based ethnoecological activities intertwined with checking and picking berries”, including educating youth and new harvesters, monitoring ecosystems health, searching for signs of wyldlife, clearing trails, watching for changes in the landscape, exchanging oral traditions, and taking note of disruptions or the effects of climate change (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 178-81). This long list of activities helps to provide harvesters with the knowledge essential to the success of planning projects like Łu Zil Män LAP.

The Łu Zil Män planning committee can engage harvest knowledge through each of the steps listed in Section 5.1.1 and by collecting harvest knowledge (with the consent of those who

share it) throughout the planning process. Elder Anderson, McKay, and Smith note that a great deal of knowledge has been shared by Elders and community members over decades of Land Claims negotiations and land planning initiatives, yet very little of it has been adequately documented. When stressing the importance of recording the meetings of our community research team Elder Smith explains that:

We've taken a real step backwards the non-recording of every meeting that we have with respect to what we care about and how we plan on following through. Cause we have no records, because it moves from one government to the next and there is no data on it at all, not in our records or theirs. And new people come into new positions and have nothing to work off, so we are a step backwards. (Elder's Meeting 2021a)

On this subject, Elder Anderson notes that “last meeting I went to on Fish Lake, they weren't recording. Just using the Whiteboard and flip chart, but it's easy to roll that up, throw it in the back seat and forget about it (haha)” (Elder's Meeting 2021a). Echoing Smith's concerns, she explains “we are supposed to have like a library of all the knowledge that we gathered from the Elders, and we started that, but then new council came in and its disappeared – I don't know what happened to all that material. Sewing, books and stories and background information” (Elder's Meeting 2021a). Following Anderson's comment, Elder McKay notes that “some of the Elders that contributed are now gone” (Elder's Meeting 2021a). In addition to supporting harvest knowledge networks, KDFN, YG and the Łu Zil Män planning committee can also action a commitment to harvesters by creating or looking for opportunities to recruit harvesters as stewards, monitors, and planners on future projects and programs coming out of the LAP process.

Lastly, a commitment to harvest must involve a commitment to those knowledges typically underrepresented by the planning process. As discussed in Chapter Two and Four, the underrepresentation of harvest within land planning is a symptom of colonial heteropatriarchy. In celebrating the diverse languages and literacies surrounding northern landscapes we can challenge the dominant hold heteropatriarchy presently has on the planning process. Kuokkanen explains that Indigenous knowledges emerge from the sustainable practices of

subsistence-based economies, meaning that efforts to maintain Indigenous ways of knowing must involve the protection of the subsistence communities where such knowledge is produced (2011, 220). She adds that subsistence economies, in many parts of the world, have traditionally been the domain of Indigenous women. Attempts to undermine the knowledge systems women hold in relation to subsistence thus undermines the economic, political, and social autonomy of Indigenous Peoples as a whole (Kuokkanen 2011, 223-229). Indigenous subsistence practices, and the role of women in them, must play a central part in contemporary governance of Indigenous lands and knowledges. The Łu Zil Män LAP commitment to Indigenous knowledge is thus a commitment to the knowledge of Indigenous women and to Indigenous subsistence practices like wild harvest.

To summarize, foragers are looking to have the value of plant harvest and its potential as a community building tool recognized by planning bodies, through the protection of their spaces and respect for their socio-ecological knowledges. KDFN and YG can work towards this aim through the engagement of harvesters throughout the length of the Łu Zil Män planning process, and in future planning projects. This is not to say that engagement will achieve the four objectives listed above but it is a critical starting point.

5.2 Project Limitation

While the research team and I set out to ensure the project reflected the diversity of the Whitehorse harvest community, we fell short in this aim. In the following section, I will discuss the way our findings were limited by the representational make-up of participant and by the size of the group. I will follow this by outlining how the project has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2.1 Citizenship

Of the nine individuals who participated in the study, three were citizens of KDFN. The remaining six were residents of the Whitehorse area, one of whom identified as having

Indigenous ancestry outside of KDFN. Participants ranged in age from 26-70 and had levels varying levels of harvest experience from beginner to advanced, with some harvesting only seasonally, and others going every day. While we were pleased with the diversity of age and experience captured by our sample, we had hoped to recruit an even number of KDFN and non-KDFN participants. As recruitment took place in the late Summer and Fall of 2020, we suspect that two major factors likely complicated our attempts at an even split. The first factor may have been the harvest season itself. I was informed by the research team that consultation and engagement can be difficult to conduct around this time of year, when citizens are involved in hunting and gathering wyld foods for the winter and are spending little time attached to their phones, emails, and social media platforms. The second factor likely limiting recruitment was the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, the KDFN staff on the research team have experienced a great deal of success in recruiting participants in-person, through community events and spaces. Engagement through community events and spaces is a great way to increase familiarity and trust between researchers and potential participants. It also helps to lower the barriers to participation as no technology is required and forms can be printed, read aloud, signed, and collected in one go. However, with the closure of public spaces, restrictions around gatherings and concerns about minimizing risk, these methods of recruitment were not available to us. By this point in the pandemic, we also suspect many potential participants were experiencing digital fatigue.

We had also hoped to engage several KDFN Elders as participants, but the pandemic made this difficult to do so in a way that was safe and accessible. UBC did not allow in-person research with vulnerable groups, like those with underlying health conditions or over the age of 65. Unfortunately, many of the KDFN Elders we had hoped to engage fell into these categories and showed little interest in conducting interviews or mapping sessions remotely.

As the project unfolded and restrictions allowed for the reopening of the KDFN offices, we were able to increase the involvement of KDFN citizens and Elders by inviting Elders

Anderson, McKay, and Smith on to the research team. While I could not conduct in-person research with participants over the age of 65, members of the community research team were allowed to meet in person in the KDFN offices. This did not increase the risk faced by team members as it constituted part of their normal day to day activities. When it was safe to do so Roy and I met with the Elders in a KDFN boardroom that had been arranged to allow for 2 meters of spacing between occupants. Together we walked through the project findings, collecting questions, feedback, and guidance when it was offered. At all times, our actions abided by the latest safety restrictions in place by KDFN, UBC and the Yukon government.

We also encountered difficulties when recruiting TKC citizens. Although Łu Zil Män is primarily on the Traditional Territory of KDFN it does include small parcels of TKC settlement land and is an important place from many TKC citizens today. That said, the history between KDFN and TKC is complex. Both nations were once a single Indian Act band but separated between 1995-98 (Mombourquette, personal communication, email, 2020). This separation divided some families from the same area with similar lands, knowledges, language, and cultures, which in turn created political grey-areas in each government's path towards independent self-determination. Łu Zil Män is an example of one of these areas.

In the early days of the project, I alerted TKC of proposed study and began the process of working with them to ensure it incorporated the perspectives of TKC citizens and met their standards of ethical research. Unfortunately, our lines of communication were severed by the demands placed on their staff by the pandemic. I did my best to keep the project open and welcome to TKC citizens, but none reached out. With this, I would like to acknowledge that the project cannot speak to the perspectives of TKC citizens, however, the MOU signed by both KDFN and YG recognizes TKC traditional ties to the area and commits both governments to working with TKC to ensure their involvement in the LAP process (Government of Yukon 2020, 2).

5.2.2 Gender

Another limitation was that no men volunteered to be a part of the study. Despite this, both our KDFN and non-KDFN participants indicated that they harvested with the men in their circles of family and friends (Dillman 2020a; Holozubiec 2020a; McDowell, 2020a; McDougall 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a). Several participants even made a point of mentioning how important harvest was for these men, letting me know they had made attempts to recruit them into the study without luck (Focus Group 2020a & 2020b; McDowell, 2020a). Through my on-the-land observations, I was also able to confirm that men harvest with wmn, other men and on their own. In an attempt to understand their absence as participants in the project, I brought the issue forward to the focus group. The consensus among participants was that while wmn may lead certain harvest activities or have special responsibilities around harvest knowledge, the lack of men in the study is less a reflection of their connection to the practice and more the result of lower participation rates in community engagement (Focus Group 2020a & 2020b). The KDFN staff on the team also confirmed that in their experience it is often more difficult to recruit men for community consultation events (Mombourquette 2020b; Focus Group 2020a).

While the intention of the project was to foreground the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous wmn, I did hope to collect input from all kinds of harvesters, including those who identify as two spirit, non-binary, or gender fluid. I am also keen to push back against the patriarchal and Western assumption that food collection and preparation is segregated by gender in all contexts. While I can draw on interview transcripts, fieldnotes and secondary sources that refer to the involvement of all genders in the act of plant foraging, I cannot make firm assertions on the ways gender non-conforming people or men engage with the practice. As a result, this research centers heavily on the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous wmn harvesting in Łu Zil Män. However, as highlighted earlier, the bulk of northern land-use planning projects do not incorporate the perspectives of wmn. Yet, these projects are never questioned as an accurate reflection of community interests (Parlee & Wray 2016; Staples &

Natcher 2015, 147-150; Todd 2016). With this, I ask that the voices left out of this project be acknowledged, and that those highlighted here be honored for the unique perspective they provide. I also encourage future research projects to explore the ways members of the gender queer communities engage with the land.

5.2.3 Group Size

The research team and I also recognize that a group of nine participants cannot be said to represent the entire harvest community, particularly when there are no Indigenous Elders, gender queer folks, youth, men, or members of TKC among the participants. I will note that we do at least have three Indigenous Elders, and two men involved on the research team. Regardless, the intention of this project is not to capture the full picture of the harvest community. Instead, our aim is to offer a snapshot of contemporary harvest practices and how these practices shape local community dynamics.

5.2.4 COVID-19

This past year I found myself in conversation with friend and TKC Elder Shirley Adamson. While discussing the challenges of the 2020's, Adamson explained how gathering to harvest as a family or community is key for effective teaching and learning on harvest itself. She went on to note that COVID-19 made this kind of knowledge exchange exceptionally difficult (phone call with the author, August 11, 2020; email to the author, January 25, 2021). Her words helped to characterize something I had been struggling with over the course of the project: the format in which knowledge is being gathered for the project feels so distant from the way knowledge on this subject is typically shared. After all, how does one conduct a community-based, land-centric research project without the ability to gather with community on the land? Without these types of interactions, it is difficult to witness the unique relationship held between community and land. It is certainly not something that can be easily replicated on the individual level or reconstituted in digital spaces.

The importance of the community-land dynamic became clear during one of my observations with two of the project participants. Being related and inside each-others' COVID-19 'bubbles,' they expressed an interest in conducting their observations together, in the family cranberry patch.¹² Upon learning that the three of us were going picking, one participant's mother and father decided to join. With their unexpected arrival in the patch, the group size triggered my institutionally ingrained COVID-19 protocol alarms. However, I decided to resist these alarms, knowing that it would be rude to leave a patch I had been invited to and unthinkable to ask any member of the family to stay away from the area. I also knew that this would mean interfering with the natural happenings of this family's berry harvest practice. Thinking on the spot, I determined that these four were already in a bubble with one another and thus the risk encountered by participants had not increased. So long as I kept two meters distance from them along with the areas they picked, and reminded them to do the same, the situation could be managed. I am so glad I took this route because the family's interactions with the land, each other and myself illuminated several key insights around knowledge transmission, memory, trust, reciprocity, and community cohesion.

While I would have loved to have conducted the project in a time that allowed for more on-the-land community data collection, waiting for such a time was not an option. Early in the pandemic it was determined that the Łu Zil Män LAP would proceed as planned. As mentioned earlier, the community was frustrated with the slower pace taken by other planning projects and feared that more damage would be done to Łu Zil Män if a plan was not brought in sooner. In fact, the increase in recreation witnessed by the area due to the pandemic highlighted the immediate need for a short-term management strategy. Thus, our team determined that while it may be imperfect, any intervention on the inclusion of harvesters was necessary. In the end, I

¹² The term 'bubbles' is a pandemic term used to describe the small grouping of family and friends who regularly see each other in unmasked situations with less than two meters of distance between them. At this point in the pandemic, YG officials were recommending Yukoner's keep bubbles of six or less.

was glad we took this path because I believe that the stories shared by harvesters allowed us to mount a strong case for more engagement with the plant harvest community at a later stages of the Łu Zil Mǎn planning process. The lack of community-land interactions also helped us to demonstrate the need for this style of engagement down the road.

In fact, in some ways our project design was well suited for the challenges presented by the pandemic. The ever-changing realities of the pandemic demolished all hope of set and stable plans. This did not mean we proceeded without a plan; it simply meant that we constantly had to revisit, redesign, and retry multiple plans. By no means would I argue that COVID-19 has been beneficial for our project. However, it did provide me, as a community-based researcher, a certain advantage within an institutional academic setting. As many scholars before me have noted, the methodologies of community-centric research often conflict with the restrictive timelines of graduate school because when and how the project proceeds depend on the community and not the researcher (Caine & Mill 2016, 32). Yet, COVID-19 has created an environment in which all projects are routinely delayed, disrupted or derailed all together. In other words, researchers of all kinds, from graduate students to faculty, are finding their control over projects greatly diminished and are having to create methodologies that remain responsive to the shifting conditions around them. In a climate such as this, the community-based mentality of constant re-evaluation and adaptation is an asset. Thus, I did not experience pressure to have stable plans and predictable schedules. In fact, because flexibility was built into the project prior to COVID-19, I was able to navigate the many rocky twists and turns of the pandemic in ways my peers could not. For this reason, I hope more disciplines will look to champions of community-based methodologies for guidance on how best to research in times of instability.

Our determination to conduct in-person research during the pandemic also gave us the chance to make a unique contribution to the field of community-based research. While the methods outlined in Section 2.3 were improvised and far from flawless, they helped to highlight ways of including participants who could join in-person. These methods that can be taken up

even when pandemic restrictions reside. For example, the busy day-time schedules of participants and team members meant that our focus groups needed to take place in the late evening, a time often difficult for parents of young children to join. However, the use of zoom meant that one participant could join in while still carrying out the tasks of her child's bedtime routine. The mute and camera-off function allowed her to continue listening even over bath time, and the gurgles, splashes and joyous outburst that punctuated her contributions inspired a great deal of laughter and smiles from other group members.

The presence of children in the project (facilitated by zoom) was another unexpected benefit of our digital methods of engagement. Though not involved as participants, I often had the chance to meet the families of participants and research team members when conducting interviews, mapping sessions and focus groups over zoom. Young babies would perch in their parents laps and watch as I made silly faces at the camera, toddlers would help their parents mark out harvest sites or simply doodle on the digital or physical map materials provided, and teenagers would say hello or stop to listen-in as they passed through the frame on route to the kitchen. These appearances brought out impromptu reflections from participants on how harvest supports their family and on their hopes for future generations of harvesters, crucial information that fed into our recommendations. The mute and camera-off function also allowed participants to stay engaged even when they needed to step away briefly to help family members.

The same methods that allowed parents to participate in the project can also be used to include others in future northern community mapping projects. For example, a great number of people, including myself, leave the north each year to access education, employment, and health care in the south. Despite their time away, many of these individuals hold incredible amounts of knowledge about their community and are eager to stay connected to them. Our method of digital engagement thus can be used to ensure that such individuals remain tapped in and that community-based projects stay as accessible as possible.

As much as I encourage community-based researchers to continue offering participants digital opportunities to engage, I would like to stress that these cannot replace in-person interaction entirely. As I discussed above, on-the-land community connections are key to conducting research in northern and Indigenous communities. The research challenges our team documented help to demonstrate the intense value of having multi-generational community land interactions woven into projects like this. These challenges also provide a key argument against the current trend to move research (and all other aspects of our lives) online. My hope is that other community-based researchers can learn from this experience and use it to further strengthen the field.

5.3 Project Strengths

One of the most notable strengths of the project is its interdisciplinary nature and its multimodal methods of information gathering. As an interdisciplinary student, I have drawn on and sought guidance from scholars working in anthropology, critical theory, cultural studies, human geography, Indigenous studies, and fine arts in the implementation of my research. My methods involve interviews, on-the-land observations, focus groups, mapping, and my analysis engages Indigenous, decolonizing, feminist, and anti-capitalist frameworks. By braiding stands of inquiry together, I can engage with this topic out from multiple angles, making my investigation more rigorous. I also feel that this approach helped to challenge the exclusionary boundaries created by academic disciplines, thus fostering more inclusive of diverse methods of knowledge production.

Another strength of the project is the relationships at the heart of it. This project would not have taken place if not for the relationships KDFN staff and I first established through my work with the Jane Glassco Fellowship. Building on our pre-existing research relationships gave us a starting point for this research and the ability to develop narrowed research questions that would aid the community in its goals for the LAP. As discussed in Section 5.2.4, beginning this

research with some degree of established trust, commitment, and dialogue also allowed us to take on the challenging work of conducting in-person research during a pandemic. The staff KFDN and members of the research team have been incredibly generous in lending their time to the project. Despite the demanding nature of his job as a Land Planner for KFDN, Roy Neilson made time to connect over the phone once or twice each month, and touched base over email at every opportunity, from the early days of the project until the completion of this thesis. I also found that the trust we were able to foster also allowed us the ability to work independently when the demands of life and work, meant we could not connect as frequently as we would have liked. When the Elder's met to review the project's findings, they stayed far later than they were asked to and gave incredibly detailed responses to my questions. As well, research team member and participant, Mombourquette, frequently went above and beyond in her contributions, offering feedback on consent forms, lengthy answers to my questions, additional resources, and a thorough review of my written thesis. I would characterize all interaction with this team as filled with patience and laughter. Our conversations often satisfied my thirst for the playful northern banter I so often crave when away from home.

I also found this comradery to be true of my interactions with participants. I am grateful to have cultivated friendships with several of the project's participants. Even as the project comes to a close, we often exchange book recommendations, pass along opportunities and swap harvest information. I know the idea of friendship is a threatening notion to the perceived 'objectivity' of the researcher within Whistlerstream academia, however, I think this is what makes our relations so radical (Fox 2020, 25; TallBear 2019). Objectivity has never been my aim as a researcher. My aim is to conduct meaningful community-based research and I believe the relationships emerging and continuing from this project are a testament to its strength, particularly in a year where the conditions of the pandemic made it incredibly difficult to establish intimate levels of communication and connection. I will continue my discussion on the

radical potential of relationship building in Section 5.6, but to consider this to be one of the incredible assets of this project.

5.4 Project Contributions to the Literature

In Section 1.4, I identified two gaps in the literature on northern plant harvest. While existing research on wyld plant harvest has consistently documented the importance it holds for northern peoples, little work has been done to explore the contemporary plant harvest practices specific to the Whitehorse region. Similarly, little investigation has been conducted on the plant harvest practices of non-Indigenous northerners or on the harvest relations within blended Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities like Whitehorse, Yukon. Our team has sought to address both these gaps in our work here.

Having completed the study, we can confirm that plant harvest plays a valued role within the community of Whitehorse. As detailed in Chapter Three, Section 3.2.1, the harvest spaces, and practices of Whitehorse residents support their physical and mental well-being and are vital tools for establishing and maintaining social connections to fellow community members, both human and more-than-human. This information aligns with similar studies conducted by Baker (2020), Boulanger-Lapointe et al. (2019), and Parlee (2006), discussed in Section 1.3 of this thesis.

While the accounts of harvesters from KDFN continue to demonstrate the cultural significance of traditional and contemporary plant harvest practices, our findings in Section 3.2.2 reveal that the practice also carries cultural meaning for other Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters living in Whitehorse. These cultural ties to harvest often stem from distinct ethnic identities, but also emerge as part of a distinct Yukon cultural expression. These findings also suggest that harvest practices can be used to link different cultural identities, McClintock linked the practice back to both her northern and her Indigenous roots, while Dillman discussed using harvest to explore both her KDFN and German heritage.

In addition to addressing the gaps in the literature, this project also reinforced the findings brought forward by existing research on northern plant harvest. For example, our work contributes to a growing understanding of the threats posed to the practice of wyld plant harvest. Like studies conducted by Anderson et al. (2018, 857), Baker (2020, 12), Boulanger-Lapointe et al. (2019, 89-90), and Parlee (2006 76, 125, 123 & 138), our findings in Section 3.3 highlight the cascade of social and environmental issues brought by the loss of harvest spaces due to development, over-use, and climate variability. In alignment with the work of Boulanger-Lapointe et al. (2019, 90-91) and Maher (2013, 52), we have identified plant harvest as a low cost, low impact, land-based activity that offers a valuable source of nutrition and social interaction for a diverse range of genders, ages, and cultural backgrounds (see Section 3.2). Finally, like the work of Baker (Black Elk & Baker 2020, 178-181) and Parlee (2006, 136-138), this project also highlights the important systems of knowledge built and maintained through harvest practices and the ways in which harvesters actively use this knowledge towards the betterment of the social and ecological networks in which they participate (see Section 3.2.3).

5.5 Future Research Opportunities

As outlined in Section 5.4, the information gathered here can be used as a launch pad for further engagement with harvest. Our small group size allowed us to conduct our research within the time and resources constraints faced by both KDFN staff and I, however, it is not an exhaustive breakdown of the challenges experienced by harvesters in Łu Zil Män or a full picture of the needs and interests of the community. This work could be expanded through deeper engagement with a wider range of the Whitehorse harvesting community, including members of all ages, genders, racial identities, cultural backgrounds, and socio-economic positionalities. More work could also be done to engage a greater number of Indigenous harvesters to better understand and support their diverse traditional and contemporary harvest practices. With the inclusion of a larger segment of the harvest community, a more nuanced

investigation of the ways in which the harvest practices of different groups within the community do or do not intersect.

I also see potential for replicating this study in other northern communities similar to Whitehorse, like Yellowknife, or Iqaluit. Such an endeavor would provide an opportunity to compare and contrast the harvest dynamics and cultures of other Indigenous and non-Indigenous northern communities. Comparative research may also aid in greater knowledge exchange between jurisdiction and aid in the collaborative creation of pan-northern harvest supports. Finally, in our conversations, harvesters often mentioned other key harvest sites around Whitehorse such as Annie Lake, Grey Mountain and Lake Labarge (Dillman 2020a; George 2020a; Mombourquette 2020a & 2020b; McClintock 2020a; Elder's Meeting 2021a). Like Łu Zil Män these areas are popular recreation sites close to the city that hold traditional significance for citizens of KDFN and TKC as well as the Indigenous peoples who have historically traveled through the area or continue to do so. This project could be expanded to map the harvest relations and barriers in these spaces. This kind of work would help to paint a broader picture of the harvest practice and spaces in the Whitehorse area – information that would support both the harvest community and local governments in developing more holistic planning, with a targeted focus on foraging.

5.6 Concluding Thoughts

First, I would like to acknowledge the absence of recommendations on the regulation of harvest in Section 5.1.1. This choice was made partly because the LAP will be an advisory policy document and not a regulatory one. However, knowing that these recommendations could have impact beyond the LAP, I wanted to avoid the use of regulatory language overall. Members of the research team and I agreed that Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and governments needed to work together to support and protect harvest practices and spaces. In my conversation with KDFN Elders and participants, however, it was clear that a conservation

strategy based in restricting and regulating individual harvesters was not the best method for achieving this aim. As Mombourquette highlighted in Chapter Three, a great deal of harm has been delivered to Indigenous communities through the banning or policing of Indigenous foodways by colonial authorities. This history, in combination with the fact that regulations often reflect Western logics of property and control, meant that some Indigenous people resisted or ignored contemporary regulations (even when set by Indigenous governments) (Mombourquette 2020b; Elder's Meeting 2021a; Focus Group 2020b). Such methods of land management can also be linked to historical process of colonization and capitalism meant to empower hierarchal Settler land ownership and displace Indigenous Peoples. Thus, any harvest solutions that involve regulations being placed on community members may be both ineffective and aid in the perpetuation of colonial based food violence.

The enforcement of excessive regulations also draws resources away from initiatives that center around reawakening of Indigenous methods of governance that emphasize shared responsibility. As Elder Anderson notes if Łu Zil Män "is going to be an area open to everyone, then there should be some sort of participation in protecting it [with everyone], because it has this ability to calm you and make you feel like you're out in the wilderness and giving you that spirit that everyone needs" (Elder's Meeting 2021a). Although regulations can be helpful in certain situations, especially when developed and revised through constant community engagement, we felt we had more effective and immediate tools at our disposal. Our choice to take this route was part of our commitment to an opportunities-based approach to problem solving. It is clear that harvest has the potential to advance community cohesion, so we want to use that potential in our approach to addressing the issues it faces. Together, we decided to pursue the protection of delicate resources and areas by focusing on steps that support more reciprocal relations between land, harvesters, and other users. Towards this aim, we asked: what kind of relationships to land and community can our proposed planning projects and policies support? And what kinds of positive change can we promote through those

relationships? In asking these question that our ideas for community gatherers, knowledge dissemination events and collective stewardship initiatives emerged. Our dedication to relationality, is also informed by the words of Indigenous Feminist theorist, Gina Starblanket, introduced earlier in my discussion of standpoint theory in Section 2.1.2: “our everyday relationships are our primary site of political action” (2017, 37). It is here that I see the radical potential of relationship building.

For me, Starblanket's words pair seamlessly with the words of Elders Anderson, McKay and Smith. In a discussion on the important role plant communities play in protecting against corrosion, flooding, draught and fires, Elder Smith explained that “it’s the roots that hold our lands together” (Elder’s Meeting 2021a). Building on this, each of the Elders talked about how plant communities connect human’s and other non-human species; the disruption of plants along the shores of Łu Zil Män and its surrounding creeks have harmed the health of fish and ducks, while damage to local lichens and grass have pushed moose and caribou out of the area. Each of these disruptions to plant communities harmed not only foragers but also those wishing to hunt, fish or collect water in the area (Elder’s Meeting 2021a). As Elder Anderson explains the health of plants are “a part of the animals’ survival, as well as the harvesters” (Elder’s Meeting 2021a). There words brought me to the realization that our project does not simply address human to human or human to plant relationships and tensions but extends so much deeper into all the places plants exert their presence. It was not until this moment that I understood the full impact of Elders Smith’s earlier comment explaining that “traditional medicine is everything. It touches everything, every human being, every animal, every lake” (qtd. Panchyshyn 2020, 6).

Protecting plant communities cannot be motivated alone by the goal of maintaining human subsistence, nor by the sole aim of conserving the ‘natural world’. These objectives are forever linked. Harvest supports must be viewed as part of a larger effort to cultivate more reciprocal relationships with the land and all who share it. Here I am reminded of Robin Wall

Kimmerer's observations on sweetgrass, a plant that has long been used by Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, including the north. She explains that the plant is disappearing from the Great Lakes region because it has grown to depend on the humans and is now struggling in areas where it is no longer being harvested. She notes that "people can take too much and exceed the capacity of the plants to share again". However, by taking too little the community risks far more: "if we allow traditions to die, and relationships to fade, the land will suffer" (2013, 157-66). Protecting harvest practices and places then is about protecting and strengthening the everyday relationships between the plant, human and more-than-human worlds. Therefore, our proposed planning approaches seek to serve the role of the roots in connecting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all. Like the roots, our solutions must work in ways that encourage balance and long-term stability. Yet, they must also be designed and implemented as living, breathing initiatives that remain responsive and adaptive to their surroundings. Going forward, we must also see plant harvest supports as a chance to empower rooted networks of responsibility that bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of the area together to share and protect areas like Łu Zil Măn, now and for generations to come.

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Appendices

Appendix A: KDFN Letter of Support

April 30, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

With this letter, I confirm that Kelly Panchyshyn, graduate student from the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus, will be working with us to map our community's wild harvest foodways within the city of Whitehorse. The aim of this work is to develop a better understanding of the role urban wild harvest spaces and practices play in shaping our food security, cultural identity and community relations. With this understanding, we can work with KDFN citizens and staff to better inform culturally relevant and socially responsible land and food planning.

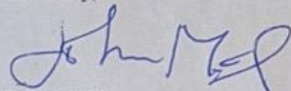
Kelly's research will be guided by participatory action research methods, meaning she will engage with KDFN citizens and staff to form a community research team. This team will help Kelly shape the project to our community's values and interests. KDFN will be Kelly's primary research partner; however, she and the research team may also collaborate with other community organizations, governments and residents with interests in wild harvest, food security and land-use planning, when it is appropriate to do so. Once the project goals and guidelines are established, Kelly will conduct archival research, interviews, and on-the-land observations with the research participants. With the consent of participants, Kelly will record or document interviews and meetings. She will work with participants to populate a digital map of one of the city's harvest areas with photos, text, audio, and video that express their connection to the area, fellow users and the practice of wild harvest. Once collection has wrapped up, she will work with the community researcher team to interpret findings and develop recommendations. This information will be included in Kelly's Master's Thesis.

All participants will have the opportunity to review project findings and offer feedback prior to the project's completion. Special efforts will be made to ensure any Traditional Indigenous Knowledge is protected. Nothing will be included or shared without full and on-going consent of participants (and the KDFN government). As much as possible she will ensure participants are recognized for their contribution, unless they prefer to remain anonymous. Participants will also have ongoing access to their research contributions. The final product and thesis will be made available to the KDFN government, and Kelly will work with them to see it distributed appropriately.

To strengthen collaboration and reciprocity, Kelly will also share her knowledge of designing and conducting community-based research with interested community members.

We are pleased to be working with her in developing this project together.

Sincerely,



John Meikle

Manager Planning
Kwanlin Dun First Nation
35 McIntyre Dr.
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 5A5

Appendix B: Project Research Agreement

Research Agreement

This is an agreement will bring together members of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation government and community, with a researcher from the University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus, in the formation of a *Community Research Team*, for the *Collaborative and Creative Land Planning in Canada's North: supporting wild harvest through participatory action research in Whitehorse, Yukon* project, also known as the *Fish Lake Harvest Project*

The main intention behind the *Community Research Team* is to ensure the project is guided by the interest of the community.

The main intention behind Research Agreements is to ensure the Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) and University of British Columbia (UBC) representatives are on the same page around project goals, methods, timelines, and ethics. The UBC representative will be responsible for the bulk of the work but will report to the members of the Team for direction, feedback, confirmation and approval.

Representatives of the KDFN government and community will include:

John Meikle
Managing Land Planner
Heritage, Lands & Resources Department
Kwanlin Dün First Nation
Email: John.Meikle@kdfn.net

Roy Neilson
Lands & Resource Planner
Heritage, Lands & Resources Department
Kwanlin Dün First Nation
Email: Roy.Neilson@kdfn.net

Dianne Smith
Kwanlin Dün First Nation Elder
[REDACTED]

Judy Anderson
Kwanlin Dün First Nation Elder
[REDACTED]

Rae Mombourquette
Kwanlin Dün First Nation Citizen
[REDACTED]

Margaret McKay
Kwanlin Dün First Nation Elder
[REDACTED]

Researcher from UBC's Okanagan Campus:

Kelly Panchyshyn
Graduate Researcher
University of British Columbia – Okanagan Campus
Phone: [REDACTED]
Email: kellypan@ubc.mail.ca

Purpose:

The objective of the *Community Research Team* and *Fish Lake Harvest Project* is to:

- Explore how the gathering of wild plants and fungi in the Fish Lake area shape food security, culture and community relations for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous residents of Whitehorse, Yukon.

- Begin to map the historical and contemporary gathering practices in the Fish Lake area.
- Generate information and recommendations that will support the inclusion of harvest considerations in the Fish Lake Local Area Planning Process.

Method:

The project begins with the formation of Community Research Team. Once this team has established a research agreement, Kelly will collect data by reviewing relevant documents, conducting interviews and hosting on-the-land observations with research participants. Working from these interactions, Kelly will collaborate with participants to map important harvest interest and concern within the Fish Lake area. In addition to indicating harvest sites or access routes, participants will be invited to populate the map with any photos, text, audio, or video that capture their relationship to wild plant harvest and the Fish Lake area.

Kelly will review the map and the rest of the project data to understand how the harvest of wild plants and fungi in the Fish lake area impacts the food security, culture and community relations of Whitehorse, Yukon.

Kelly will bring her preliminary findings to the Community Research Team to conduct further analysis and develop recommendations for the incorporation of wild harvest practices into the Fish Lake local area planning process and future food and land planning strategies. At this point, a small group of participants from the study may be brought in to offer feedback on the proposed recommendations.

Timeline:

August – October

The research team will assemble in August to finalize a research agreement. Recruitment and data collection will begin shortly afterwards. She will coordinate with the team to ensure she is not duplicating information or taxing KDFN citizens. Kelly will provide updates on her research activities throughout the summer and fall, seeking team input and support when needed. She will aim to complete the bulk of her interviews, observations and mapping efforts by the end of October, but will continue to collect data for the project over the following winter should the opportunity or need arise. Team members are welcome to join Kelly in any of her research activities but are not obligated.

November – January

The research team will meet to review her preliminary findings and develop recommendations. At this time, Kelly may host a focus group discussion to collect community feedback on the draft recommendations. Following this, Kelly will aim to compile a brief report on project findings and recommendations by the end of January. This report will be shared with KDFN and presented to the Elders in a special meeting.

February – August

Kelly will use this time to build on the teams work and complete her Master's thesis, before defending it in **August of 2021**. She will ensure that research participants and team members have ample opportunity to provide feedback on her writing. If interested, participants and team members will be invited attend her defence. KDFN will be provide with both the full and summary length version of her final dissertation, before her graduation. Kelly intends to continue

her work with KDFN and the *Fish Lake Harvest Project* past her defence and even past graduation should KDFN need her.

Roles & Responsibilities:

As Community Partners, John Meikle and Roy Neilson will work to ensure the project serves to the needs and interests of the KDFN government and its citizens. They will also help Kelly locate relevant materials, recruit participants and develop recommendations. Kelly may also request support in setting up the project mapping tools.

As a Community Partners, Dianne Smith, Judy Anderson, Margaret McKay and Rae Mombourquette will work to shape the project around knowledge, protocols and peoples of KDFN, in a manner that reflects and respects the community's ties to harvest and to Fish Lake. They will also help to develop recommendations and review project materials when possible.

As a Researcher, Kelly Panchyshyn will be responsible for the bulk of the data collection and analysis. With KDFN's guidance she will organize, design and implement the research project. Kelly will also be responsible for coordinating meetings and distributing findings. Kelly is also responsible for thanking participants or team members for the time and knowledge they have shared with her and crediting their contributions wherever possible.

Records:

All research materials will be collected by Kelly, and will be kept on a computer hard disk, which will be password protected and stored under lock and key at UBC Okanagan for a minimum of 5 years after publication. KDFN will also be provided a digital copy of all data records. KDFN may store this information as they see fit.

Data Ownership

The Parties will have shared ownership of research data collected for the project, meaning:

- KDFN has the ability to use the shared data for future land use planning in the KDFN Area.
- Kelly has the ability to draw on shared data in future academic presentation and publications. However, Kelly will work with KDFN and the project participants to ensure that any data use is appropriate.

However, it is important to note that:

- KDFN citizens have the option to opt out of sharing their data with KDFN. If a citizen chose to opt out, Kelly will not be able to share recordings or transcripts of their interviews with KDFN. In this case, KDFN will not have the access to this data nor the ability to use it.
- Participants have ownership over any Intellectual Property they share with the study. They will be credited for their contributions whenever possible.

Authorship

Kelly is conducting this research, to fulfil the requirements of a Master's degree. Data collected during the study will contribute to her Master's thesis. Kelly will be listed as the sole author on

her master's thesis. Co-authorship between Kelly and KDFN will be sought on all other reports, publication and presentations emerging from the project.

Ethical Considerations

Special efforts will be made to protect the Traditional Knowledge of KDFN and its citizens. Information that is labelled culturally sensitive will be handled with care. Kelly will seek the guidance from KDFN and participants on how to properly use and store such information. If the information is deemed too sensitive for use in this study, Kelly will have it removed from the research data.

Two Ways of Knowing

Both Indigenous knowledge and western knowledge will be incorporated into project development, research methods, and any other learning and communicating about the Fish Lake environment, history and culture. To establish a balanced and fair representation, Indigenous knowledge:

- will be given equal weight to western knowledge in the formation and implementation of this project;
- will have access to equal resources, and will be released with the consent of KDFN to be shared among the Parties;
- will be rooted in an Indigenous context, and will not be used to supplement, bolster or validate western knowledge;
- will not require explanation beyond the Indigenous context from which it is rooted parentheses will not require a western explanation parentheses; and
- will be presented as living, contemporary knowledge.

Capacity Building

To strengthen collaboration and reciprocity, Kelly will also share her knowledge of designing and conducting community-based research with any interested KDFN staff or citizens. She will also share her findings to the community digitally and in-person whenever possible and present to Fish Lake Local Area Planning Committee.

COVID-19 Limitation

When possible, Kelly will engage the team and community remotely, using phone, email and zoom. She will host all in-person interviews and observations outside in low traffic areas, with no more than 4 people present. She will follow the projects COVID-19 guidelines, along with KDFN's and UBC Covid-19 guidelines as they evolve.

Parties to this Agreement will confirm their support orally.

Appendix C: Core Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

Below is a list of proposed interview questions that will be discussed with KDFN and other research team members. Changes are anticipated. As the interviews are semi-structured, other questions may arise on a case by case basis.

- ☐ What is your relationship to the area?
 - How long have you or your family lived and harvested in the area?
- ☐ Is the area important to you? If so, why?
- ☐ How do you and your family spend time in the area?
- ☐ Could you tell me more about your harvest practice in the area?
 - What do you like to harvest and when do you like to harvest it?
- ☐ Why do you harvest, or what do you harvest in the area?
- ☐ Is there anything that limits your ability to conduct harvest in the area?
- ☐ How do you engage with other harvesters, or other people accessing the area?
 - Have you ever experienced conflict or connection with other users?
 - Do you feel comfortable using the space?
 - Do agree with the way others choose to use the space?
- ☐ How has your relationship to the area changed over time?
 - How has it been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic?
- ☐ How does your practice of harvest, or your use of the harvest area shape your identity?
 - Does it shape your cultural identity?
 - Does it contribute to a sense of belonging within a particular group (i.e. Whitehorse community, Northern Canadian, KDFN peoples)?
 - Does it shape your gender identity?

Appendix D: COVID-19 Safety Protocols



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Irving K. Barber Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Okanagan Campus

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Co-Investigator:
Kelly Panchyshyn
Graduate Researcher
Phone: (250) 8596672
Email: kellypan@ubc.mail.ca

Project Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

Thank you for volunteering to take part in the *Collaborative and Creative Food Planning* research project.

Our project leads would like to assure you that our research team is working with Kwanlin Dūn First Nation and the University of British Columbia (UBC) to ensure our project complies with the latest public health guidelines from the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada. Our aim is to conduct meaningful community and land-based research while fighting against the spread of COVID-19.

Before any in-person research activities take place, please ensure you do not have any of the following symptoms:

- ☐ new or worsening cough
- ☐ shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing
- ☐ new smell or taste disorders
- ☐ nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- ☐ unexplained fatigue
- ☐ chills, headache or fever

Please also ensure that you have not:

- ☐ had close contact with anyone experiencing the symptoms listed above
- ☐ had contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days,
- ☐ travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days,
- ☐ or had close contact with anyone who has travelled outside Canada in the past 14 days.

We also recommend that you do not take part in in-person research activities if you have a compromised immune system or underlying medical complication. If you cannot participate in an in-person interview or observation for any reason, we can reschedule for a later date, or connect remotely instead.



While participating in the projects in-person activities, we recommend you:

- ☐ wash and sanitize your hands before and after,
- ☐ keep 2m distance (the length of one caribou) between you, fellow participants or members of research team,
- ☐ avoid touching your face,
- ☐ and cough or sneeze into your elbow.

All research activities will take place outside. Whenever possible researchers will wipe down any shared surfaces on location. Researchers will have hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes on hand, should you need them. You are also welcome to wear a mask or face covering during our meeting. However, we are not able to provide you with a mask and encourage you to bring your own, should you wish to have one.

During interviews and observations, you may be given a pen and a map to mark any important harvest interests and concerns you would like documented. These items will be disinfected before they are handed to you. Once you are finished with these items, and researchers have had a chance to photograph your map, you can keep or discard it.

If you are conducting harvest activities we ask that you bring your own harvest equipment, i.e. water bottle, backpack, clippers, baskets or containers. This will help us reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. You are also welcome to bring your own camp chair, should you wish.

We hope that the precautions outlined above will help us to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, please note that we cannot completely eliminate the risk of transmission. Should you feel unsafe at any point leading up to or during the meeting, we can cancel the activity and connect remotely instead.

For more information on COVID-19 and prevention, please visit the Government of Yukon's COVID-19 site or call their COVID information center at 1-877-374-0425. For medical question or if you start to experience symptoms, please phone 811, or use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool.

If you have any questions about the research project, please don't hesitate to reach out to Kelly or Christine. You can find their contact info listed at the top of the page. You are also welcome to provide this information to local health authorities should they need it for contact tracing.

