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Of Kimchi, Caribou – and Canadian Multiculturalism? An exploratory study

Abstract: In this paper we argue that food – a basic life-necessity – should not be overlooked as a dimension of life-satisfaction. We use secondary sources and also empirical research to illustrate emergent dimensions of this topic: primarily in British Columbia, Canada. Other recent research suggests that, among immigrant populations, life satisfaction in a multicultural society such as Canada is not just about getting a job. As people migrate, they move into a new environment that may, or may not, supply familiar necessities. The additional perspective here is that off-reservation access to appropriate food by First Nations is also considered.

Key words: acculturation, culture, food, indigenous people, immigrants, Korean

Introduction

This paper seeks to juxtapose two facets of modern food consumption that seem to be exhibiting opposing trends: one towards globalised standardisation and same-ness the other towards diversity and difference. Yet these two, the powerful national commercial food system and the cultural diversity of resident populations, interface on a daily basis. Such realities are a crucial underpinning to the ongoing question of what types of food can be accessed by increasingly-diverse local populations. The question is one of how to reconcile powerful, highly-concentrated, ‘one-size-fits-all’ agro-food industries with an increasingly diverse public. Answers, however, are unlikely to be straightforward as the topic

of food can be approached from many, often opposing, perspectives. Canada, with its very diverse population in large urban centres, poses strong challenges to sameness and thus offers a particularly interesting context to any such debates.

The food system: increasingly globalised

As their operations have globalised, the leading food retailers who dominantly operate hypermarkets/ superstores or supercentres, Wal-Mart (USA), Carrefour (France) and Tesco (UK), have become familiar to most. Walmart alone had 2012 fiscal year sales of US\$444 billion and such growth tends to come at the expense of smaller, weaker, rivals (Hallsworth and Evers 2002; Hallsworth 2014a; Hallsworth 2014b). Canadian-based firms are less prominent in the global mass-food market; though the Weston group [owners of Loblaw's grocery stores in Canada] once traded as *Fine-Fare* in Britain¹. This globalisation trend suggests that standard products, including food and drink, can be traded everywhere. This at least implies a long-run reduction in choice and diversity. The trend to sameness may be one reason why food – a necessity of life – is simultaneously of tremendous importance and yet so mundanely familiar as to be regularly overlooked by policymakers. As, however, the commercial food retail system has become concentrated into a few dominant retail chains (e.g., in Australia, just two) their handful of powerful buyers control what is placed on their shelves. In many cases, own-brand products add to the reduction of brand choice. Indeed, the leading food retailers also largely control where they choose to locate and, of course, choose not to locate. For some years the term 'food deserts' has been used to describe areas in Britain and other countries including the USA (Hallsworth 2013, 275), usually low income areas, that have systematically been avoided by the dominant food retailers. Such trends carry important implications for consumer sovereignty and for the notion of choice itself (see Berasategi 2014). In the USA, a degree of countervailing power is held by huge manufacturing suppliers but recent trends mean that manufacturers now work with, rather than oppose, those powerful retail buyers. The much weaker position of smaller suppliers including independent farmers means that they are in no position to resist the demands made by the retail chains (Hallsworth and Wong 2012).

Contesting globalisation

In an admirably grounded and widely-referenced study, Collins (2008, 153) asserts that „....localisation of 'global' food brands is not ...smooth ...and ...there is always an intense, continuous, comprehensive interplay between the indig-

¹ They currently control British non-food retail stores such as Primark and Selfridges.

enous and the imported“. Quite so: and Peter Jackson’s extensive work on the interface of product, person and consumption (see Crang *et al.* 2003; Jackson 2004; Jackson *et al.* 2006) entirely confirms this. Collins, whilst offering a solid grounding on transnationalisation and globalisation to which reference may be made, influences this paper in one other major way. His empirical study was of Koreans living in New Zealand and, of the arrival of McDonald’s Corporation in Korea. In the latter topic, he noted „it was 50 percent owned by Koreans to avoid anti-Americanism“. The same ploy was adopted by Tesco who partnered with Samsung on entering Korea (Kim and Hallsworth 2013). Collins further notes that – for Koreans and others – „..... food and drink provide one way to bridge the sensual gap between ‘here’ and ‘there’“. He further avers (Collins 2008, 161) that the Korean delicacy kimchi² „is often seen as a ‘symbolic connotation of Korean national identity’“.

What is indisputable is that, kimchi or not, there is a strong Korean national identity and this is manifest in a strong, and strongly-defended, food culture: Koreans know what they like and what they like is Korean food. Now, Collins (2008) is less concerned with the local (New Zealand) context to consumption patterns of Koreans abroad except to refer (Collins 2008, 156) to a ‘constitution of familiarity’ for his study group of Koreans (see also Gilly 1995). Furthermore, though a respondent recalls being served Thai rather than Korean rice³, authenticity and sourcing of food are also not central concerns (indeed one Korean restaurant doubles as Japanese). So, in a remarkably full paper, Collins (2008) leaves little space to pursue two other aspects with which he might have engaged. One is food culture and authenticity, the other is multiculturalism; of which the New Zealand comparator would be Maoris. In this exploratory study we find that our respondents do mention food authenticity and we further allow ourselves to speculate on possible links to Canadian multiculturalism.

The Canadian multiculturalism context

We do not intend to centre this study of food on multiculturalism but to rely instead on the work of Hodgett and Clark (2011). They characterised Canada as one of the most multicultural countries in the world but noted that: „Historical differences separate the construction of policies for French, Aboriginal, and (recent) immigrant Canadians into silos.“ (Hodgett and Clark 2011, 166). This paper seeks to find an area of common ground (food and the need to eat) across which inter-group comparisons may be made. Hodgett and Clark most closely

² Kimchi (Hangul: 김치; Hanja: 沈菜) is a traditional Korean side dish which consists of vegetable(s) such as Napa cabbage (*Brassica rapa*) pickled in sour and spicy liquids.

³ Sticky short-grain *japonica* rice is consumed typically in Korea. In contrast, non-sticky long-grain *indica* rice is eaten principally in Thailand.

match our interests by „focusing on the full range of capabilities or freedoms different people and ethnic groups have reason to value“ (Hodgett and Clark 2011, 170). Food, we here argue, is very much something that people from every ethnic group have reason to value. Should it not at least be considered as a valid dimension of multiculturalism? In our study we seek to show how the importance of food varies between Canadian residents from very different backgrounds. We show that choice, as defined by ready access to traditional foods, can be greatly circumscribed for some; less so for others. Hodgett and Clark highlighted Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s 1971 House of Commons Speech in support of federal multicultural policy: noting his words „...If freedom of choice is in danger for some ethnic groups, it is in danger for all“ (Trudeau 1971). We argue here that, for newcomers and established groups alike, finding familiar food is a beneficial outcome but one that is dependent upon available choices. Note too, that Murdoch (1945) suggested nine factors that commonly exhibited cultural differences: of these, two related to food. Hodgett and Clark’s empirical research comprised a small number of ethnographic interviews conducted in Ottawa (Canada). Like ourselves, they stress non-economic aspects of well-being; arguing that simply to provide work opportunities is not enough. They consciously focused, as does our work on food, on broader issues of social integration, everyday life and satisfaction. This was founded on „growing concern about the continued successful integration of some Canadian immigrants“ (Hodgett and Clark 2011, 164).

Hodgett and Clark (2011) added an important additional dimension: chronic poverty (see Hodgett and Clark 2011, 169–170). For example: „...the approach is therefore able to analyze the factors that (1) trap some people in persistent poverty...“ (Hodgett and Clark 2011, 170). Food, for the most part [though see below] demands payment and thus ones ability to pay influences ones access to good food. This leads us back into consideration of which sub-groups of wider society are most likely to face such issues. Hodgett and Clark also considered the work of Kymlicka (2010) who wrote of „the emergence of ‘super-diversity’ in which ethnic and religious diversity no longer arises primarily or exclusively from permanently settled citizens but ... from growing numbers of people with various legal statuses and degrees of attachment and residence“ (Kymlicka 2010, 29–30). Probably unintentionally, this juxtaposition of permanently settled citizens versus people with various legal statuses seems to imply that all may be well with the former. It also invites the comparison to be made here: for example, between indigenous citizens and recent immigrants from Korea (predominantly on student visas). In respect of such latter groupings, an unpublished 2012 report from Queen’s University (Kingston, Canada) indicated that availability of culturally-appropriate food was an attraction for international students (personal communication: Jenna Hubbert).

Food: from consumer culture to authentic food

As noted above, food is something that people from various ethnic groups have reason to value: even if just as a basic necessity of life. In Maslow's familiar Hierarchy of Needs (1943), food and shelter feature were deemed to be core necessities – though many different perspectives could be found (Hogg and Michell 1996; Cook *et al.* 2000). Recently, the rise of Farmers Markets in both Canada and the UK and The Fair Trade movement denotes a strong undercurrent of public feeling about wholesome and fair food supplies. Alongside this, researchers have sought to identify nations with inherently strong or weak food cultures. Britain (weak) and France (strong) are often cited in this respect since the former readily adopted North American style fast/junk food whilst the latter has more strongly resisted. Regional cuisine remains strong in France and, though there are regional food specialities in Britain, the expectation that one travels to a whole region, rather than, say, a particular restaurant, for its cuisine hardly holds (though see Agnew 1997, 171) who observes:

..... Matthew Fort..... comments that '[t]he decline in the number and quality of our native [food] products should be almost as great a matter of concern as the destruction of the rainforests', arguing that government policy is failing adequately to protect our indigenous cuisine, and that British cooking remains uninspiring compared with that of some of the country's neighbours.“

As an aside to Agnew but again emphasising culture, one respondent in an Opinion Leader Research (OLR) study (Owen *et al.* 2007, 39) for DEFRA⁴ commented „Sunday roast is part of the culture isn't it?“ The OLR report continued: „Traditional foods are key to the identity of different communities. It is also noted that there is prevalence amongst migrant communities to hang on to their traditional dietary practices for as long as possible during the process of acculturation and that for some dietary change is non-negotiable (*ibid.*).“ Note, too, that the teaching of cooking at school, though strong in the immediate postwar period, has declined. However, in May, 2012, British ‘celebrity chef’ Jamie Oliver presented a petition to British Prime Minister Cameron pleading for its reintroduction.

Finally, Agnew (1997, 179) observed: „But what can you do in a nation without a clearly marketable culinary heritage? That is the question which has faced Australia: as Michael Symons, food author, says, ‘Australia has very few dishes of local origin.(Of course, he is talking about white Australians here; no mention is made of Aboriginal cuisine, other than to note that, as hunter-gatherers, they have no sedentary ‘agricultural’ or gastronomic heritage which could be exploited by settlers.)Australian food remained, at least until the 1970s, definitively ‘English’.... although American culinary imperialism

⁴ DEFRA = Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the United Kingdom.

reached Australia in the Second World War.... (and) Coca-Cola (... ran a TV commercial in the UK featuring Aboriginals). gruff and macho alternative, 'bush tucker', has yet to catch on..."

This reference to aboriginal cuisine is also of signal importance to the findings from Vancouver, Canada presented here.

Catering for diverse tastes

Research from elsewhere in Canada (Blay-Palmer and Donald 2006) on *The New Food Economy* in Toronto (Canada), involved a key informant/producer Mr. Goudas who noted „No other city in the world caters to ethnic diversity like Toronto. You can find almost every religion, language and food.... Because the population is so varied, there is a high demand for exotic foods“. They suggested that Mr. Goudas' success and steady growth over 35 years was founded on the company's ability to respond to new and emerging immigrant markets in the Toronto area and note:

„The company serves many communities, so that one canned good can have up to 14 languages on its label.“

This does of course raise the issue as to how any one of those 14 language groups can regard the product as authentically their own when 13 others might feel likewise. Mr. Goudas' innovative capacity was said to lie in its ability to identify and capitalize on the multicultural diversity of the Toronto area. Later they, like us, juxtaposed this variety with: „... the dominant agrofood mainstream model and those who are interested in disrupting this model by developing 'alternative' food geographies This is the economic space in which cultural, social, and political change is occurring as new Canadians, health-conscious consumers, and 'foodies' challenge the existing dominant, mainstream food system, a system that does not necessarily welcome many of the players in the new food economy“ (Blay-Palmer and Donald 2006, 384).

This brings us back to the introductory point: how to resist powerful, market-dominant global retailers? The strong level of food activism in western Canada (Hallsworth and Wong 2012) was a further motivation to undertake empirical food research primarily in the Province of British Columbia.

Seeking a research sample

An obvious generalisation about food this: most dishes, most cuisines, can reasonably be replicated if the recipe is written down and one has access to cooking facilities. Food preservation techniques mean that authentic ingredients, too,

can travel. This makes most, but not all, food culture transportable; a problem for Australian aborigines as already noted above. As Collins (2008) emphasised, Korea offers a particularly good example of strong food culture. (Coe and Lee 2006, 75) wrote:

„.....transnational retailers, such as Wal-Mart and Carrefour, were struggling in the face of the South Korean customers' strong nationalistic outlook“

Indeed, despite their size and power, both Wal-Mart and Carrefour exited the Korean market in 2006 whereas Tesco were still present at time of writing, despite recent setbacks (Kim and Hallsworth 2013). Meanwhile, as Coe and Lee (2006, 76) observed, Tesco became „highly responsive to local consumers' tastes“ they added (Coe and Lee 2006, 77). „South Korean customers and local retailers played crucial roles in boosting localization in the retail market. The customers' strong nationalistic outlook and sentiments against foreign capital provide a strong incentive“ and „, South Korean customers tend to shop more frequently and buy less each trip than in other countries because of their desire for fresh food, such as high-quality meats and vegetables. To meet these freshness standards, it is crucial for foreign retailers to supply food products directly from local manufacturers and suppliers....Samsung-Tesco also display a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables around the entrance to their stores and allow customers to touch fresh food products before they choose and buy.“

Their most telling lines come in their conclusions: „In South Korea, as we have argued, localization has been shaped by a consumer culture that is characterized by a suspicion of foreign companies and a preference for certain product groups and modes of retailing....“

We should not, of course, assume that the Koreans form a totally homogeneous group: Korea exhibits regional differences in food preferences. Past experience with Asian immigration to British Columbia exemplifies this. Until very recently, Asian immigrants (to North America) came mostly from Guangdong province, including Hong Kong and Macau, in southern China. Consequently, their Guangdong (also known commonly as Cantonese) dialect is widely spoken and understood within the established North American Chinese communities. For this reason, Cantonese cuisine became dominant in the Chinese restaurant trade. During the past decade, immigrants from regions outside of Guangdong province, i.e., northern China and Taiwan, have become commonplace in Canada. Thus, Mandarin dialect is now very prevalent along side Cantonese. Note, too, that Chinese immigrants to the Malaysian peninsula and to Indonesia in the late 19th/early 20th century originated mainly from Fujian province, north of Guangdong province. Consequently, Fujianese has been widely (and still is to a certain extent) spoken and understood within the classical Malaysian/Indonesian Chinese communities. For historical geographical reasons, Taiwan food

culture is Fujian based. Fujianese dialect is nearly the same as Taiwanese dialect. Incidentally, though the Fujian dialect is substantially different (i.e., mutually unintelligible) from the Cantonese dialect the written form is generally understood by all. In practice, the common written Chinese language becomes the vital unifying factor of Chinese immigrant societies; it affords cohesion among the dialect-diversified communities. In contrast, differences between different Korean dialects are essentially insignificant, e.g., Jeju provincial (in extreme south; Hangul: 제주도; Hanga: 濟州道) versus Gangwon provincial (in extreme northeast; Hangul: 강원도; Hanga: 江原道).

With Koreans selected as the base group – but with the above caveats – a comparator was, as noted, sought. Given the significant presence of aboriginal people⁵ in contemporary Canadian society, it was decided that they should be the comparator. Specifically, because certain Aboriginal peoples continue to live on traditional lands whilst others have dispersed to cities, it was decided to focus exclusively on the latter. Indeed, to control for age and locational variables, it was further agreed that the empirical research element of the study would be to compare Korean and First Nations (FN) students at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver.

Food life in Vancouver

Inevitably, much prior research with key respondents, prior review of major published works and site visits of food supply locations, was necessary before interviews could even be contemplated. Seeking to contrast the food experiences of new (Korean) and indigenous FN residents of Vancouver is not straightforward. Indeed, the former group may also differ from longer-term Korean immigrants (a factor evident with Chinese immigrants also). The younger Koreans will find that they have moved to a part of North America that benefited from the earlier strong Korean influx linked to the Korean War: in Canada but even more so the USA. Korean food outlets are long-established but may reflect an earlier vision of what Korean consumers want, i.e., prior to the younger people arriving from the now-booming East Asian economy. Younger Korean immigrants in Vancouver are highly mobile and their food consumption patterns often show their transnational identity and their wide-ranging efforts to obtain safe, familiar, authentic food.

In our pre-research ahead of empirical interviews, we found evidence of strong inter-connections between family members: some still in Korea⁶, others now in

⁵ In this paper, aboriginal people denote indigenous people who have inhabited the North American continent for the past few millennia. In contemporary Canadian context, First Nations people exclude aboriginal people of Métis and Inuit ancestries.

⁶ In this paper, Korea means South Korea, i.e., Republic of Korea.

Canada. This facet has an impact on the food consumption of Koreans in Vancouver. Vancouver now has a large population of overseas students and in many cases, relatives regularly travel between Korea and Canada and may often bring traditional Korean food (dried food/ ingredients) in their luggage from South Korea to Canada. In addition to students, there are many ‘separated families’ in Vancouver: working for international companies but with family at home in Korea. Some immigrants regularly get shipments of food boxes from their families in South Korea. Others simply order desired ethnocentric food via the Internet for shipment from Korea to Vancouver. Clearly, Korean food is desired by immigrants and is of a nature that can be transported. In pre-research we found anecdotal evidence of a respondent who visits his parents in Seoul and then brings Korean food prepared by his mother back to Vancouver. This might be not just dried food or ingredients but kimchi and frozen cooked food. Some newer Korean arrivals believe that certain food products sold in established Korean supermarkets in Vancouver may need to contain synthetic chemical preservatives because they are usually delivered from a long distance. Therefore, worries about food security, wholesomeness and freshness extend to obtaining authentic imports direct from family in Korea. This matter contrasts with a food industry that is seen as globalized and potentially out of touch with contemporary demands.

Other suggestions to emerge were that the established supermarket chains were expensive and seemed to offer what *appeared to be* mainstream Korean food but which could be less authentic⁷.

First Nations people

As noted with reference to Australian aborigines, FN food culture in Canada is far from easy to transport or replicate. Whilst there are numerous Korean stores, there are effectively no FN food stores in Vancouver that serve the off-reserve⁸ FN people. Conversely, even small immigrant groups such as Ethiopians – of whom there may be just a few hundred⁹ – can readily find Ethiopian

⁷ Again, this may be the contrast between the established Korean market system in Canada and the USA and the demands of educated, sophisticated current-generation immigrants.

⁸ With the passage of the Indian Act of 1867 by the Canadian Parliament, FN people have been relegated to live in small parcels of land (scattered throughout Canada) which have been reserved specifically for their inhabitation. „Off-reserve“ means living, by choice, outside of the reserve land in large towns and cities.

⁹ 2006 Census: about 1,600 Ethiopian „immigrants“ living in the City of Vancouver, and about 12,000 self-identified aborigines (including Métis and Inuit) living in the City of Vancouver. The total population of the city of Vancouver reported in the 2006 census was 571,600. Note that the Canadian Government degraded the 2011 census to

food stores and restaurants in Vancouver (similarly see Vadi 2015). Ethiopian processed foods are imported for sale, and some locally-prepared foods (un-leavened bread, for example) are prepared fresh for sale. Yet there was, at time of the empirical research, only one ‘aboriginal food’ restaurant in Vancouver; *Salmon and Bannock* – catering largely to the up-scale tourist trade. In essence, small ethnic groups have traditional food stores, while FN people have none. There are several wider explanations for this, some of which are explored in the conclusions. An important one is that, as with much Asian immigration, the FN people are, in fact, a very diverse group. Within the aboriginal community, there is substantial heterogeneity of language and culture. Consequently, the default *lingua franca* is English as many aboriginal languages are mutually unintelligible, even within the province of British Columbia. For example, although the Haisla and the Heiltsuk languages are derived from the same Wakashan linguistic family, a Haisla-speaking person could not understand the spoken words of a Heiltsuk person even though the traditional food-gathering territories of the Haisla and Heiltsuk have overlapped considerably for millennia. Furthermore, cultural practices within the aboriginal community are very diverse. For example, the salmon-culture of the traditional Salish people in the southwestern BC coast is substantially different from the non-salmon based culture of the traditional Dene people in the inland northeastern BC. In essence, a single-identity FN group may simply be too small in number (lacking necessary demand) to support a common *native food* outlet. Worse, aboriginal traditions have become too adulterated during the past 100 years for them to easily identify with an authentic *native food* outlet – whereas the generic „Ethiopian“ tag may attract recent immigrants not yet so acculturated into the Canadian mainstream.

Much, too, can be explained by the fact that traditional FN food is foraged from the land or fished from the sea and then generally prepared in a very simple fashion (see the definitive work of Nancy Turner 1995, 1998, in this field; also Kuhnlein and Turner 2009). Traditional cooking methods would typically involve roasting over open flame, or smoking. When in season, the coastal FN people living in reserves would catch salmon and also „jar“¹⁰ them for use later in the year. Jarred or smoked products are used largely today as supplementary food by individual families living in reserves. Under a restrictive quota regime, only licensed (FN or non FN) fishermen are allowed by the Federal Government to harvest and to sell salmon commercially to others. FN people living off-reserve obviously have no immediate access to salmon fishing or to facilities for its subsequent smoking or jarring. Transparently, the focus is on obtaining

the extent that it could not qualify under international norms. The 2011 census is now termed as the „2011 household survey“.....the robustness of 2011-gathered statistics is, accordingly, low.

¹⁰ Jarring is the canning of poached salmon in glass jars for later uses. This method of food preservation was introduced to the FN people by British settlers in the 19th Century.

and preserving ‘natural’ foods rather than on recipes/cuisine with use of, say, herbs and/or spices.

Food security for FN peoples: empirical research

First Nations traditional food discussions in September, 2012, involved 5 respondents (3 women, 2 men) and the venue was the FN Longhouse at UBC. Prior to discussions with colleagues, and with informants who had worked extensively with First Nations, it had been imagined that information-gathering might take the form of a Focus group with the lead researcher acting as *animateur*. Advice was subsequently received that this format would not be culturally-appropriate and that a roundtable, i.e., open discussion, would be preferable. This revision was subsequently adopted and as a result, no attempt was made to record, videotape or write down notes of the discussion. However, the discussants were invited to email the lead researcher later if they had supplementary inputs and three did so. Summarising the discussion later, the main themes that emerged covered two points that did not arise with the Korean group (below). In fact, discussion of „where to eat culturally-appropriate food“ never entered the roundtable discussion. The first topic to be covered was one that had not been anticipated in respect of urban food culture *per se*. A heated rights-based discussion/ debate arose about access, permission to hunt, and restrictions on the latter. This reflected rising concern that there was simply insufficient access to hunting (and fishing) rights for those who want to access them – and even less when one adds in latent demand from those who see themselves as excluded. This debate went on at some length to discuss topics such as the (declining) health of hunted animals and appropriate disposal of caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*, a game animal) carcasses. This deficiency of access is of course only relevant to those living (full- or part-time) in their own reserves. It may be noted that reserve residents are very protective against intruders from other reserves. For example, Heiltsuks are not welcome to hunt or fish in traditional Haisla territory.

The second point that was raised was somewhat closer to the pre-imagined brief and related to FN ‘knowledge’ about the relationship between food and wider issues of total health and well-being. The focus soon led on the issue of how such knowledge/insight is both traditionally obtained and communicated to others. Much traditional knowledge was not written down¹¹ and thus depended

¹¹ Indigenous FN people (in Canada) had never possessed an extensive written language. Cultural practices were essentially transferred and interpreted to succeeding generations by oral and/or artefactual means. Written record, in either French or English, of traditional knowledge began only after the arrival of Europeans in Canada in the 16th Century. Accurate accounts of traditional knowledge are variable and may often be distorted

upon much deeper, culturally-bounded (and often spatially-located) insights. The issue of how such knowledge/insight is both obtained and is communicated to others did, however, provide a slight link to the Korean group. One FN respondent expressed a keen desire to know more about traditional food gathering but was concerned that insights on what might safely be gathered and where was not readily available. Interestingly, Kuhnlein and Turner (2009, Chapter 4, 1–2) commented that „many of the foods listed are still being eaten...but often the contemporary pattern of use is unknown“. Precisely because so much knowledge/insight has not been (and could not be) written down, younger, off-reserve, First Nations people lacked the ability to discern between safe, edible plants and possibly inedible varieties. This is a significant point: foraging can lead to health risks. Indeed many people have been reported to be poisoned each year by the consumption of wild mushrooms gathered freely in Canadian woods. Note that some members of the Korean group (below) did stress that mothers¹² should educate their young about wholesome healthy, nutritious food.

Inevitably, at no point did the FN respondents even hint that traditional food could be bought from the mainstream food system. However, one key insight arose when a FN respondent mentioned his past involvement with trying to put FN food ‘on the table’ at a local college. This trend was also alluded to by separate communications with respondents linked to UBC-related gardening. The term that emerged was „Fusion food“¹³. Time did not permit fuller exploration but the possibility was arising that, via ‘fusion cooking’, FN students might regain interest and contact with certain elements of traditional FN foods.

Korean interviews

Since a formal „focus group“ approach was not used with FN respondents, it was felt that, to achieve consistency, the same, informal, unstructured – participant-observation, roundtable discussion should take place with Korean participants. Meetings with those volunteers (seven female, one male) took place in two locations at UBC. One, a busy, relaxed, central café area, was used to

in accordance to the prevailing perception and ideology of Euro-centric writers, especially zealous Christian missionaries. This lack of veritable documentary record is one of reasons why the re-construction of the pre-Contact FN ancestral diet is extremely difficult. To date, archaeological excavations have afforded very limited dietary information.

¹² Collins (2008) observed that, among his Korean sample, food provision, cooking and related activities were highly gendered.

¹³ Fusion food is a culinary term used widely in contemporary Anglo-North American societies to depict the purposeful admixing of ingredients, condiment and/or cooking methods of various other cultural groups. Traditionally, cuisine fused with cooking methods of other cultures normally evolves over decades or even centuries.

meet with two categories of respondent. First were three Korean undergraduates at UBC. They had emigrated to North America with their parents a few years previously and subsequently gone on to study at the University. Three others, plus two respondents interviewed at a residence for families, were either graduate researchers or wives of graduate researchers. The latter respondents had a slightly older age profile (four had children) but for both sub-groups the overall length of residence in Canada averaged about 7 years.

A particularly salient point was raised by one respondent with a school-age child. She home-cooked Korean foods from fresh ingredients and wanted her daughter to continue to eat ‘proper’ Korean food at lunch break in mainstream school. She found considerable difficulties in achieving this initiative since the types of food she wanted to put into her child’s lunchbox did not conform to school ‘eating styles’. She sensed that the ‘typical’ school lunchbox contained items that could be consumed quickly before the children were sent out for lunchtime play (the Vancouver *Sun* newspaper of 5 September 2012 covered this topic extensively – with an ideal-typical lunchbox much as described by the Korean respondent). So, the admirable pressure for play and exercise was, in effect, conflicting with parental judgements on appropriate food. She suggested that a compromise would be some sort of „fusion“ of Korean and mainstream food items. Note that, as with the First Nations, the use of the term ‘fusion’ was entirely spontaneous. This notion of „fusion“ of Korean and mainstream food items could be extended to everyday eating: depending on which authentic Korean ingredients could be found and which could not. In view that this point having been raised, field visits were made to several Korean supermarkets in the Vancouver region in order to assess the availability of ‘Korean’ produce. Fresh food displays were exceptional: some foods were from Korea, other fresh foods came from Canada or the USA. Some (expensive) food items were, incidentally, ones that could be foraged for locally. Foraging, it would appear, can still be lucrative as well as healthy – as long as someone else can afford to pay for the product. For those with the funds and the inclination it was even possible to buy refrigerators designed exclusively for the storage of kimchi.

Interestingly, the younger Korean respondents were highly selective about which supermarkets they chose – driven by their sense of ‘authenticity’ and other choice criteria. Unlike the First Nations groups where dishes and cuisine *per se* were hardly mentioned, the Korean group all regularly ate traditional meals and readily listed favourite dishes such as bulgogi (grilled marinated meat; Hangul: 불고기), kalbi (marinated beef or pork short ribs; Hangul: 갈비), bibimbap (cooked white rice mixed with sautéed and seasoned vegetables; Hangul: 비빔밥), danjang (bean paste; Hangul: 된장) and seafood cake. Just as Collins (2008) had found, selected ‘authentic’ Korean restaurants were also patronised, with food/dining being seen as an important facet of Korean culture and identity.

Other information

Returning to issues surrounding FN foods, we have noted a news item broadcast by CBC¹⁴ News (Rennie 2014) which reported „noisy protests in several Nunavut¹⁵ communities about the affordability of basic foods such as fresh orange juice (at about C\$26 per 2-litre carton), butter (at about \$20 per kg) and bacon (at about C\$17 per 500-g pack)“. The sub-text was that people were too poor to buy such ‘essential’ food items, and were asking the Federal government to intervene. It has been shown repeatedly in numerous official surveys that the cost of food is substantially higher in the Nunavut territory than that in (southern) Canada. A large part of the higher cost is due to the necessary importation by air freight from distant (several thousand kilometres away) distribution centres in southern Canada. The margin of cost difference may be as much as 100 to 300%. It is interesting to note that the Nunavut Bureau of Statistics included the following 28 items in the „standard“ weekly food basket (Anon., 2013) for a family of four: fresh milk (2% milk fat; 2 litres), margarine (454 g), eggs (12 large), celery (1 kg), mushrooms (1 kg), potatoes (4.54 kg), carrots (1 kg), bananas (1 kg), oranges (1 kg), baked beans (398 ml), canned tomatoes (796 ml), soda crackers (450 g), soup (284 ml), ground beef (1 kg), bacon (500 g), pork chops (1 kg), canned salmon (213 g), hot dogs (450 g), bread (675 g), frozen corn (750 g), spaghetti noodles (500 g), oatmeal (1 kg), rice (907g), pilot biscuits (850 g), flour (10 kg), French fries (1 kg), and frozen dinners (455 g). It is evident that none of the 28 ‘essential’ food items could be considered traditional Inuit foods at all. The wider question was, ‘what has happened to traditional foods from the land and sea? Why the people are not organizing to undertake communal foraging etc’. The answer may lie in part to the possibly irrevocable changes in societal structure of the indigenous people, especially over the past 50 years. Subsistence hunting and fishing were full time activities in traditional semi-nomadic Inuit societies. The functioning of the modern Inuit society is now entirely cash based. Virtually all Inuit are now living in permanent government-approved settlements in the Canadian Arctic. The dwellings are all serviced with electricity for heating, lighting and cooking. Family entertainment now evolves around the multi-channel satellite-television set. Poverty becomes an issue of relativity in time and place. There is no compelling reason to return to strenuous subsistence hunting and fishing activities, even with the use of modern motorized vehicles and boats.

Of relevance, too, is „Resetting the Table“ published by People’s Food Policy (2011). This publication is said to be the result of ‘a collaborative process’

¹⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

¹⁵ Nunavut, a territory located in the Canadian Arctic region, is inhabited principally by indigenous people known as Inuit.

in which hundreds of people devoted thousands of volunteer hours to create a food policy that genuinely reflects the perspectives of (3,500) people across the country. Its aim was to seek a healthy, just and ecologically sound Canadian food system. This document has a passage written by the *Indigenous Circle*. In discussing access to healthy culturally-adapted indigenous foods both on- and off-reserve, it found „....many challenges currently facing Indigenous food sovereignty“ these they see as a „legacy of past agreements based on a sacred provision to shared caring for the land as guided by Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing“. It argued „....these agreements have not been upheld, and our land, water and air are being heavily polluted by mining, industry, sprawling development and much more. ...hunters, fishers and gatherers have been confined into smaller and smaller areas due to the creation of land reserves, national parks, private lands, etc. This affects not only the ability of indigenous people to make use of customary foods found in nature, but it undermines the very fabric of Indigenous communities and the foundations of traditional knowledge.“ But acculturation, by forceful means or otherwise, changes how the FN people could and would use the land and waters for daily sustenance. The fundamental issue is the willingness of people to undertake subsistence hunting and fishing activities in the context of the contemporary cash-based society. Unfettered access to restored or unspoiled land and waters may become secondary issue.

The unaddressed underlying intractable problem is the irreversible change of the indigenous society from a subsistence economy to a cash-based economy. Because of the foundational structure of the „Indian Act of 1867“, a cultural eradication policy of the successive governments was pursued relentlessly to result in pervasive poverty and hopelessness of the indigenous people today. Regrettably even with the recent retrieval of some aboriginal rights and titles of land and waters, these „re-acquired“ assets are often sold and traded by the leadership through external bribes, coercion and other inducements.

A first point to note is how similar this is to the range of topics that first arose with discussions with FN students. Also, it does not seem that the conclusions involve attempting to reconnect with the land – admittedly even more difficult off-reserve. What the *Indigenous Circle* noted next was this:

„....Indigenous communities now face widespread poverty, hunger, lack of affordable housing, eroded culture and language and other social difficulties, both on reserve and off.the natural migration of large animals, water fowl, and other animals that are traditional food and medicine sources and which represent deep cultural relationships for Indigenous peoples. As the original peoples of this land and holders of traditional knowledge, we believe that Indigenous food sovereignty will be realized when the conditions of unsustainable over-exploitation that currently impact Indigenous communities are recognized as human rights issues and dealt with accordingly. Further, food sovereignty will

be achieved for all when the sharing of traditional and western knowledge is met with mutual understanding and respect.“

So, the idea that deeper issues can be papered over by somehow finding a way to get traditional-style foods to all indigenous communities is rejected. The problems in this area clearly run far deeper than the opening of shops. Indeed, some of the words used closely echo the work of Hamelin *et al.* (2011, 64–65) who studied participation by Canadians in general in Community Food Programmes.

In addition to having a passage on „financial access to food: an indispensable condition“ they characterised food insecurity as „a cluster of problems that go far beyond just the ‘food’ aspect and including ‘self-respect and enjoying social integration‘“. The interviews with FN undergraduates and others at UBC brought an encouraging and refreshing optimism that better food futures for FN people might be possible. We cannot, however, ignore the fact that these individuals were students at one of the world’s leading universities rather than the poorest members of FN society. Nevertheless it is acknowledged that many FN individuals suffer from multiple deprivations and that this carries strong implications for life-long food habits.

Summary

If food structures are this complex then we should hesitate to rush to simplistic conclusions. We do, however, consider that food authenticity and food availability deserve mention as aspects of life satisfaction and they clearly link to the lived experience of multiculturalism. We detected a lingering desire among FN peoples for access to traditional foods. But, on and off reserve, the FN people seem largely to have been acculturated to buy and eat foods on offer to other Canadians: with an apparent bias towards low income food preferences. Note that, unlike say Chinese or Koreans, there is no parallel influx of immigrants from some evolving overseas homeland to re-invigorate the traditional culture in urban areas. For First Nations in particular, perhaps the most telling points did not arise through round-table discussions at UBC. It was the CBC food protest reports, the work of Hodgett and Clark (2011) and the *Indigenous Circle* that flagged the significance of poverty. We cannot ignore the position whereby prospects for Canadian FN peoples remain overlain by poverty both on- and off-reserve. Universally, ability to pay is a key factor in determining what food-stuffs will be supplied to which communities.

There are other issues, too, that command our interest. A key underlying factor may be that traditional cultural practices of the FN people have largely been destroyed through several centuries of colonial rule. There is little or no

possibility of resuscitation of any remnants to the pre-Contact level. There is, as noted above, no cultural replenishment: the traditional cultural practices of most other ethnic groups (especially non-European) are continually renewed and reinforced with significant arrivals of new immigrants. This situation provides a means to retain cultural practices of the home country. The aboriginal people have no other homeland (now destroyed) as a well-spring of cultural traditions. There is also a lack of authenticity: what is considered presently to be aboriginal cultural practice, including food, has been changed by mainstream acculturation over the past 100 years. For example, the well-known „native bannock“¹⁶ came originally from Scottish settlers in the 19th century. There was no modern „native bannock“ in the pre-Contact days. Another example: tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) is considered presently by the Salish people to be an aboriginal herbal medicinal plant. Yet the tansy plant was accidentally introduced into northwestern North America by British settlers only in the 19th century. Tansy has been used widely as a medicament in Eurasia for many centuries.

Essentially, food, despite being so necessary to life and well-being, remains relatively under-researched as an aspect of multiculturalism. It was therefore encouraging to see food issues being actively debated by young First Nations undergraduates at a leading Canadian University. Others have observed that educated young First Nations people tend, first and foremost, to seek to study law: an understandable decision given the land rights issues that still continue. However, as this paper has sought to show, there are many other societally-relevant topics that also need to be researched. If food underpins multiculturalism it currently does so far better for recent Korean immigrants, for whom security of food supply seems more favourable, than for indigenous FN peoples. That said, ‘fusion’ food may be a way ahead for both: making it a topic worthy of future consideration.

Finally we observe that the continuity of cultural identity is tenuous, as second and successive generations of Korean immigrants are less able to maintain their culture identity under the relentless pressure of integration and assimilation into the larger Euro-centric Canadian society. However as the cultural identity of descendants of arrived immigrants fades away steadily, the cultural identity (presence) is renewed continually by new arriving immigrants from Korea. One net outcome is that the Korean food culture is largely maintained by this replacement regime in Vancouver and other large urban centres. In contrast, despite the notable interest among younger-generation FN people, the outlook for the recovery of „original“ FN food culture in any form is bleak. The lamentable

¹⁶ The ingredients of modern „native bannock“ are wheat flour, baking powder, vegetable oil and water. A type of „bannock“ consisting of flour of maize, nuts and roots may have been known in some indigenous cultures in North America in the pre-Contact days. See, for example, Blackstock, M.D. (2000), available in <<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/rsi/fnb/FNB.htm>> [07 Mar 2015].

circumstances fomenting over the past few centuries have resulted in relative dwindling of the inherently heterogeneous FN population as a whole, almost complete destruction of FN cultural practices with no possibility of renewal by a replenishment regime, and in systemic poverty with resulting disdainful relegation of the FN people to the lowest rung in contemporary Canadian society.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to our First Nations and Korean study participants and to several colleagues at the University of British Columbia who facilitated the meetings and added their informative insights. The research on which this paper is based was undertaken with the assistance of a study grant from the Government of Canada.

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Kimči, a od irvasa – kanadski multikulturalizam?

Istraživačka studija

U ovom radu tvrdimo da ne bi trebalo prevideti dimenziju zadovoljstva koje nudi hrana – bazična životna potreba. Koristili smo sekundarne izvore i empirijsko istraživanje ove teme, prvenstveno u Britanskoj Kolumbiji, Kanada. Druga skorašnja istraživanja navode da se, među imigrantskom populacijom, životno zadovoljstvo u multikulturalnom društvu, kakvo je Kanada, ne sastoji samo u dobijanju posla. Kako ljudi migriraju, oni se doseljavaju u novu sredinu koja može, ali i ne mora, da zadovolji njihove poznate navike i potrebe. Ovde je takođe razmotrena i dodatna perspektiva koja se tiče mogućnosti za snabdevanje tradicionalnom hranom pripadnika Prvih Nacija (Indijanaca) koji žive van rezervata.

Ključne reči: Akulturacija, kultura, hrana, domoroci, imigranti, Koreja

Sur Kimchi, Caribou – et le multiculturalisme canadien?

Une étude introductory

Dans ce travail nous soutenons que la nourriture – besoin essentiel – ne devrait pas être négligée en tant que facteur de la qualité de vie. Nous utilisons des sources secondaires ainsi que la recherche empirique pour illustrer les dimensions

émergentes de ce sujet: essentiellement dans la Colombie-Britannique, au Canada. Une autre recherche récente suggère que, parmi les populations immigrées, la qualité de vie dans une société multiculturelle comme le Canada ne se mesure pas uniquement par rapport à l'obtention d'un emploi. Comme les gens migrent, ils se déplacent dans un nouvel environnement qui pourrait ou non satisfaire leurs besoins élémentaires. La perspective supplémentaire ici est que l'accès hors réserve des Premières nations à une nourriture appropriée est aussi considéré.

Mots clés: acculturation, culture, nourriture, population indigène, immigrants, Koreéns

Primljeno / Received: 16. 05. 2015.

Prihvaćeno / Accepted: 02. 06. 2015.