Maintaining Food Security in Elsipogtog First Nation

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Abstract

Food and nutrition is recognized as a key health issue in Aboriginal communities throughout Canada. The purpose of this research is to understand how a Migmag First Nation on the Atlantic coast maintains food security. Elsipogtog has a population of 2,839 residents who reside on-reserve. This Migmag First Nation was historically self-sufficient and had a strong physical and cultural connection with food.

The researcher used a phenomenological research method that included participant observation, unstructured interviews and a focus group to learn about food security in Elsipogtog. Data collection for this research took place from February 2006 until September 2006. This research attempts to capture the mechanisms that are currently used at the individual, family, and community levels in Elsipogtog First Nation to maintain food security. Specifically, the two main research questions are:

1. What are the individual, family and community strategies used to maintain food security?
2. What are the barriers to maintaining food security in Elsipogtog First Nation?

The major findings of this research include the need to nurture to vitality the rich cultural relationship with food that the Migmag of this community have, the need to address environmental issues, the need to share knowledge and the need to support infrastructure to enhance community food security.

Preface

In honour of my grandmother, Mrs. Pearline Minnie Elliott (1916-2001)

Acknowledgements

When I first set out to complete graduate level research, my aspiration was to engage in research with one of the First Nations' communities that I consider home. I also had a personal desire to develop more skills and knowledge in the area of food security and qualitative research.

There are many people who have been supportive in many ways throughout this experience. It is important for me to acknowledge some key people but in no particular order:

- The participants who trusted and shared their stories with me.
- Dr. Connie H. Nelson for her support and encouragement to stay true to phenomenological research and experience this method of research as a learner. It was a privilege to have a supervisor who was challenging, yet provided guidance, support and real perspectives based on her experiences.
- My parents -- Adela and Franklin Levi for always being there for me. I know they sometimes felt like they were writing a thesis too.
- My Advisory Committee in Elsipogtog First Nation -- for sharing their stories and supporting the research idea.
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I would also like to acknowledge the Indigenous Health Research Development Program, an Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environment (ACADRE) - Centre of the Institute for Aboriginal Peoples Health Research, the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, The Chippewas of Nawash Post Secondary Unit and Ryerson's Centre for Studies in Food Security for providing financial and peer support. I would also like to acknowledge Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre for in-kind contributions. It is my wish that more youth from First Nations continue to pursue graduate degrees.

This thesis has taken on a life of its own that I hope will extend beyond the final page. I am truly excited that I now have the opportunity to return the findings to the community of Elsipogtog and others who are interested in this important topic. I was fortunate to be the 'gatherer of the information'. Thank-you, *Che Megwetch, Oalalin*!

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1. Introduction

Food and nutrition is recognized as a key health issue in Aboriginal communities throughout Canada. Myriad factors including: an unbalanced diet, food insecurity (including hunger), changes in diet from traditional to processed food, environmental contaminants, nutritional deficiencies, and, obesity are linked to susceptibility of chronic diseases, poor pregnancy outcomes and mental health problems among First Nations peoples (Kinnon, 2002; Kuhnlein, Receveur, & Chan, 2001; Myers, Powell, & Duhaime, 2004; Vallianatos et al., 2006; Willows, 2005a; Willows, 2005b).

For more than a decade, health researchers have systematically documented that the health of First Nations peoples is worse than that of the general Canadian population for every health status measure and condition (Health Canada, 2003; CIHI, 2004). Factors contributing to chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and cardiovascular disease are the result of rapid changes in lifestyle, particularly in dietary habits and physical activity levels (Young, 1994, p.216). Many of the aforementioned variables that affect the health of Canadians in general also apply to First Nations peoples. However, unique factors that may influence the health of First Nations peoples are often cited as: effects of colonialism, the legacy of the residential school system, the effects of climate change, environmental contaminants, and community control and self-determination (CIHI, 2004, Chapter 4). There is also a disproportionate level of poverty in First Nations' communities (First Nations Centre, 2005).

Food security is a prerequisite for healthy eating and foundational to human and environmental health. The definition of food security is inclusive of many variables and is

a relatively new research area. The most widely recognized definition was developed at the World Food Summit and is endorsed by the Canadian government: food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998). Furthermore, food security "is the basis for the prevention of chronic disease and the promotion of healthy growth and development. It is integral to healthy living and environmental health protection. If people do not have access to a sustainable supply of appropriate foods, their health will be compromised, regardless of available health care (The Community Nutritionists Council of British Columbia, 2004, p. vii).

The 2001 Canadian Community Health Survey revealed that the rate of food insecurity was disproportionably high among off-reserve Aboriginal peoples; more than double replied affirmatively to at least one of the food insecurity questions compared to non-Aboriginals (Ledrou & Gervais, 2005). What is more, the fact that the CCHS 1.1 and 2.2 excludes homeless people, and First Nations peoples living on First Nations reserves may be problematic as they tend to have relatively higher risks of food insecurity (Lyons, Park, & Nelson, in press, p.6). The 2004 CCHS, Cycle 2.2, which focuses on nutrition, included an over-sample of Canada's Aboriginal persons living off-reserve, which will contribute to a better understanding of the food and nutrition issues of this vulnerable population, but again not of on-reserve populations (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2006). In addition, a valid measurement tool for measuring food security as it pertains to First Nations who live on-reserve is absent (Che & Chen, 2001; Tarasuk, 2001; Willows, 2005a).

Many Aboriginal peoples in Canada, particularly in remote communities, experience all or most aspects of food insecurity due to poverty, conditions of economic marginalization, safety risks in the traditional food supply, and disruptions to access caused by environmental factors. For example, in remote communities the cost of commercial food is high, as are the cost of supplies for fishing and hunting (Reid, 2002; Willows, 2005a). There are numerous documents discussing the impacts of the loss of traditional diet and food acquisition practices on First Nations peoples (Bell-Sheeter, 2004; Duhaime, Chabot, & Gaudrealt, 2002; First Nations Development Institute, 2002; Hackett, 2005).

As demonstrated above, the issues discussed in the research to date, focus on food *insecurity* rather than food *security*. This current research deviates from this trend by examining how food *security* is maintained from the perspectives of the community and its members. Given that the research focuses on food security as defined by members of Elsipogtog First Nation, the findings may differ from the accepted definition of food security.

Purpose and Research Questions

Thus, the purpose of this research is to understand how food security is maintained in Elsipogtog, a Migmag First Nation. Aboriginal peoples are over represented among those experiencing food insecurity in Canada (Che & Chen, 2001; McIntyre, Connor, & Warren, 2000; Willows, 2005a). However, maintaining one's food system was historically necessary for survival and inherent to the culture among many First Nations' communities (Hackett, 2005; Kuhnlein et al., 2001; Medical Services Branch, Health Canada, 1994; Wein, Freeman & Makus, 1996). This research attempts to capture the mechanisms that are

currently used at the individual, family, and community level in Elsipogtog First Nation to maintain food security. Specifically, the two main research questions are:

1. *What are the individual, family and community strategies used to maintain food security?*
2. *What are the barriers to maintaining food security in Elsipogtog First Nation?*

An outcome of the research methodology described in Chapter Three are recommendations to further enhance food security in Elsipogtog First Nation. The purpose of developing recommendations is to provide more than an academic document that brings something tangible for readers to understand.

Community Setting

Formerly known as Big Cove, Elsipogtog has a population of 2,839 residents who reside on-reserve (Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre, 2006). The Elsipogtog First Nation Reserve is located in the northern boreal forest of northern New Brunswick and has a maritime continental climate (Berghout et al., 2005).

The history of Elsipogtog goes back to a time when it was part of an area called *Oapenaagig*, (Land of the dawn) which encompasses today's Gaspe region in Quebec and the four Atlantic provinces. This area was divided into seven distinct territories occupied by different Migmag[1] clan or family groups. Elsipogtog is located in the district called *Sigenigteoag* (Pritchard & Augustine, 1991). The word "Elsipogtog literally translates into "Great Fire . It is said that Elsipogtog was once the gathering place for the seven districts of the Migmag Nation.

[1] Migmag is spelled according to the Pacific Writing Style recommended by my Advisory Committee in Elsipogtog First Nation. Migmag can also be spelled Miigmag, Mi'kmaq, and Micmac.

Migmag people lived along the Richibucto River, on the Atlantic coast and far inland for thousands of years. Nature provided everything the families needed for food, medicines, shelter, clothing, transportation and tools. After the arrival of European settlers on the territory, life changed drastically for the Migmag people. For example, when Elsipogtog was created in 1802, the Richibucto River area Reserve (Elsipogtog) covered an area of 51,200 acres. Today, the Elsipogtog Reserve has been reduced to an area of 2,222 acres (Elsipogtog First Nation, 2006).

As a result of the *Indian Act*, the federal government initiated a process to prepare the Indians for the transition from a traditional way of life to a farming economy. The first school was built in 1855 followed by a church in 1897 (Big Cove First Nation, 2001). Over the years, Elsipogtog has diversified in its service facilities for their people. Whereby, most of the community and economic support programs are funded by the federal government and community generated revenues. Some of the programs and services observed by the researcher include: child and family services, the Head Start Program, Elsipogtog Day Care Centre, elementary school education and adult education, economic development, police and fire services, social assistance and welfare services, Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre, mental health services, fisheries and forestry businesses, and church, culture and spiritual programs.

The food related businesses in the community are shown in Table 1.1. During the course of this research a high turnover in food related businesses was observed where some businesses opened and closed within the same year.

Table 1.1. Food Related Businesses in Elsipogtog

Name of Business	Description of Items Sold
Augustine's Variety Convenience Store	Pop, chips, confectionary items, Video Lottery Terminal (V.L.T) machines.
Boogie Gees Pizza	One of the oldest businesses in the community. Sells pizza and non-alcoholic beverages.
Cal's Take-Out	Variety of fast food and drinks. Offers home delivery.
Cara's Cafe	Pop, chips, nuts, alcohol and non-alcoholic beverages, confectionary items. V.L.T. machines
Harry's Taco's	*Loosgnigan* (Fried Bread) covered with homemade chilli taco sauce with cheese and toppings.
Jac's Pawn Shop	Pawn shop with V.L.T machines. Subs, pop, chips and vending machines.
Lipai 1 & 2	Fast foods: subs, pop, chips, V.L.T machines.
Lola's Lounge	Fast foods, subs, pop, chips.
Levi & Levi Gas	Convenience store: non perishable items, milk, bread, eggs, luncheon meats, subs, coffee, beverages, confectionary items, small selection of fruit and vegetables.
Peter's Variety (out of business)	Convenience store: non perishable items, milk, bread, eggs, luncheon meats, subs, coffee, beverages, confectionary items, small selection of fruit and vegetables. Now a member's only gambling lounge.
Pizza Place (out of business)	Specialized in pizza, subs, and fast foods, pop, etc.
Shirley's Subs and Fast Food Take Out	Daily home cooked meals, pizza and variety of take out, homemade breads and pies. Offers delivery.
Stan's Grocery	Convenience store: non perishable items, milk, bread, eggs, luncheon meats, subs, coffee, beverages, confectionary items and small selection of fruit and vegetables, V.L.T machines.
Tex- Mex Taco's	Variety of Mexican burritos and tacos, beverages. Offers delivery.
Whispering Pines	Variety of fast food. Offers delivery.

Economy and Employment

It has been cited that Elsipogtog First Nation, receives approximately twenty eight million dollars per year in income from the federal government (Lenehan, 2005), which is the largest economic generator in Kent County. However, "due to [a] lack of on-reserve businesses, very little of this income is re-circulated within the community. Almost as soon as it arrives, most of this money flows right out Highway 116 into the surrounding communities and the greater Moncton region (Big Cove First Nation, 2001, p. 18).

As with many First Nations communities, economic well-being is one of the foremost concerns for the Elsipogtog First Nation. The most recent data available from

Statistics Canada reports that the average annual income in 2001 -- for those reporting from Elsipogtog -- stood at about $13,000, which is 50% less than the average income in the province of New Brunswick. Moreover, the unemployment rate according to 2001 Census data was 44% (Statistics Canada, 2001). However, not everyone within Elsipogtog participates in Census reporting. Local estimates show that greater than 80% of the community is on social assistance (Big Cove First Nation, 2001). In Elsipogtog, individuals who are employed work for the band, independently, or off-reserve. Commercial fishing is one common independent means of employment in Elsipogtog as in much of the Maritimes. Individuals on social assistance are at increased risk of experiencing the inability or uncertainty of purchasing nutritious food (Dietitians of Canada, 2005).

An important federal ruling that has positively influenced employment and wellbeing in Elsipogtog is the Marshall Decision (R.v. Marshall, 1999). The ruling has historic roots in that it provided legal recognition of the treaty rights of the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy peoples to harvest and commercially sell fish and, from it, earn a moderate livelihood. Following the Marshall Decision of 1999, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) provided increased First Nation access to the commercial fishery. This was accomplished through the negotiation of fishing agreements.

> The Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Marshall Response Initiative, has provided fishery access, employment, and economic opportunities to many First Nations in the Maritimes and eastern Quebec. The decision, and the resulting increased access to the commercial fishery for First Nations in this region, created a great deal of change within their communities. It has provided employment, incomes, and economic opportunities to those who previously had none. (Atlantic Policy Congress, 2004)

The Marshall victory has brought hope to struggling communities but at the same time, has resulted in conflicts between Mi'kmaq and the state over how fisheries should be developed and managed (Fox, 2006). The 2006 Census results may provide insight on how the decision has impacted employment in the community.

Traditional Migmag Diet

Traditionally, the Migmag ate a large variety of seafood found in ocean as well as forest animals such as moose and deer. "Fish and shellfish were an important part of the diet. Cod, lobster, oysters, eel, Atlantic salmon, scallops and other fish, as well as seaweeds like dulse, Irish moss, kelp, vegetables such as corn and potatoes, wild greens like fiddleheads, and blueberries and cranberries were all enjoyed by the maritime Indians (Medical Services Branch, 1994, p. 11). Thus, in the past, fishing, hunting and gathering were important aspects of the Migmag way of life, permitting them to live in harmony with nature for thousands of years. The most valuable fish for the Migmag was the *Pulamoo* (Atlantic salmon), which was found in abundance in rivers across their territory. Being one of the main food supplies, *Pulamoo* has always been closely related to the Migmag culture (Elsipogtog First Nation, 2006).

Current Diet in Elsipogtog

There are a number of studies describing the current diet of First Nations communities across Canada (Campbell, Diamant, Macpherson & Halladay, 1997; Kuhnlein, Receveur, & Chan, 2001; Lawn & Harvey, 2001; Wein, Freeman, & Makus, 1996; Willows, Iserhoff, Napash, Leclerc & Verall, 2005). Yet, specific research, quantitative or qualitative, describing the diet of Migmag people in this region could not be found. However, a few questions that addressed nutrition and diet were included in the

2002-2003 First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey. Elsipogtog First Nation was the largest community in New Brunswick to participate in this survey. Almost 52% (N=257) of the respondents said that they have had traditional foods -- land based animals, fresh water fish, salt water fish -- shared with them by others. Within this survey, results also indicated that 50% of respondents eat these traditional foods (Getty, 2006). This suggests that traditional food remains an integral part of the dietary and lifestyle choices among the people of Elsipogtog First Nation.

Although there is no research that describes the current diet of community members in Elsipogtog First Nation, assumptions to the current diet can be made based on the major food sources available. There are two main convenience stores in the community where canned and dry foods can be purchased. Fresh produce is limited in these stores to one fridge including produce such as onions, potatoes, and carrots. There are a number of take-out shops in the community where pizza, fried foods and ready made meals can be purchased, as demonstrated in Table 1.1. Over the years, restaurants have opened and closed down. There are a number of places where *junk food* can be purchased such as cigarette shops, candy stores, and Video Lottery Terminals (VLT) stores. The majority of food is accessed and purchased from outside of the community from two small grocery stores that are approximately a 20-minute drive away, and large grocery markets and superstores that are a one-hour drive away. In addition to store bought foods, community members also enjoy traditional food as described under the Migmag diet.

2. Literature Review

Food Security and First Nations Peoples

First Nations people reside in all parts of Canada. Those who live on reserves are situated in a variety of geographical contexts. In general, the more rural a community is the less availability of commercial foods, and a greater reliance on traditional food sources (Kuhnlein et al., 2001; Wein, 1995). However, traditional food systems are no longer the primary method for accessing food among First Nations peoples. Traditional food systems such as hunting, fishing, harvesting and gathering now enhance the nutritional value and cultural acceptability of store bought foods. Available foods can be accessed by three main methods: traditional food systems, purchasing from suppliers, and/or obtaining it through charity food providers.

While food is often available, what happens when people cannot access it? A survey that was conducted in 1992-1993 on behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development found that 35-55% (N=800) of women from eight remote communities in Northern Canada were extremely concerned about not having enough money to buy food. Between 40% and 68% of women reported that they did not have enough to eat in the house in the past month (Health Canada, 1995). More recent research has documented that Inuit communities spend approximately 50% of household budgets on purchasing food. This is combined with the fact that the high costs for hunting means that traditional food is also becoming more expensive and harder to get (ITK, 2006). Basic food such as bread, milk and cereal are scarce in many Aboriginal families for two weeks of the month (OFIFC, 2003). Among the Cree in Northern Quebec, researchers found that

21% (N=245) of mothers were anxious about food supplies (Willows et al., 2005). These staggering numbers show that food insecurity is a real and common concern among Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada.

It is also documented that access to food on-reserves or in Aboriginal communities is strongly influenced by local business proprietors. "The majority of foods available in most Native communities are provided by non-Indian owned businesses, small Indian owned businesses on-reserve or the federal government. There are few successful agricultural enterprises that are locally supported. As is the case in many limited-resource communities, many reservations lack access to healthy foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Small, reservation-based stores frequently do not stock a full range of food (particularly fresh fruits and vegetables), providing instead snack and convenience foods (Bell-Sheeter, 2004, p.8). A study of the Navajo reservation found that the amount of healthful foods found on the reservation is limited, and rural convenience stores and trading posts reported that junk food was the most commonly sold food (Bauer, 2001). In Australia, research examining the nutrient densities of two northern coastal Aboriginal communities found that nutrient densities tended to be highest in both communities when one particular store manager administered their stores. Results support the notion that store managers wield considerable power of accessibility to nutritious foods (Lee, Bonson, & Powers, 1996). In Elsipogtog there are two convenience stores with limited fresh produce owned by community members of Elsipogtog.

Traditional foods are still enjoyed by many First Nations peoples in Canada (Getty, 2006; Wein, 1995; Willows, 2005a). However, there are barriers to hunting, harvesting, and fishing of traditional foods due to a lack of equipment, loss of knowledge and skills,

inaccessibility due to animal migration patterns, expenses, apprehension regarding environmental laws, and fear of environmental contaminants (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, 1998; Campbell, et. al, 1997; Giuliano, 1995; Kuhnlein, Soueida & Receveur, 1996; Lawn & Harvey, 2001). It has been documented that community freezers and other forms of community sharing enable community members to have access to traditional foods (Duhaime et al., 2002).

In a case study documenting which elementary school parents of Elsipogtog choose to send their children to (i.e. band school or off-reserve school), it was found that parents who sent their children to the band operated school rated the free lunch program as the best aspect of the school. The free lunch program was implemented in 1996/1997 after a needs assessment determined that children were going to school with little or no nutrition (Augustine, 2002). The school has made a direct impact on the provision of food to school age children. School nutrition policies could not be found at the Elsipogtog First Nation level or the federal level from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. However, it should be noted that the Community Dietitian has been involved in promoting *New Brunswick's Healthy Foods and Nutrition in Public Schools* policy (Personal Observation, February 17, 2006).

As discussed above, food security for First Nations peoples is composed of many factors tied to policies, culture, health determinants and current living conditions. To date, the primary focus of research about food security among Aboriginal peoples (including First Nations, Inuit and Metis) has been based on confirming the disheartening fact that many Aboriginal peoples in Canada, especially women and children, are experiencing inappropriate and inadequate food consumption based on income insecurity, contamination

of traditional food sources, loss of knowledge in accessing traditional foods, and accessibility to conventional food outlets (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2004, 2005, & 2006; Frideres & Gadacz, 2005; OFIFC, 2003; Shah, 2003; Statistics Canada, 2001; Willows, 2005a).

The Relationship between Health and Food Security

An Aboriginal perspective on the concept of health balances physical, mental, emotional and spiritual elements (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Ellingsen (1989) investigated the concept of health among [Migmag] women. Participants of this study believed that health is attained by linking the past to the present context in which unity or disunity is being experienced (Ellingsen, 1989). In the Migmag language there is a word *Mset Nogemag* when translated means *all my relations*. It is a powerful word that acknowledges the connection with everything around us: living and non-living.

In Elsipogtog, health as it pertains to the community can be further understood from the vision of the Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre. The Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre (EHWC) incorporate the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual elements into their programming. As illustrated in Table 2.1, the vision of the health centre is towards a healthy community (Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre, 2006).

Table 2.1. What is in a Healthy Community?

In a healthy community...	
1. The community gets its... • Energy, hope and pride from the youth • Stability, strength and leaderships from its adults, and, • Wisdom, patience and identity from its elders.	**3. Community members express themselves in healthy ways:** • By leading active, healthy lives • With actions that express self-worth and a hope for the future • With trust and acceptance when people need to speak, and • By celebrating their heritage and honouring their elders
2. People embrace the value of... • Family and community • The unique contribution of everyone • A holistic, balanced approach to health • Culture, traditions and history, and • Connections to the creator, each other and every living thing.	**4. Good things are visible:** • Living spaces are safe, clean, and not overcrowded. • Community activities are healthy, respectful and safe • There is good economy with meaningful employment • Gifted, inspired youth act in the present and create the future • People have hope for the future, determination and a common purpose • Ceremonies and events celebrate a rich culture and history, and • The facilities, land, resources and leadership are there to enable community members to act on their desires for a healthy life.

When discussing health, it is important to consider non-medical factors such as the social determinants of health that affect well-being. These social determinants intersect and interact with each other, so that the health of any individual is a complex summation of factors (PHAC, 2006). This interconnectedness has been known and recognized in First Nations' culture for many years (Kinnon, 2002). The social determinants of health include income and its distribution as the highest impact, followed by social status, social support networks, level of education, employment status, working conditions, social environments, geography, physical environments, healthy child development, health services, gender, and culture. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) reinforces this by stating that: "health status improves at each step up the income and social hierarchy. High income promotes living conditions such as safe housing and ability to buy sufficient good food. The healthiest populations are those in societies which are prosperous and have an equitable distribution of wealth (PHAC, 2006). While food security is not highlighted as a social determinant of health by the PHAC, others have identified food security as an

important social determinant of health (Dietitians of Canada, 2005; McIntyre, 2003). Dr. Lynn McIntyre captures the broadest sense of this by saying food security "is clearly a determinant of a lot of things: life, health, dignity, civil society, progress, justice, and sustainable development (2003, p.46).

Based on the vision of the EHWC, a First Nation's view of health, securing one's food is a composite of many factors. It involves everything around us. Although the model in Table 2.1 doesn't specifically include food security in the quadrants of what comprises a healthy community, references to the basic elements of life make food an essential component. Moreover, food security cannot be achieved without the assurance of other determinants of health such as housing, clean water and adequate incomes (ITK, 2006).

Policies and Relationship to Food Security

For Aboriginal peoples, the issues of food security are tied to: land, natural resources, and the environment as well as to traditional cultural relationships and practices.

> Historically, our ancestors made plans for the future. They were aware of the benefits of long term planning. The wellbeing of the community, of their children, and of their children's children was in their hands. Winter and summer villages had to be established, and food had to be obtained through gathering, fishing and hunting to sustain the community through the long, harsh winter. Scouts, hunters, gatherers, and fisherman were mobilized to provide for the community, and warriors were identified to protect people from the enemies. They knew the land, the animals, and the responsibility they had for sustaining the people and the environment. (Big Cove Chief and Council, 1999 as cited in Big Cove First Nation, 2001)

What is described above by the Chief and Council in Elsipogtog, (formerly known as Big Cove) was experienced across North America in First Nations communities. Life on the land, based upon the practices of hunting, fishing, farming and gathering of traditional subsistence foods has always been the basis of Aboriginal peoples' identity, culture,

language and religious practices (International Indian Treaty Council, 2002). These fundamental relationships have been recognized in Canada's Action Plan for Food Security (CAPFS), calling for the recognition and protection of these practices (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998, 2004). For example, priority five, *Traditional Food Acquisition Methods of Aboriginal and Coastal Communities*, acknowledges the important role that hunting, fishing, gathering and trading play in the food security of many communities in Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998, 2004). The awareness of traditional foods, reduction of environmental contaminants, sustainable management of resources and appropriate supplementation with high quality commercial foods as a way to strengthen communities' access to foods was advocated for in the CAPFS. In fact, under most priorities in the action plan and subsequent progress reports -- such as the right to food, reduction of poverty, and promotion of access to food and food safety -- the improvement of food security of Aboriginal peoples is specifically discussed (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998, 2004, 2006).

In Canada's third progress report on food security (2004), efforts to address the high rate of food insecurity among Aboriginal peoples included: the need to address the lack of data, to develop environment sustainable strategies to protect food sources and strategies to increase income for families. In the report it was also cited that there is a need to monitor food costs in northern Canada (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, 2004). In the province of Manitoba, their food charter acknowledges that a sustainable food system (which is believed to be essential to food security) must include respect for the traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and conservation practices of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples within sustainable limits (BRRT Inc., 2006). Therefore, it seems there is a

commitment among both federal and provincial governments to recognize and improve food security among Aboriginal peoples.

Following European contact, many things changed for Aboriginal peoples. Most importantly though is the organization of Indians[2] into their present day bands. Over time, this has become the basis upon which Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples operate (Frideres & Gadacz, 2005). Migmag people traditionally were hunters and gatherers, travelling to where the game and fish migrated. When the colonial authorities established reserves, they demanded that the First Nations peoples in New Brunswick remain on their reserves and were forbidden to hunt or fish off their reserves (Perley, 2001). With this loss of the land, further compacted by the restricted access to the land, many Aboriginal peoples shifted away from longstanding subsistent practices and living which relied heavily upon access to the land.

Within the past decade, access to fishing on the ocean has become an issue of treaty rights and a fiercely contested issue in New Brunswick (Getty, 2006). The Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in the Marshall Decision provided legal recognition of the treaty rights of the Migmag peoples to harvest and commercially sell fish and from it, earn a moderate livelihood. Beyond that, First Nations in this region view the Supreme Court's decision as a confirmation of the importance of treaties and the treaty relationship with the Government of Canada. The decision also caused a paradigm shift in federal government policy and provided a greater sense of hope for First Nations peoples with regards to their economic well-being. Following the Marshall Decision, the federal Department of Fisheries and

[2] Indian refers to a person who, pursuant to the Indian Act (1986), is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian. Most individuals who live in Elsipogtog are status Indians (2839) and a few are non-status (80) (Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre, 2006). I refer to the community members as First Nation's or Migmag.

Oceans (DFO) provided increased First Nations access to the commercial fishery as a source of employment. This was accomplished through the negotiation of fishing agreements (Atlantic Policy Congress, 2004).

> Aboriginal peoples access to wildlife resources varies somewhat from province to province, depending on treaty provisions, or the lack thereof. Aboriginal peoples access to wildlife resources in the Maritime provinces has been uncertain since the 1985 Supreme Court of Canada decision in Simon. In that decision, the Court ruled that a 1752 peace agreement between the Migmag and the British constituted a treaty which confirmed the right of the Migmag to live and hunt as previously. In New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island all Crown land is considered to be occupied and First Nation persons are supposed to avail themselves of hunting and trapping licenses. No province regulates the harvest of berries. (National Aboriginal Forestry Association, 1993)

Through the Indian Act, the federal government has jurisdiction over reserves and reserve lands. Other acts such as the Firearms Act, Migratory Birds Convention Act, and the Species at Risk Act affect Aboriginal treaty hunting and fishing rights. (Reddekopp, 1999). Below, in Table 2.2, legislation mentioned using Reddekopp's *Analysis of the Effects of Legislation on Food Security in Canada* is summarized.

Table 2.2. Analysis of the Effects of Legislation on Aboriginal Food Security in Canada

Act	Effect/Impact
Firearms Act	Under this act, gun owners are required to obtain licences and registration certificates in order to possess firearms. Possessing a firearm without a licence and registration constitutes a criminal offence. While this act is not to be construed so as to detract from Aboriginal and treaty rights, it may affect the ability of Aboriginal food hunters to legally possess firearms because of the cost involved with obtaining licences and registrations. If so, it neither respects the ability of Aboriginal Peoples to obtain traditional sources of food nor protects against actions which could prevent them from accessing this food.
Indian Act	This act deals with virtually all aspects of First Nations lives including defining who First Nations are under the assumption that the federal crown is in the best position to protect the interests of First Nation's. This act may protect the interests of First Nations, or be a source of injustice and deprivation. For example, the setting aside of First Nations land has assured that First Nation's have land, but this land and resources are only for the use and benefit of Status First Nations.
Migratory Birds Convention Act	This act implements the Migratory Birds Convention, which protects migratory birds and nests. Hunting of migratory Birds is restricted to certain times of the year, although First Nations may hunt them at any time of year except not for sale. This act protects migratory birds- an important source of food for some Aboriginal peoples. It may conflict with Aboriginal and treaty hunting rights if it is enforced without due regard to Aboriginal and treaty rights and the food needs of Aboriginal people.
Species at Risk Act (SARA)	Species at Risk are protected by federal legislation, called the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), proclaimed June 5, 2003. Three federal departments are jointly responsible for recovering listed species: Environment Canada, Parks Canada Agency and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The federal government works closely with provincial and territorial governments in the recovery and protection of Species at Risk. The purpose of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) is to prevent wildlife species from being extirpated or becoming extinct, to provide for the recovery of extirpated, endangered and threatened species, and to manage species of special concern to prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened. It may conflict with Aboriginal and treaty hunting rights if it is enforced without due regard to Aboriginal and treaty rights and the food needs of Aboriginal people.

(Environment Canada, 2005; Reddekopp, 1999, p59-64)

Income and Food Security

The socio-economic status of Aboriginal peoples is lower than that of non-Aboriginal Canadians on virtually every measure. Educational attainment is lower, fewer people are employed, and average incomes are also lower (CIHI , 2004, p.84). One of the most influential determinants of food security is income level. Individuals who experience income difficulties are more likely to experience food insecurity (Che & Chen, 2001;

Ledrou & Gervais, 2005). According to the New Brunswick results from the First Nations and Inuit Regional Health Survey (RHS), 38% of families have an annual income less than $20, 000 (Getty, 2006). Interestingly, a higher percentage of First Nations communities in New Brunswick are living on an annual income of less than $20,000 as compared to 30% for all First Nation communities across Canada in the aggregated data from the RHS (First Nations Centre, 2005).

Thirteen different welfare systems currently exist in Canada. First Nations people on- and off-reserve, receive the same benefits as others through the welfare program in the province or territory where they live. New Brunswick and Alberta had the lowest welfare incomes in 2005 for the four household types the council looked at in each province and territory (National Council on Welfare, 2006). For First Nations people living on-reserve, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) delivers the Income Assistance Program as a matter of policy, not legislation, and follows the eligibility requirements and rates of provincial and territorial general assistance programs. INAC may directly deliver the Income Assistance Program, but the responsibility for program delivery has been largely passed on to First Nations Chief and Councils' (INAC, 2005).

Analyses have shown that the cost of basic needs, including a healthy diet, are not affordable for low-income households on social assistance or minimum wage employment (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2004, 2005 & 2006; Community Nutritionists Council of British Columbia, 2004; Dietitians of Canada, 2005; OFIFC, 2003). As the adequacy of household income deteriorates, the likelihood that a household will report some experience of food insecurity, such as worrying about not having enough to eat, or compromised quality or variety of food eaten, increases dramatically (Che & Chen, 2001;

McIntyre et al., 2000). In addition, chronic disease is more likely to affect people with low incomes (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). People living in poverty also tend to die at a younger age and experience higher overall rates of illness (F/P/T Advisory Committee on Population Health, 1999). Researchers have said after the 1950's, Native dietary patterns were increasingly dictated by "the arrival of [welfare] checks and the distribution of government commodities (Bass & Wakefield, 1974). The available evidence suggests that income remains a strong predictor of increased food security among First Nations peoples.

Water and Food Security

Water is a basic human need and a huge area of concern for many First Nations communities in Canada. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) recommended that the government of Canada provide additional resources for construction, upgrading and operation of water and sewage systems to ensure that adequate facilities and operating systems are in place in *all* First Nations communities within five years. Of the 740 water systems tested in the *National Assessment of Water and Wastewater Systems in First Nation's Communities* by INAC, 29% (218) of those assessed were classified under Category C as posing potential high risk that may negatively impact water quality. A similar finding to the INAC assessment, was the First Nation's Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) 2002/2003 where it was reported that nearly one-third (32.2%) of First Nations consider household water unsafe to drink (First Nations Centre, 2005). Among New Brunswick First Nations, 48% consider their water unsafe to drink and more than three quarters of all people (77.6%) use bottled water (Getty, 2006). The Special Chiefs-in-Assembly passed a resolution on November 2, 2005, "whereas safe and

sustainable water supply is a critical element of all life on earth and the United Nations has clarified that rights to water include availability, quality, and accessibility and First Nations have inherent rights to care for the lands and waters; and First Nations communities nation wide continue to live with unsafe drinking water. This is having detrimental effects on their health, safety, and overall well being (Assembly of First Nations, November 2005).

Thus, there are grave concerns about the sustainable use of Canada's fresh water supply, especially as it relates to First Nations communities. The Chiefs-in-Assembly support all First Nations communities in their initiatives to manage and protect water sources and deliver safe drinking water to their members (Assembly of First Nations, November 2005). On a national level, the Assembly of First Nations has taken a lead role in formulating national policy positions based on direction provided by the Chiefs-in-Assembly.

Should an immediate threat to the health and safety of the community be identified, such as the presence of *E. Coli* in the community's drinking water, it is the responsibility of the First Nation band to take necessary action to protect the residents. In a situation where water is considered unsafe for consumption, Environmental Health Officers (employed by Health Canada or First Nation's stakeholders) immediately advise Chiefs and Councils to issue boil water advisories (INAC, 2003).

In Elsipogtog, some households will not drink their water due to the uncertainty of water quality. However, water is tested regularly and Elsipogtog is not under a boil water advisory.

First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB)

On a national level, the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) of Health Canada are responsible for working with First Nations and Inuit to improve their health. The objectives of FNIHB activities are: improving health outcomes, ensuring the availability of and access to quality health services, and supporting greater control of the health system by First Nations and Inuit (Health Canada, 2006). The FNIHB has established a Food Security Reference group to ensure collaboration towards improved food security for First Nations and Inuit peoples. Table 2.3 outlines programs and services aimed at enhancing food security in First Nations communities.

Table 2.3. FNHIB Programs & Services, Enhancing Food Security in First Nations Communities, 2006-2007

Program and Services	Enhance Food Security through:
Children and youth – targeting maternal, infant and child health	• Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve – includes lunch and snack program to children attending head start; family education around food and meal preparation. • Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program – offers nutrition supplementation to expecting mothers such as milk vouchers; provides snack during sessions; promotes breast-feeding and education about nutrition and child health. • Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Program – Promotes healthy nutrition; camps funded through this program provide food to children.
Mental health and addictions	• Residential Treatment Programs – encourage healthy eating by providing meals to residents in the program; teach cooking and nutrition education.
Chronic disease and injury prevention	• Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative – some initiatives include education of traditional diet, cooking skills and nutrition education; community garden and community kitchens.
Environmental health and research	• Working in partnership with First Nations communities (except the Yukon and the Territories) to implement Water Management Strategy, which includes drinking water monitoring guideline for Canadian Drinking Water Quality.
Primary Health Care	• Home and Community Care Program – support staff offer cooking and shopping for clients as a service.

(Data summarized Health Canada 2006-2007 reports, plans and priorities)

The above table is not inclusive of all activities relating to programs and activities that address food security. Rather, the purpose of the table is to demonstrate how a diverse

range of programs assist individuals and families to maintain their food security. Programs and services do not provide income directly. However, income is supplemented through food vouchers, allotment for purchasing meals in programming budget and skill development. Moreover, through the education of traditional practices, food security is enhanced.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

In general, INAC has primary, but not exclusive responsibility for meeting the federal government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations. Some responsibilities have a direct influence on food security such as social assistance and social support services to residents on-reserve. INAC delivers on-reserve services to Status Indians that would normally fall within provincial jurisdiction, such as: education, housing, and community infrastructure. The majority of these programs and services are delivered in partnership with First Nations, who directly administer 85 percent of Indian and Inuit Affairs Program funds (INAC, n.d.).

There are two programs in particular that have a direct impact on enhancing food security. Firstly, the First Nations' National Child Benefit Reinvestment (NCBR) initiative allows First Nations to develop projects that will address child poverty issues that exist in their individual community. The initiative is flexible enough to allow First Nations to choose different ways to improve the well-being of low-income families, and in particular children. Communities can decide which priority -- some examples include hot lunch program for school children, improving employability of parents and cultural awareness -- they would like to see addressed during the course of a given year (INAC, n.d.).

Secondly, the Food Mail program is a federal initiative committed to reducing the cost of nutritious perishable foods and other essential items aimed at improving the well-being of people living in isolated communities. The program has been administered by INAC since 1991 and is implemented in partnership with Canada Post. The Food Mail program subsidizes nutritious perishable food products and other essential items to 63 isolated northern communities at reduced postal rates (no increase in rates since 1993). Non-perishable food and some essential non-food items can also be shipped under this program at higher postage rates. However, foods of little nutritional value, such as pop and chips, are not funded (INAC, 2006). Although there is a paucity of available fresh produce in Elsipogtog, it is not eligible for this federal program due to its location and relative proximity to urban areas.

Public Health Agency of Canada

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) delivers programs and services such as the Aboriginal Head Start program. Programs directed towards children, families with low income or most Aboriginal targeted programs tend to include nutrition as a component. In terms of the Aboriginal Head Start program, the nutrition program is intended to ensure that children are provided with food which will help meet their nutritional needs (PHAC, 2006).

Community Based Food Security Initiatives

Community food security has been described to exist "when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice (Hamm & Bellows, 2003). When attempting to focus on what is happening in terms of

food security among First Nations communities, it became apparent that many First Nations are using community based approaches and initiatives to address food security. This is especially important as it pertains to this research and to document in this review of literature because of the nature of this research: talking to Elsipogtog First Nation about maintaining food security at the individual, family and *community* level. Unfortunately, many community based approaches and initiatives are not documented in conventional journals or academic documents.

There are national groups, organizations and even health authorities who are supporting community based food security among Aboriginal peoples. The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) has carried out a number of activities related to monitoring food prices and quality in Inuit regions. A number of suggested approaches have been developed to address issues of access to country foods, such as the installation of community freezers and transportation subsidies for hunters and gatherers in our communities. ITK has also corresponded with federal officials regarding the reduction of transportation costs for nutritious store bought foods (ITK, 2005). Organizations such as Heifer International support key initiatives such as local food systems and Indigenous cultures. They have expanded their program into Canada to support Aboriginal peoples to be food secure; Heifer International works from a values based model of development to empower families, combat hunger, alleviate poverty and restore the environment by sharing appropriate livestock, training and related services for food systems (Heifer International, n.d). Even the Vancouver Coast Health Authority through the Aboriginal Health Initiative Program offers regional community-based funding for locally responsive health promotion projects in which one of the streams is local community food security. "Finding ways to

bring back our cultural teachings about our traditional food sources will help support food security in our society [Aboriginal communities] today (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2007).

The commonality between the national group, the organization and health authority described above is that they support bottom up approaches in First Nations communities to enhance food security rather than determine what approaches or initiatives have to or should take place. Supporting bottom up approaches have been noted as promising avenues for the reduction of health inequalities and the promotion of social justice in First Nations communities (Potvin, Cargo, McComber, Delormier & Macauley, 2003; RCAP, 1996).

Food security is composed of many factors and has been described as a continuum (see Table 2.4) from short-term relief, to capacity building, to redesign actions (Kalina, 2001). Some First Nations communities are engaged in all stages while other communities might be focusing on short-term relief actions. It is important to note that success is not determined by what stage the action is at, rather, that the community is moving forward (Kalina, 2001).

Table 2.4. The Food Security Continuum

Short-term Relief	Capacity Building	Redesign
These actions provide immediate and temporary relief to hunger and food issues. These activities are often completed with little involvement from those experiencing food insecurity. (Examples: food banks, soup kitchens)	These actions are often more costly in terms of time and manpower and require commitment from those experiencing food insecurity, but are steps to empowering those experiencing food insecurity. (Examples: community kitchens, community gardens, food buying clubs)	Redesign actions are broader in scope and require a long-term commitment from representatives of the entire food system, including, in particular, those marginalized by the system. As such, redesign actions are often the most costly, time-consuming and difficult to mobilize communities to pursue. This is often thought of as working "upstream to create system change. (Examples: Food policy, social advocacy to address poverty.)

(Kalina, 2001)

As mentioned previously, First Nations communities are at varying degrees on the food security continuum with respect to community food security efforts. The concept of community food security is not new among Aboriginal peoples as providing food for all community members, was historically essential for survival of the entire community (Medical Services Branch, 1994; Milburn, 2004). Today, the central focus is reclaiming food security in First Nations communities. In the Nisichawayasik Cree Nation in Manitoba they run a commercial fisherman program, country foods programs and an elders' traditional program to enhance food security in the community. Within the country foods programs, in operation all year, food is provided to elders and others in the community. A community garden operates in the summer months to supplement country foods (Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, n.d.). "Some communities [in Manitoba] haven't had gardens for something like two generations (Olsen, 2006) . In the Navajo Nation, U.S.A, home and community garden projects have successfully addressed nutrition and food security issues on a grassroots scale by re-establishing traditional Navajo practices (Lombard, Foster-Cox, Smeal & O'neil, 2006). *Homegrown* is a Canadian project that utilizes community gardens to help First Nations people develop self-reliance through providing the resources, training and support needed to grow food organically in their backyards. Its mission is to move beyond charity-based models and work in partnership with families to enhance self sufficiency (Lifecycles, n.d.)

Community gardens are just one type of capacity building action that moves towards food security. Selling locally produced foods outside the community can also bring new income to the local economy and ameliorate food security. The production of traditional foods can also contribute to community development, as people come together

to achieve a common goal. As individuals learn to run their own businesses and manage their own farm operations, local leaders are born (Bell-Sheeter, 2004, p.9). The Siska community in British Columbia is using the harvesting of traditional plants to drive both economic and social development. Profits are redirected into the community to learn about traditional food systems, promote community health education through traditional foods, and develop a traditional food and nutrition guide (not yet completed) for the area. Further, through this project the Siska Band realizes the importance of promoting the need to learn from elders especially in terms of traditional food (Siska Traditions, n.d.).

Aboriginal peoples are not only focusing on ensuring their communities have enough to eat, there is a focus on sustainability, which encompasses community food security.

> "In the Athabascan Nation, Alaska, the Chickaloon Village Environmental Protection Program is working toward restoring land, water, and air quality to levels that are cleaner and healthier than what they are today. The Chickaloon Village Sustainable Foods Initiative's goal is to re-assert food sovereignty, defined by this Nation as: "the right of people and communities to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, harvesting, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect for culture and systems of managing natural resources (Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, n.d).

One of the programs is a four-season ecologically designed greenhouse with the aim to increase local food production, and consumption, until as a bio-region, they are food secure. (Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, n.d). This is one example of community food security, which includes short-term relief, capacity building and redesign strategies -- all elements of the food security continuum.

Another innovative example of a multidimensional community food security approach is the White Earth Land Recovery Project. One component of this project is the *Mino-Miijim* (Good Food) Program. This was created to address the diabetes epidemic on

the White Earth Reservation, Minnesota, U.S.A., and to restore health and balance to the community by drawing upon the wisdom of cultural teachings and the findings of modern researchers. Currently, participants receive a bag of food containing buffalo meat, hominy corn, chokecherry or plum jelly (made with honey), maple syrup, wild rice and mazon. In addition to these traditional foods, the program partners with the North Country Food Bank, located in Crookston, Minnesota, U.S.A to deliver fresh foods and vegetables from local food producers. The project also supports local food producers, which in-turn supports traditional production methods such as hand-harvested wild rice. The purchasing of this rice provides supplemental income for individuals who generally earn very little money. This project generates their own income but also partners with organizations like Heifer International to strengthen community based agriculture (White Earth Land Recovery Project, 2005). Internships and volunteer opportunities are offered at White Earth Land Recovery Project to educate individuals and others about all dimensions of the project.

The Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona, U.S.A is on the leading edge of establishing a food secure community by recognizing that communities must develop comprehensive, healthy, traditional food systems to meet the long-term needs of their people through efforts of the Tohono O'odham Community Food System Project (Bell-Sheeter, 2004). The project engages in a series of strategies in five program areas: food production, food processing, food distribution, education and revitalization of culture. One strategy consists of a farm used to increase production of traditional, healthy foods to meet a high level of demand. The farming operation involves: land preparation, educational and technical support activities, a farm equipment cooperative, a seed bank to preserve

traditional seeds, continued support for home gardens, and a wild food collection program. They have also partnered with schools and a health centre to purchase local foods as well as coordinating farmers' markets on-reserve (Tohono O'odham Community Action, n.d.).

Research is also being used to improve food security in First Nations communities. As a result of the Northern Food Prices Project in Manitoba, seven priority strategic options related to the nutritional health and food security of Northerners, which included First Nations and Metis communities, was developed. If implemented, these options would improve food security by addressing policy. Two of the options include development of the Northern Food Self-Sufficiency Initiative and development of the Northern Community Foods Program. The first involves a comprehensive and long-term strategy to build local food provision activity and capacity in the north. The Northern Community Foods Program would build on the cultural tradition among Aboriginal peoples of sharing abundance with others. This option facilitates the sharing of successful community models of community foods programs. These include organized hunting, fishing or gathering, community food distribution, food preservation, and cultural education about using traditional foods (Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee, 2003).

Summary

It is unfortunate that food insecurity has been described as commonplace among Aboriginal peoples considering national surveys have neglected to collect data from First Nations people's on-reserve. Therefore, there is lack of research to determine the level of food insecurity among First Nations peoples.

The Aboriginal concept of health has been recognized for being holistic and of a population based health approach. The social determinants of health demonstrate why First

Nations peoples are more vulnerable to food insecurity as compared to the general Canadian population. However, what this review of literature has captured is the motivation of Aboriginal peoples to maintain food security through strategies relying on cultural traditions. Available foods can be accessed by three main methods: traditional food systems, purchasing it from suppliers, and/or obtaining it through charity food providers. Aboriginal communities *are* increasing access to food in communities. At first glance, food insecurity may seem like another negative phenomenon occurring in First Nations communities, but by digging beneath the numbers, which is an aim of this research, many positive initiatives have been revealed.

3. Qualitative Research Strategy

This research is a phenomenological study whereby the researcher identifies the "essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, in this case, food security, as described by the participants in the study (Creswell, 2003). Thus the phenomenological approach allows the data to speak for itself. A phenomenological method acknowledges the community as the expert and the researcher provides the role of the learner and gatherer of community perspectives. Phenomenology is able to portray a holistic picture of human experiences rather than the fragmented account given by quantitative data (Crazy Bull, 1997). Phenomenology has been identified as a research approach that assists indigenous people in reproducing -- through narrative communication -- features of the past, present and future (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). Smith (1999) includes in her description of indigenous methodologies that research be carried out in a respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful and beneficial fashion seen from the point of view of indigenous peoples. Indigenous methodologies tend to approach protocols, values and behaviours, as an integral part of the methodology (Brown & Strega, 2005; Smith, 1999).

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research is interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants (Creswell, 2003). Here, I share my background and how I evolved from a profession as a Registered Dietitian to a Masters of Public Health student conducting qualitative research in food security.

I am from the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation in Ontario. The initiation of this thesis and my in-depth experiences throughout this phenomenological research project in

Elsipogtog, New Brunswick began in the summer of 2005. According to the *Indian Act,* Elsipogtog First Nation is not my 'band'; rather, I am a band member of the Chippewas of Nawash in Ontario. I was raised in a large family, and over the years lived between both of my parents' First Nations communities. Throughout my life, food has been important for survival but also as a part of my culture as a First Nation's person. Like most big families, my family sometimes had trouble making ends meet. Sometimes, we relied on assistance of neighbours, relatives, credit from local stores and food from the food bank to maintain food security in our family. Aside from food access issues, we celebrated food through traditional feasts, harvesting, celebrations and cooking family recipes.

I have always been interested in food as an essential part of health and overall life. As an Aboriginal person I sought opportunities that would allow me to pursue a career in health in various Aboriginal contexts. I continue to be concerned that Aboriginal communities have an overall health status that falls well below that of other Canadians (Shah, 2003; Smylie, 2001). However, this research is more personal than other assignments I have done as my parents currently reside in Elsipogtog and I lived in this community during my early teens.

The catalyst for this research began through conversations with my parents, Adela and Franklin Levi in summer of 2005. I explained to them that I was interested in starting my thesis in the area of food security. As a result of this conversation with my parents, the information was passed on to others in the community where it was favourably received by community members who hold decision-making influence on what research occurs at Elsipogtog.

It is important to share how my formal training affected my role as the researcher. Prior to this research, I had experience with evidence-based models, structural frameworks, survey courses and quantitative research methods. I had never carried out community based qualitative research. I had read about qualitative research and carried out mini case studies. I struggled with this personal limitation at the beginning of the research. I wanted to narrowly define the topic and focus on specific aspects of food security. I did not understand how I could just ask a broad question, and fulfill the requirements of an academic thesis. My thesis supervisor Dr. Connie Nelson, was very supportive in helping me to make this transition. Eventually throughout the research process, I gained the confidence to shed the "formal hang-up I possessed to have everything planned out before hand. "Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they *position themselves* in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). It was necessary to understand and overcome this limitation in order to truly answer the research question.

Part of the phenomenological approach is to have no presuppositions about what of importance may be learned (Brown & Strega, 2005), and it was necessary to set my beliefs aside and instead listen to what community members said in response to speaking with them during the research project. With participants, I always would stress that I was the learner and was seeking their guidance in answering the research question.

I did not realize when starting this research how frequently I would cross paths with my parents, throughout the research process. For example, the second day in the community I attended a workshop relevant to my research about climate change. The

facilitators were my parents. My parents ended up playing a number of key roles that all impacted my learning of food security. Such as, my parents are members of the Elsipogtog Elders Advisory Group at the Health Centre and my father worked for the band's Traditional Ecological Knowledge Project. Moreover, my parents are members of the Advisory Committee for my food security research project because of their affiliation with the Elsipogtog Elders Advisory Group. In sum, my parents became a large part of the research.

This connection wasn't planned, and at first it was hard to deal with because I thought about the notion of conflict of interest. I talked about this with an Elder in the community and my thesis supervisor who explained to me that my parents are members in the community and they should not be excluded from this research just because they are my parents. Moreover, to exclude their role in this written thesis would not be ethical. As the research evolved, requests to speak with me would come through my parents. An explicit example is that my father, who speaks Migmag, would introduce me to members in the community in Migmag and explain what I was doing before I engaged in conversation with them. Thus, I realized that my parents were gatekeepers and enhanced the accessibility of resources available. Their connection to the project grew organically and it is important to share this uniqueness in this research. I left my community for higher education and returned to my community to be educated again by those close to me.

An ethical principle that guided me through most of the process was *respect.* I assumed the role as the gatherer of information, a *learner* as described above. It was my role to respect all the information shared and to report it in a way that is in line with the vision of the Health Centre:

> We believe in the promotion and provision of holistic health and wellness services responsive to our community needs to affirm confidence, pride and self-responsibility (EHWC, 2006).

I kept this vision at the back of my head throughout data collection in hopes that the research would affirm confidence, pride and self-responsibility.

Data Collection Procedures

"The realization that objectivity in research is an illusion frees the naturalistic researcher to do truly effective data collection and analysis. Most important is the fact that the researcher him or herself becomes the most significant instrument for data collection and analysis (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 39). Data collection for this research took place from February 2006 until September 2006. The following section describes the processes involved in gaining entry to the community, getting starting and the note taking methods used.

Gaining Entry to the Community

Following the informal discussions with my parents, and their follow up with the community, in September 2005, I made contact with the Primary Health Care Coordinator as well as the Research and Evaluation Consultant at the Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre. I was advised by the Research and Evaluation Consultant to write a two-page proposal about the research which was completed and sent in October 2005.

While waiting to hear back from the Health Centre, I attended the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Research Conference (November 13-15, 2005), in Ottawa, Ontario. As a result, I had the opportunity to sit in on a session titled the "*Potentials and Pitfalls of Research Capacity Building: A Chapter in a Community's Story* facilitated by

Andrea Colfer and Denis Leblanc (Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Healing Networking Center Coordinator Mawiw Council, & Research & Evaluation Consultant, Elsipogtog First Nation, respectively). To my surprise the presentation was about Elsipogtog First Nation and it was very helpful in understanding the research world within this community.

The facilitators in Elsipogtog outlined criteria for successful research (Appendix A) in this community. Revision of the list of fourteen criteria for successful research confirmed that my research proposal met these criteria. After the presentation, I had the opportunity to speak to the Research and Evaluation Consultant again, this time in person. I shared my enthusiasm for the research proposal I had sent. I explained that I was puzzled to not have received any further communication from Elsipogtog. I offered to visit the community to discuss the proposed research with individuals from the Health Centre. So in a serendipitous fashion, at a time when I thought the opportunity with Elsipogtog ended, this conference gave me the opportunity to be a face-to-face advocate for my proposed research in food security.

On December 19th, 2005, I went to Elsipogtog to talk about the proposed research project. My primary contact Denis Leblanc, Research and Evaluation Consultant, organized and invited fourteen people to attend a meeting about my proposed research. The attendees included my thesis supervisor (by phone), members of the Health Centre's Elsipogtog Elders Advisory Group and Health Centre staff. I presented my basic research question: *What are the individual, family and community strategies to maintain food security in Elsipogtog*? I discussed the proposal that I sent to the Health Centre and asked if I could pursue a research project that would serve two purposes. The first purpose if achieved would result in data that could be used by the Health Centre for planning and or

advocacy purposes and second that I would be able to use this project to complete my thesis.

It was a humbling experience for me at this meeting. Due to my formal training, I assumed the role of *expert* because I thought this was what I was supposed to do to appear credible. Even though my supervisor had explained to me the qualitative process before this meeting, I fell back into the trap of relying on a more structured approach. First, I discussed the technical terms of food security and second the methodology I intended to use if given the opportunity to do research with Elsipogtog First Nation. So here I found myself describing a qualitative approach in an authoritative manner. Luckily, my supervisor was present via phone. Although, she allowed me to go though the terminology and technical information, she then subtlety helped me to refocus the meeting so that I could let go of this expert role and experience research as a learner. This anxiety to appear like an expert must not be mistaken, for my heart wanting to do something that could be used by the Health Centre and community.

A phenomenological approach appeared to be an unfamiliar process for doing research because those in attendance at the meeting provided many suggestions for doing a quantitative research approach based on a survey with specific groups in the community. Dr. Nelson explained that:

> Through a qualitative approach the community shares their expectations and needs and builds capacity to further maintain and enhance community food security. The narrative gathered remains as information for the community to use. This approach to research is different from survey type research in which the questions are determined before the research starts and there is no opportunity for the community to shape the questions. Through a qualitative approach the community's knowledge is respected and becomes the outcome of the research process. (Minutes, December 19, 2006)

The first outcome of this meeting was approval from the community to move forward in the research process. I was advised to draft and apply for ethics approval from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. In addition to the ethics applications, I was also advised to write a two-page summary for Advisory Committee members to review. A second outcome from this process was the development of a core Advisory Committee represented by those who were at the meeting with the understanding that the membership would remain open to others who may have important perspectives on food security.

On January 10, 2006, the Director of Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre wrote a letter offering endorsement to complete my masters thesis in Elsipogtog and stated "This research will help us better understand the community's health status and how we can work towards improving it (Appendix B). Ethical approval was obtained from Lakehead University on February 1, 2006 (Appendix C). After receiving ethical approval, I contacted the Research and Evaluation Consultant to organize my first site visit.

In addition to being welcomed to do research in the community I was cautioned that many times research is done and the community is left with a very academic report. Given the nature of the research question and methodology, I was advised that while writing the thesis that I would use my experience through interviews and the literature review to provide recommendations that the community could use. These recommendations are not meant for one particular person or department but rather recommendations that could be used to further enhance food security in the community.

During the gaining entry process, I came to a fuller understanding of how many research requests were being made to Elsipogtog First Nation. I felt very fortunate and

honoured that my research was approved. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the gaining entry process to carry out my research in food security.

Table 3.1. Gatekeepers Helpful in Gaining Access to Conduct Research with Elsipogtog First Nation

Gate Keeper(s)	Formality	Key points
My parents	Informal	• Informally shared my desire to do research in a First Nations community about food security and public health. • Members of the Elders Advisory Group (unknown to me at the time of research).
Primary Health Care Coordinator	Formal	• Advised the Community Research and Evaluation Consultant to contact me. • Informed that food security is a determinant of health but there are no indicators within the community in terms of primary health care planning. • Corresponded via email about research and benefit to community. • Corresponded with ultimate decision maker (Director).
Health and Wellness Director	Formal	• Wrote letter of support for research.
Community Research and Evaluation Consultant	Formal	• Advised to write 2-page proposal • Re-established contact with community after not hearing back after writing 2-page proposal. • Contact to set up first face-to-face meeting in Elsipogtog as a researcher. • Primary contact during each site visit.
Traditional Community Health Representative (CHR)	Informal	• Primary contact during each site visit. • Primary contact between Health Centre and Elders Advisory Group.

Getting Started

Early in the research dialogue I was told by gatekeepers that "*We are not totally sure what food security in Elsipogtog would really mean for us in the community* when I asked the proposed research question. Likewise, I did not understand what the question meant to the community either and felt the need to re-focus the question. The need to do this, reaffirms what Neuman (2006) states when he writes, "people who are used to the direct, linear approach may be impatient with a less direct cyclical path (p. 152). Again, my formal training made me struggle in feeling comfortable in opening up a community

dialogue on the meaning of food security. This confirmed that a qualitative approach was necessary in order to define food security from the perspective of the community.

Four separate visits were conducted during the data collection phase of this research. The first site visit took place from February 14 to February 28, 2006. The three final site visits took place in one week intervals from March 19 to March 26, 2006; May 9 to May 16, 2006; and September 3 to September 10, 2006. The selection of these dates was to ensure food security data was collected in different seasons, and within the restrictions of time and funding. During each of these visits various types of data were collected including interviews with participants such as Elsipogtog Band employees in health related positions, Elders, community members. In addition, I observed meetings, community events and informal day-to-day activities in the community. Participants I met with also provided me with written information they thought would be helpful to the research. I gathered written information such as the *Elsipogtogeoei* community newspaper and annual reports. During my first and second site visits, I was also able to gather written information such as personal letters due to the Chief and Council elections that were occurring in the community; whereby, candidates sent out campaign information and made specific reference to life in Elsipogtog.

Note Taking

In order to capture what was learned in the field, I developed a recording protocol. The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is and how it shapes the study (Creswell, 2003). I modified the method outlined in Neuman's text about taking notes (p. 398). By doing this, I created a chart with three columns using Microsoft Word . I used the headings: observation, analytic and personal notes. The observation notes were a

detailed description of what I heard and saw in concrete specific terms. The analytic notes allowed me to keep methodological details separate where I would plan, question myself, or my actions, and make decisions about how to proceed. These notes also provided an opportunity for my thesis supervisor to comment on my line of thought. In the column with the heading 'personal' I was able to comment on the observational notes I made and how it affected me. I was also able to see my growth throughout the research. The notes are ordered chronologically, with the date, time and place of each entry.

In my letter of introduction (Appendix D), I advised participants that I might use a digital voice recorder or manually record information. I never felt that any of the participants were comfortable using a voice recorder. Instead, I relied on my memory to take notes; if I did bring out a pen, I would ask permission to take notes. Usually, this would be to remember names or specific dates. While talking to four community members, I was commended on using my memory rather than taking notes. This format follows traditional ways of intensively listening and being respectful of oral traditions. An Elder shared with me that when she was interviewing people that another Elder told her not to take notes because when she sat down she would remember what she needed to hear. Thus, I conveyed respect by listening, which allows one to hear from the heart.

Site Visit One: February 14 to February 28, 2006.

It was obviously a very significant visit because it was the first time I was introduced to the community as a researcher. It also was the first time that I woke up every morning to reflect on the research questions, *What are the individual, family and community strategies used to maintain food security? And, what are the barriers to maintain food security?*

Immediately, when I arrived in Elsipogtog, I realized at this point that since I am an "insider doing research as described by Smith (1999); Smith's account as an insider doing research with Maori mothers revealed that I would have a unique experience during field research. It was also at this point that I realized what Creswell (2003) meant when he said, "the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self (p. 182). Arriving at the Health Centre, the Research and Evaluation Consultant introduced me to people within the Health Centre as he was unaware that I already knew most of the people who worked at the Health Centre. I recognized that my experience is different compared to other researchers who are outsiders to the community because I have the advantage of knowing people and places in the community that an outsider researcher would not otherwise know. On the other hand, this can also be a limitation, which I will discuss later.

At the Health Centre I was provided a work station which I only used for one day. I quickly learned that when in the field, the researcher goes to where the information is (Neuman, 2006). I realized early that if I sat at my desk, I would not be able to observe key events and might miss the opportunity to speak to key participants.

Early in this first experience, I requested from the Research and Evaluation Consultant any documents, lists or information that might be helpful in getting started. I was provided with a list of individuals who were employed in Elsipogtog and given a directory list of Band phone numbers. In retrospect, I was still trying to control what was happening.

One of the first things I thought about was who I could contact that would provide rich sources of data in terms of food security. The population of Elsipogtog is approximately 2800 members. Because my question did not focus on one specific group

and it wasn't my role to narrow or focus in on one specific group, I had to develop a strategy that would open more doors to information. First, I asked for the schedules of both the Dietitian and Traditional Community Health Representative (CHR) and Maternal Health Nurse. Secondly, I attended meetings, activities, and events with them to learn and listen. Thirdly, I made myself visible at as many places and events as possible. From these activities I learned about community roles that involved food security and extended the number of community contacts from whom I could learn more.

To reach these new community contacts I used the phone directory and my personal knowledge of the community. I used purposive sampling to create a list of whom I should call to learn about all programs. In purposive sampling the researcher employs his or her own discretion to select respondents who best meet the purposes of answering the research question (Neuman, 2006). To assist me in making these 'cold calls', I developed a 'letter of introduction and consent form' (Appendix D). My goal was to give this letter of introduction with the Health Director's letter of support (Appendix B) to everyone that I talked to in this research project.

Prior to meeting with individuals, I dropped off an information package. I opened each discussion by sharing who I was, who my family was, and my research topic. Sharing who my family was and my connection to the community was helpful in making people I did not know, to feel more comfortable. Neuman (2006) states, "you might share your background to build trust and encourage the Participant to open up (p. 406). I reviewed the letter of introduction and discussed confidentiality. I also informed each person at the end of my conversation, that I was hosting a draw for all the people I spoke to. The draw consisted of one, one hundred dollar gift certificate and three, fifty-dollar gift certificates to

a grocery store. I would not publish any names in the report or publish who won the gift certificates. This was a standard procedure for each person I talked to in a formal setting. This means that the people I observed in groups were not entered into the draw.

As most of the participants I spoke to are from Elsipogtog, it also provided an opportunity to learn both about their personal and work experiences related to food security. Therefore, individuals in professional roles who I spoke with also shared their personal stories as community members. I had to stress the word *learn* because when I mentioned the word *food security* or *research*, there was a sense of hesitation in their voices. I informed participants that the main focus was to learn about *their* programs. Field researchers use unstructured, non-directive, in-depth interviews, which differ from formal survey research interviews in many ways. The field interview involves asking questions, listening, expressing interest, and recording what was said (Neuman, 2006, p. 406). I did not take verbatim notes. In the end, I ended up obtaining rich information through unstructured interviews.

Throughout the first site visit, I spent a lot of time explaining the phenomenological method of the research. I was challenged to continually explain that I was not coming to Elsipogtog with an already established survey framework. Rather, I was in the community to listen and learn from others and give this information back.

Prior to ending the first two weeks of field entry, I was encouraged to submit an article to the *Elsipogtogeoei Community Newspaper* (Appendix E) where I shared information about the research project and myself. I was advised to visit the community before the end of the March so that I could be more visible and this might encourage discussions.

At the end of the two-week field visit I met with my Advisory Committee. This meeting provided an excellent impromptu opportunity to learn about the history of food security in the community. After all, elders possess the historical knowledge of food in the community. The Advisory Committee became essential to assisting in how to answer the research question. After I shared with the Advisory Committee how I had stated the research questions in an academic manner, they advised me to simply ask people: *How do you get food on the table?* In the meeting with the Advisory Committee I learned what Smith (1999) explains as the critical issue for insider research "the need for constant reflexivity . They challenged me to overcome my fear and need for formality. I began the journey to get out of my academic training to see things as an objective outsider and instead to genuinely and respectfully listen to what my Advisory Committee was saying.

It is necessary discuss that the purpose of re-framing the research questions was to allow the participants in the research as well as the Advisory Committee to understand in their own words the thesis research questions. It is therefore important to document their understanding here. The use of the word *table* provided a personal visual connection to food that is eaten. As an interviewer, I continued to introduce my topic as food security but I provided further information at the request of my Advisory Committee by saying *How do you put food on the table?*

Site Visit Two: March 19 to 26, 2006

Prior to my second visit, I contacted the Research and Evaluation Consultant to learn about any events that might be relevant to gaining a better understanding of food security. In addition, I followed up on the sampling decisions I made during the first field

visit but did not have time to complete. Thus, I continued to speak to program managers and directors. I attended any events that I learned about while in the community.

Something unique that occurred between my first and second field visit, was that community members who were interested in speaking to me contacted my mother to find out when I was going to be in Elsipogtog. This provided an opportunity to talk with a diversity of community members outside of a professional and formal setting.

Using information from my first visit, I ventured outside Elsipogtog to speak to, and visit the school meal programs in the off-reserves towns of Rexton and Richibucto. Approximately 50% of the Elsipogtog school children attend school in these communities. Furthermore, on advice of the Chief, I went to the food bank in Richibucto, which is utilized by many members in the Elsipogtog community. I developed a practice while talking to people whereby I would ask if they had information and or written material that they thought would be helpful. I would later use this information to confirm what people said, find more information or utilize this information in my literature review.

Since I wrote an article for the *Elsipogtogeoei* Newspaper during my first visit, I thought people would have responded to it. I was informed at the Health Centre that a newspaper article is a good way to keep people informed but rarely will you get a response. There were no responses to this article via the email address I provided and the telephone number of the local contact. However, my mother was contacted and by being visible in the community many people came up to me and commented that they had seen my article. I wrote another article (Appendix F) for the paper to provide an update on the research, as well as provide my contact information. It was published in the April 2006 and May 2006 issues.

Interestingly, because my Advisory Committee consists of the CHR and Elders in the community, I was invited to participate in cultural and spiritual activities facilitated by the Health Centre. Having grown up in a traditional family, I was not introduced to new situations. However, I had a first time opportunity to attend a Shaking Tent Ceremony that provided tremendous personal growth. I would not have had this opportunity at this moment in my life had I not been in the community.

Site Visit Three: May 9 to 16, 2006

It was during site visit three that I began to see the transformation in my approach as a qualitative researcher. In the beginning, I thought the most important thing was to find information. By site visit three, I realized that by using all senses during field research there is plenty of information to be found. I experienced what van Maanen (1982) said "field work means involvement and detachment, both loyalty and betrayal, both openness and secrecy and most likely love and hate. The researcher switches perspectives and sees the setting from multiple points of view simultaneously . He or she gets inside the meaning system of members and then goes back to an outside or research viewpoint (Neuman, 2006. p.383).

> A great deal of what researchers do in the field is play close attention, watch, and listen carefully. They use all senses, noticing what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched. The researcher becomes and instrument that absorbs all sources of information. (Neuman, 2006, p. 396)

I realized that I had gathered a wealth of information in the past two visits. I reflected on how many people I spoke to since starting the project. I possessed field notes of approximately 25 one-on-one interviews.

Similar to the last visit, there were two people whom my mother crossed paths with who expressed their interest in talking with me. Both were interested in talking to me but were not sure 'how much good the information would be to me'. I arranged to meet with these people in their homes.

I decided to engage in activities as a full participant rather than a complete observer. Neuman (2006) refers to the level of involvement as a continuum. The researcher can be at one extreme as a detached outsider or intimately involved as an insider (p. 387). When I began field research, I thought it was important to maintain a distance. Once again, I was still struggling with feeling completely comfortable as a qualitative researcher.

> Roles at the insider end of the continuum facilitate empathy and sharing a member's experience. The goal of fully experiencing the intimate social world of a member is achieved. Nevertheless, a lack of distance from, too much sympathy for, or over involvement with members is likely. Your reports may be questioned, data gathering is difficult, there can be a dramatic impact on the self, and the distance needed for analysis may be hard to attain (Neuman, 2006, p.387).

As the research evolved, I realized I could move back and forth from being both an observer and a participant.

At the end of the field visit I organized a meeting with the Advisory Committee to talk about the research thus far. In addition, the Research and Evaluation Consultant sent an email for other people to attend this meeting in an attempt to get a response like the first meeting we had in December 2005. The meeting ended up consisting of the Elders Advisory group, the CHR, the Dietitian, and the Research and Evaluation Consultant. In addition, the visiting Elder at the Health Centre also attended the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, I was asked, "*Why do you look scared?*" I realized that I must have looked

scared because I was nervous that I might not be doing things right. In retrospect, my role in this meeting was to listen to the guidance and feedback from my Advisory Committee. When I was asked the question about being scared it provided an opportunity for me to realize that I was nervous. This enabled me to focus on listening rather than rigidly controlling the Advisory Group meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to share what I had learned, to seek guidance and hear any feedback from the group. Again, this meeting proved to be very beneficial because due to the knowledge of the people in the group, I would hear and confirm what I already heard or observed in the field.

I shared with the Advisory Committee the evolution of the research questions (Table 3.2). This led into a more detailed discussion of the topic. The Elders became participants in the research as well.

Table 3.2. Evolution of the Research Questions

Initial reserch questions: ***What are the individual, family and community strategies to maintain food security? And, What are the barriers to maintain food security?***
• How do you put food on the table?
• What sort of issues do you think about?
• How does your family put food on the table?
• What is unique about your family and food?
• How does the community put food on the table for its members?
• What do you see happening in the community to make sure people have food?
• What are some of the barriers to maintaining food security?
• Given our history with our food environment, what are some of the barriers you encounter, your family encounters and the community encounters?

In this meeting we also looked ahead and discussed dissemination of the research. A variety of ideas were shared. This discussion demonstrated the growing commitment of the community to this research.

Site Visit Four: September 3 to September 10, 2006

The purpose of field visit four was to visit in summer months as the other visits took place in winter and spring. However, my visit took place later in the summer. I changed data collection methods for visit four and spent the week planning and organizing a focus group. I also talked to individuals that I was unable to meet with in earlier site visits. I followed the same procedures such as attending community events and meeting with my key contacts at the Health Centre.

While reflecting on the community members I had the opportunity to engage with during the previous field visits, I noticed a gap in age distribution in my resources. I did not have the opportunity to speak one-on-one with young families, or with younger men. Since my research question is community based, I brought seven people together from different age groups. The purpose of the focus group was to use the question agreed upon by the Advisory Committee and gain insight from diverse age groups. Colourful flyers were developed including feedback from the Advisory Committee. The catch phrase was: "Elsipogtog, how do you put food on the table? . Posters were displayed one week before the focus group in all community band buildings and community businesses. It was decided that one week of posting allowed for sufficient planning; I was advised that if postings for events are distributed early, it does not increase participation.

Eleven community members responded to the posters to participate in the focus group. Seven people aged 22 to 56, were able to participate on September 7, 2006. Within this group three participants were men and four were women. Three of the women had young children at home. A recorder and translator were present so that individuals could speak Migmag as I am not proficient.

Prior to the focus group, I asked interested participants if they would object to the focus group being voice recorded. Six out of seven participants agreed to voice recording. I decided that I would not record the focus group, as the one objecting participant was a valuable voice given that he is a single man in his forties.

In the beginning, I wrote out a timeline of the research project that I taped on the wall where everyone could see it. I did this to show that the contribution of the group was very significant in the research process. I also shared what the process was in completing a thesis and my journey as a Master's student.

As people started to share their answers and stories, the same stories were shared that I heard in previous site visits. However, the stories were not as in-depth, nor as personal as the one-to-one interviews. I believe if the group was more homogenous and if they knew each other they might have shared more personal stories.

The questions that were asked to the group were:

- *How do you put food on the table?*
- *How do families put food on the table?*
- *And, how does the community put food on the table?*

We used a flip chart to record answers that the group agreed upon. It was stressed that there were no wrong answers. This meant that some bullets were conflicting as the participants held different views. My intention was to further narrow the flip charts into a visual representation. However, the group resisted. For example, three people voiced that they trusted me to show this representation if I felt it was necessary. There was consensus as to what was written on the flip charts before the focus group ended.

I included traditional practices such as smudging and a talking circle layout into the focus group. The CHR assisted me at the beginning of the focus group. A participant from

the focus group did the closing prayer. As we were wrapping up the focus group, one participant asked if the group could help with recommendations that I would be writing in chapter five. I was so delighted because I wanted to ask but did not want to impose. This I felt allowed the group to use what was written on the flipcharts collectively to discuss as a group what recommendations could, or should be made. The recommendations from the focus group are included in the Post-Script.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis and data collection occurred in a spiral process where further data collection added to the data analysis and constant data analysis helped to further focus data collection.

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of the text and image data (Creswell, 2003, p. 190). I used Creswell's (2003, p. 191-195) generic steps for data analysis. First, I organized all my field notes into different files dated chronologically. Feedback from my supervisor was given on each field entry. Secondly, I read the field notes with my supervisor's feedback several times. Qualitative analysis requires an individual researcher to read and re-read the data, notes, reflect on what is read and make comparisons based on logic and judgement (Neuman, 2006). Thirdly, I created another file in which I coded the data according to the research questions: *What are the individual, family and community strategies to maintain food security? And, what are the barriers to maintain food security?*

After, I organized the materials into "categories , I further looked for similar topics within and across files. I developed themes from the analysis of my written notes. I did not rely on common themes found in food security literature; rather I used themes that

developed from the data itself. To the reader, this may be unsettling as some themes identified as mechanisms to maintain food security will appear contradictory. However, it was my role to convey the meaning of the participants shared with me which at times may include findings that the reader may view as contradictory.

An additional source of information I gathered was the monthly, community newspaper for one year from September 2005 to August 2006. I read the newspaper searching for information about food or related issues about *putting food on the table.* I summarized each month and then created a chart reporting food security topics and the frequency throughout the year. I further chose specific references from the newspaper to enhance understanding of the themes. Reading the newspaper also enabled me to become familiar with what was happening in the community.

Strategies for Validating Findings

Methods of Verification

To address triangulation, which is "the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and the theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305), a number of data collection methods were used, including field observation, unstructured interviews, focus group and document analysis. Unlike quantitative research where the focus is on generalization to other research, qualitative research attempts to enhance understanding by achieving a representative picture of a particular context.

The most important component of this research is to identify the lived experiences with food security as described by the participants of Elsipogtog First Nation. Validity determines whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, the community, and the readers. Terms that speak to this idea are regarded as

"trustworthiness , "authenticity and "credibility (Creswell, 2003). Thus, in qualitative research, four types of validity are sought which include ecological validity, natural history, member validation, and competent insider performance.

Ecological Validity

Ecological validity conveys the degree to which the social world described by the researcher matches the world of the participants (Neuman, 2006). This is obtained when the descriptions of the field site match those of the members and the field researcher's presence was not a disturbance. Firstly, my presence as a researcher would be expected to be largely unnoticed in the community as my parents live there and it is usual for me to come for visits to Elsipogtog. Secondly, except for the facilitation of the focus group, I did not create a constructed research environment, but rather met with participants at their convenience. The events observed could have occurred without my presence. Nonetheless, one cannot omit the relationships or influences that people have on each interaction. For example, as a result, I got to know people in my community on a more personal level. One of the most fundamental principles of indigenous research methodology is the necessity of the researcher to locate himself or herself (Brown & Strega, 2005). The purpose of location in Aboriginal research means "revealing our identity to others; who we are, where we come from, our experiences that have shaped those things, and our intentions for the work we plan to do. Hence, location in indigenous research, as in life, is a crucial starting point (Sinclair, 2003, p.122). Creswell (2003) states that self-reflection creates and open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers and also clarifies that bias the researcher brings to the study (p. 196).One method to confirm ecological validity was the approval of the contents of the final thesis by my Advisory Committee.

Natural History

Secondly, natural history validity is obtained by a full and candid description of the researcher's roles and procedures for doing research (Neuman, 2006). The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a rich description of the process as it occurred.

Member Validation

Member validation is a method field researchers use to demonstrate the authenticity and trustworthiness of a study by having the people who were involved, read and confirm what is written in the report (Neuman, 2006). Meeting with the Advisory Committee and sharing my experiences for each site visit achieved accuracy of the findings. I did not present written information, but instead followed the traditional practice of sharing my thoughts in words with the aim of being redirected where misunderstanding had occurred. Once the data was coded into themes, a focus group with seven individuals who the researcher had never met with during the three previous field visits were asked to participate in a dialogue about food security. This helped to provide a comparison in the findings, and validate previous findings. Moreover, member validation took place by widely distributing a penultimate draft to the community for their comments. This feedback from the community was incorporated in the final thesis.

Competent Insider Performance

Competent insider performance refers to a method field researchers use to demonstrate the authenticity and trustworthiness of a study when a person can enter a community and observe first hand the findings reported in my thesis. (Neuman, 2006). This validity method will only be obtained in the future. Competent insider performance when achieved allows future researchers to *pass* as a member of the group under study. This thesis contains a detailed description of data collection; and data analysis contains

direct experiences from the participants in Elsipogtog First Nation. The reader will ultimately make their own decision about how this research can be applied to other situations.

Ethical Conduct

> Historically, Aboriginal communities have been the subjects of much research by "outsiders . This colonial approach to research in Aboriginal communities must give way to an understanding that Aboriginal peoples have an inherent right to be agents of research in contrast to mere passive subjects when the research topic involves their community or culture (CIHR Ethics Office, 2006, p.19).

OCAP refers to ownership, access, control, and possession with respect to ethical guidelines when conducting research in Aboriginal communities. When developing the Lakehead University ethics application, I included principles of OCAP to ensure ethical and beneficial research that conforms to the culture and needs of Aboriginal communities and serves to value and preserve indigenous knowledge bases (Schnarch, 2004). After the ethics application was approved at Lakehead University, the local ethics review committee reviewed the application for its relevance to OCAP principles and endorsed the research.

I informed all participants that I would not mention any names in the written thesis report. For those participants who wished to be named and to waive their right to privacy and confidentiality, I asked for written evidence (Appendix D) that was witnessed by a third party.

Limitations

The findings of this study are extensive and they must be interpreted in the context of a phenomenological research study. The method that I used to gather information and perspectives is unique because of my personal connection to the community. Efforts were

made to reduce investigator bias by using different methods to interpret the essence of lived experience ranging from talking with a variety of different participants to confirming conversations through written materials and observations as a full participant. Due to my connection to the community, childhood friends may have been reluctant to speak to me due to fear of changing the friendship relationship to a research relationship. I attempted to minimize this impact by repeatedly ensuring confidentiality to everyone I spoke with.

The decision to record notes from memory rather than use voice recording or taking notes as people spoke may have resulted in less accurate information. However, given the sensitivity of the topic discussed, participants may not have been willing to share had a voice recorder been used. Furthermore, this method of note taking respected the traditional practices of the community and I was commended for this effort.

This data cannot be generalized to all Aboriginal peoples as Aboriginal peoples are diverse across Canada. However, these findings do provide a rich description of Elsipogtog and provided many examples of how food security is maintained within this community. Thus, comparisons can be made to other First Nations communities but this research cannot be generalized.

Timeline

The timeline in Table 3.3 provides a quick point a reference for the steps involved in this qualitative research thesis.

Table 3.3. Timeline of Research

Date	Activity
July/05	Informally discussed thesis and research interest with family in Elsipogtog. Sent information to family via email. This information was shared in an informal setting with gatekeepers.
Aug/05	Contacted by Community Research & Evaluation Consultant from Elsipogtog Health & Wellness regarding interest in research with community. Advised to send proposal about research
Sept/05	Sent letter to Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre outlining interest in carrying out a qualitative study defining food security in the Elsipogtog based by talking to people in the community.
Nov/05	Corresponding via email regarding the importance and relevance of research about food security. Attended the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Research Conference in Ottawa. Applied for research allowance to the Indigenous Health Research Develop Program. Set planning meeting date for thesis research in community.
Dec/05	Planning meeting held. Fourteen people attended. Direction given for next steps
Jan/06	Letter obtained from Health Director supporting research. Lakehead University Research Ethics Board approves researcher's agreement form application. Research allowance approved by Indigenous Health Research Development Program.
Feb/06	Site Visit One (February 14-28, 2006). Wrote article of introduction in Elsipogtogeoei newspaper, attended all Health Centre events, and developed sampling strategy. Spoke to approximated 17 people. Advisory group meeting held
Mar/06	Site Visit Two (March 19-26, 2006). Attended community events. Spoke to approximately 10 people.
May/06	Site Visit Three (May 9-16, 2006). Wrote update in Elsipogtogeoei newspaper. Spoke to 4 people. Advisory committee meeting held.
July/06	Preliminary Analysis of Data
Sept/06	Site Visit Four (September 3-10, 2006) Member checking - Focus group (7) people. One Interview. Advisory group meeting held.
Aug-Sept/06	In-depth analysis of all data
Oct/06	Meeting with Thesis Supervisor to review draft analysis
Mar/07	Draft thesis completed and sent to Elsipogtog Advisory Committee and External Examiner.

4. Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of this phenomenological study. Responses to research questions are organized at the individual, family and community level and organized by themes as demonstrated in Tables 4.1 to 4.9. The use of themes is not meant as a generalization or unanimity in responses among all community members in Elsipogtog. Each theme is based on information collected from unstructured interviews, observations and written materials collected during each site visit. As a researcher, I have presented the information shared creating themes. The contents of these tables are alphabetically organized and do not to rate the responses in any way. Although, history of the community was never directly asked about, every conversation acknowledged what happened *before* in Elsipogtog. Phenomenology has been identified as a research approach that assists Indigenous people in reproducing, through narrative communication, features of the past, present and future (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). Everything included in the historical tables refers to what participants said might have occurred before, which could be yesterday or one hundred years ago.

Similar to the nature of talking about history and the present, when I would talk to community members, individual stories were inevitably mixed with family stories and community stories. The individual refers to people talking about themselves and other people. The family section refers to references about families. Although in the individual section, the example might involve a family; this signifies a reference to just one person. When participants from Elsipogtog were asked about the "community many referred to the Band or First Nation (the governing structure in Elsipogtog).

Interestingly, when participants talked about food, it was common that the food would be named in Migmag. I have included the Migmag word throughout the text and the English word in brackets beside it. The second section of chapter four provides an analysis of the Elsipogtogeoei community newspaper. The newspaper was analyzed for food related topics and organized this into a table depicting food security issues.

The final section of this chapter documents findings from the final field visit. The tables represent the findings of the focus group held in Elsipogtog. They are left as they were written on the flip charts during the session. During the focus group, participants answered the research questions collectively.

Site Visit Findings

Food Security at the Individual Level

Tables 4.1 to 4.3 summarize the main findings from discussions with participants about how individuals maintain food security historically and currently as well as some of the barriers that were identified.

Table 4.1. Historical Practices to Maintain Food Security at the Individual Level

Themes
Bartering, Sharing and Trading
Cooking
Farming, Gardening and Harvesting
Fishing and Hunting
Seasonal Eating
Survival

Bartering, Sharing and Trading

Bartering, trading and sharing were discussed as historical practices to maintain food security. Participants reminisced about how this increased food sources and created a

variety of food options. As expected, the quotes within this theme are from Elders in the community.

> 'Local farmers in surrounding areas would trade turnips and potatoes in exchange for baskets. I saw that farmers kept these in cellars and in the sand and they were still firm, I learned this way' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

> 'Elderly persons will not go over and fetch something like moose meat. It has to be given to them. They expect to be treated with respect by someone taking food or gifts given to them. This is an old traditional value' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

> 'We would get vegetables from across the river. We ate lots of beans. I still cook beans today. I cook them on Saturdays for my family who are all grown up now' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

> 'When deer or moose meat used to be hunted it was given away because there were no freezers. But this was not the only reason; it was because people shared too. The same goes for fish in season like salmon, smelts and eel. When it came to fishing smelt, people always shared because the fishing hole did not belong to anyone' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

> 'The food we had on hand was small. And most times there was not enough for a big meal so would have to borrow from neighbours. But we would never pay back – they would just come over and borrow something else' (Site Visit Four, September 06, 2006).

Cooking

When participants would discuss food, a historical anecdote involving cooking would surface as an essential skill to maintain food security. I was told that as long as you had the basics such as flour, beans, butter, meat and bones, vegetables and what ever was in season, your family would not starve. One participant shared,

> '...people pass down recipes through narration, you learn from your parents and they learn from their parents. I don't know of any recipe books. But there are traditional favourites in this community like *Onisaoai* (Potatoe Soup) soup. I still make this once a week. It's made with potatoes, sliced onions and either moose meat or hamburger beef fried up and added into the soup as a base. There is *Looginign* (Bread). This is bread. And there are beans. It's cooking that we have to learn and share' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

> 'My mother used to make sour dough bread. She did not have yeast. It was small and she made it the night before in something the size of a crock pot. She had a starter that she used. Rarely do you see people make this today. They make *Looginign* (Bread)' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

Another participant made a comparison to lack of cooking skills today in the community.

> 'Young families buy ready-made foods or they just go to the corner store and buy subs. This cost more money but they don't know how to cook what we used to eat here' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

Farming, Gardening and Harvesting

In a very historical sense farming may not be included in this theme. As a result of the *Indian Act*, First Nations communities were forced towards a farming mode of life unlike their historical practices of moving where the food was. I have included this section because people talked about farming as a historical practice to ensuring one had food. Participants referred to farming, gardening and harvesting as a way to connect with their food sources as a very action-oriented practice.

> 'In the spring, we used to pick fiddleheads, we still do today. We eat these with salmon and trout in the spring. Now if you are too old to go and get them, you can buy them from people who get them' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

> 'My family used to farm but it was an expensive vocation. We always had a family farm of potatoes. I continued to grow potatoes when I got older but we relied on the farmers across the river for vegetables in the summer and fall. Once my father had a cow but it was expensive. We had chickens too so there was always eggs to eat. (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

> 'In the summer, my father would take us to the dunes. The dunes are land in-between water and the ocean. It is past Rexton along the Northumberland Strait. We would live there for the summer. I remember in the summer, we would be on one side doing chores. My father would catch eel with a spear and then we would kill them by rubbing sand on them to rub off the scum and they would die. And when it got hot we would move to the other side of the dune. In the evening we would put eel on the spit and watch the fat dripping as it cooked. People don't do this now. They buy it in a store' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

When a participant was asked to talk more about his childhood and food, he discussed the lots (land) that families had in the community. He discussed the vegetables that were grown in the gardens:

> 'People had different vegetables. Sometimes carrots would be traded for beans. People shared what they grew but it was all about survival and knowing how to do these things for survival. Being the youngest in my family, I could see these things' (Site Visit Three, May 12, 2006).

A common practice in Elsipogtog, still carried out today is working for farmers to pick blueberries and potatoes. As well, potatoes were planted in Elsipogtog and used for personal consumption.

> 'Historically, in this community people used to make extra money going blueberry picking and potato picking. People don't potato pick much anymore because that's when school starts and people care about education now' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

> 'I remember Indian Affairs used to bring in old bags of potatoes, with eyelets in them. We would cut them out, plant these and have new potatoes in the fall' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

A presentation at the junior school for cultural week during the first field visit focused on traditional plants in the area, their medicinal purposes and their Migmag names. Children were encouraged to go home and ask their grandparents about plants that were harvested in the area like Indian cucumber root, water hemlock, wild raisins, camomile, spring beans, chokecherries, and wild blueberries. One child responded after looking at a pressed plant, 'I know that plant, it grows in my backyard' but did not know the Migmag name associated with it. She appeared surprised when she was told what it was used for.

Fishing and Hunting

During my first research meeting while in the community, I was invited to share a meal of smelts and *Looginign* (Bread) with a group of elders. This was a very basic meal

whereby the fish are in season. Occurrences of fishing and hunting for personal consumption were shared with me by historical narrative with different participants throughout each site visit. There is a close connection to the river, which Elsipogtog sits along; people commonly refer to this area as "down the shore .

> 'Fishing was plentiful. When I was a kid I could go down the shore and the river would be bubbling. You would take a flat rock and hit *Agoogamigoa* (Spring Herring) on the head. All fish were preserved and shared' (Site Visit Three, May 12, 2006).

> 'When it was spring we ate *Segoonamigoa* (Gaspereau), *Atjogoongoolooech* (perch) and Indians from other communities call us *Gaspalag* because this community eats little fish and still today we are known for that. At that time (1940) my father would trap food. We did not hunt big game because we were not allowed to. Not like today' (Site Visit Four, September 06, 2006).

> 'I remember when my father fished and my grandfather and his grandfather probably fished too. My late husband fished and hunted too. At one time there was no *Gegaoo* (Bass) in the river. My dad came home one day and he was ecstatic because he caught a bass. He hadn't caught one for three years' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

> 'I remember when my father used to fish down the shore. Now we are told by the DFO that the stocks are too low or unhealthy. In my opinion if we are told not to have our traditional foods there should be some compensation because our people are replacing it with less healthy foods' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

Seasonal Eating

Eating seasonally was described as a practice to maintain food security in the past. Participants would commonly say 'we ate what was in season'. The notion of seasonal eating is also described in examples throughout this section. When seasonal eating was mentioned, the need to bring this practice forward to now was also acknowledged.

> 'We used to eat what was in season, we have too much choice now, but not good choice, we have to teach about what's in season' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

'...if you told a youth today to go catch something, would they know what is in season?' (Field Visit One, February 28, 2006).

Survival

After meeting with people, and repeatedly sharing that the meaning of food security was for them to define, and thus overcoming the need to work from an existing definition, participants would go through a similar pattern. First, telling me that they could not help me, secondly, talking about food historically, and thirdly, discussing the word survival. Some of the examples below illustrate the food and survival connection:

'We never thought about food security or food and nutrition. I or my family thought about survival. We ate to survive. It was good stuff because all we had was good stuff. It was healthy food because there were less options' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

'I never would have thought about this before talking to you. But it is about survival. The mentality of survival still exists today but it is not about food. It's about paying for other things first and then there is a dependence on other things. My grandchildren do not think about food for survival anymore' (Site Visit Three, May 12, 2006).

'My mother died when I was about five years old. I did not see much of my father because he worked. He did whatever he could to provide for us, to feed us. It was about survival and we ate what was in season and what was around here' (Site Visit Four, September 06, 2006).

Participants discussed survival and historical practices to maintain food security. The essence of the message was focused on how people continue to feed themselves. The term survival was used in some cases because I think when participants looked back on their individual, family or community dietary habits, it was first and foremost important to have the skills to obtain the food under harsher conditions than today.

Congruently with speaking about survival, participants also shared the desire to carry this knowledge forward to people today. Unfortunately, the awareness and caution of

promoting traditional foods exists because of the some government policies that discourage the consumption of traditional foods among Elsipogtog community members today.

> 'Can you not approach this project in a different manner? My beliefs are here now in a different manner. How can we help our children bring the traditional ways to the modern times? 1950's to now, it is different! How it used to be to now. The cultural changes are here. We need to share this. It was told to us four to five years ago to make our soups, more vegetarian style' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

> 'I am enjoying this, emerging the old ways to the modern ways. I can see where programming could be enhanced if we knew more about these stories' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

> 'It's nice that we have these stories, our ultimate future. By promoting these foods, then we will be affected by government policy such as Species at Risk. We will not be able to have our traditional foods because of policies and we will have to rely on processed food. And when asked how we get our fish, it will be out of the freezer. And people will ask how do you skin a partridge?' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

Table 4.2 shows the main themes derived from participants with respect to how individuals maintain food security.

Table 4.2. Current Practices to Maintain Food Security at the Individual Level

Themes
Attending Community Events
Cooking Traditional Foods
Food Bank
Gambling (Bingo/VLT's/Poker)
School Lunch Program
Social Assistance
Utilizing Programming in the Community

Attending Community Events

Attending community events is a way to maintain food security as every event put on by the community provided food for participants. When food is available for

participants it is usually healthy and sometimes includes traditional food items such as moose and different fishes. For example:

The community pow wow in August always includes a feast at the end of the weekend. It is open to the whole community to attend and eat. Community members bring home cooked specialties for the feast. At an educational event, an organizer commented that more people appeared at lunchtime compared to those who attended the session (Observation Notes, May 11, 2006). Moreover, I was informed of a community member who was known to attend wakes in the community, firstly to pay respects to the person who passed on, but secondly to have the opportunity to eat home cooked meals.

Interestingly, one participant commented that during election time, candidates gain weight because you are offered food by almost every house you visit. One participant describes how different individuals maintain food security:

> 'Some families have lots of money and you know this because the community is small and they have huge meals when you get to their house. Some people are eating peelings because they have addictions or other payments take precedence over food. But families offer you what they have. I like the old favourites that don't cost much to make. You just have to know how to cook' (Site Visit Three, May 15, 2006).

Cooking Traditional Foods

Participants referred to cooking traditional foods as a way to maintain food security. An analysis of the diversity and meaning of what constitutes traditional foods in this community was not within the scope of this research. However, some participants shared how cooking traditional foods increases food security. Traditional foods such as game, fish, and staples like root vegetables are not seasoned with expensive ingredients. The recipe contents are minimal. For example, *Onisaoai* (Potatoe Soup) soup is made with potatoes,

sliced onions and either moose meat or hamburger beef fried up and added into the soup as a base.

A professional in the community observed that when people are accessing the food bank in town when they are in need of food, 'people want potatoes, meat and flour and these are the people who cook. For the people who do not cook it is harder' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

Food Bank

The Kent County Community Voluntary Food Bank was a recurring theme that emerged while carrying out site visits. When people do not have the means to buy food through conventional methods, the food bank provides access to foods and thus maintenance of food security. The food bank is located approximately twenty minutes from the community. Leadership stated in the 2006 elections that, "Our people are sent to the Food Bank when they do not have transportation or food at the food bank (Levi-Peters, 2006) .

In an unstructured interview with the Food Bank coordinator, I asked the coordinator about the food bank operations. The coordinator preferred not to comment on specific numbers of families who are from Elsipogtog but indicated that there has been a huge increase in her two years of service and in no specific age group. She inquired as to why Elsipogtog did not have a food bank in the community (Observation Notes, March 23, 2006). The food bank serves over 200 families with a large number of families from Elsipogtog.

A policy for social assistance recipients accessing the Food Bank is that they are required to get a signed form from the social services department in Elsipogtog. This form

indicates that the "person(s) identified in the form have indicated that they are presently experiencing an emergency situation in regards to food shortage The referral officer signs that they feel the person(s) would benefit from emergency food assistance (Elsipogtog Social Development, n.d).

A community member volunteered to journal her experience at the food bank on March 16, 2006. Some exerts from her journal are below:

> 'I called the welfare department to tell them I was out of food...she told me to come in and she would have a slip ready for me to pick up...my need for food is essential and I was not going to go without it because of the welfare department being closed all weekend and my cheque not being accessible until Tuesday...Upon arrival to the food bank I felt shy at first and felt the kind of feeling whether I should go or not. I asked myself do I really need this...I went to the cellar of the building where the lady gives out food. The lady said hello and I gave her my slip. I sat down and waited my turn. I noticed the lady put my form in a pile. I would say these forms likely all came from the same place. Elsipogtog forms. It looked like over 100 or so forms...While I was sitting here no one said a word...I only use this food bank when I am in need and do not abuse it...[she spends time thinking about all the reasons people use food banks]...my thoughts are disrupted, it is now time to leave. The lady says to me that your food is ready and to have a good day and I tell her thank you.'

Gambling

The participants I spoke to did not share that gambling was a means to maintain food security. Although participants did not discuss gambling as a means to maintain food security, during field observations, a winner playing the V.L.T machine say that now they had money to eat a good meal. I also observed players say that the money spent gambling is shared with regulars. One week you are lucky to win and the next week another person is a lucky win. The money goes round and round. A gambling winner has increased income. Hence, gambling is used as an income support and thus helps to maintain food security.

School Lunch Program

The Elsipogtog school lunch program is provided for all students who attend the school. I was invited to attend the Elsipogtog School Nutrition Committee meetings. I continued to learn about the school meal program throughout the year and listened to people dream about the program's potential, praise its existence, question the quality of food served, and witness the lack of funding for this program.

The cafeteria was never meant to be an institutional kitchen and foods are currently prepared in the home economics kitchen and served at the school's indoor courtyard. Due to lack of institutional kitchen sanitizing equipment, all lunches are served on Styrofoam plates. The school committee estimated that over 43,000 Styrofoam plates are being used each year because there are no resources for dishwashing. The school meal program provides a means for children attending the school to maintain food security. The principle of the school indicated in conversation that:

> 'The program started seven to eight years ago. Before kids were bussed home from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. The staff noticed that kids were not eating when they went home. They made a goal to feed the children because the knowledge that fed kids are healthy kids. Over the years the Province has implemented a School Nutrition Policy and the program has made small steps...it's hard to change to a healthy diet when the things that taste great to them are not healthy. These things take time, money and resource' (Site Visit One, February 23, 2006).

The principle also noticed that some kids who do not attend school will come exclusively to eat lunch.

Some other noteworthy comments about the school lunch program are:

> 'There is currently a milk program which the Credit Unit provides a small donation to help students when they cannot pay the twenty five cents. Last year the donation amount received was $200.00 (Site Visit One, February 23, 2006).

'Without the program, children would not eat and this happened before' (Site Visit One, February 23, 2006).

'There isn't actually a budget for the program. Money is taken from other places in the school budget. The total budget for the year is $20,000.00. There is support for healthy foods but if kids don't like it – they will go to the store and buy pop and chips' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

'Band operated schools have not received an increase in unit dollar per child since 1998 and there is no money for cafeterias unlike provincial schools' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

Children also have the opportunity to attend school off reserve. In the school off reserve, children have access to provincial run cafeterias that have implemented school nutrition policies.

Other programs in the community that provide food for children are the Day Care and the Head Start Program. The Community Dietitian works with all programs to encourage adherence to Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating as well as traditional Migmag foods.

Social Assistance

Social Assistance provides income for individuals, which provides money to buy from conventional food outlets. Welfare is essential to maintain food security in this community for many people. It can also be considered as a barrier to maintain food security because the income does not provide enough money for individuals and families. I asked leadership, department employees and community members the same research question.

'We don't eyeball people, it's not like outside. At Christmas time we bought grocery food gift certificates for after Christmas because we knew people would come into the office because they don't have food. Even when you have a job, you spend a lot on Christmas' (Site Visit One, February 21, 2006).

'It's difficult when 85% of the community is on welfare. This is a way of life and we are not going to wake up one morning and there will be no more welfare. In the summer there are jobs for fishing and welfare decreases. People make money through blueberry picking. But welfare goes back up again'(Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

'Food is an issue and parents are feeding their children the cheapest things in order to have money for other things. It's empty calories' (Site Visit One, February 21, 2006).

'I saw a girl at the Co-Op [a grocery store] this morning and the girl is about 23 with four kids. She was loading her cart with food. I said to her, "are you feeding an army and she replied that I have to make this last until next ration' (Site Visit Three, May 15, 2006).

There are also innovative dreams of ways in which the welfare program can enhance food security:

'Visualize a cooking program where a rate can be picked like a family with three children to come in and learn about cooking and meal planning for 130.00/week...money doesn't make things better. There has got to be more' (Site Visit One, February 21, 2006).

Utilizing Programs in the Community

In addition to the programs mentioned above like the School Meal Program, Day Care, Head Start and Social Services, individuals utilize other programs to maintain food security on many levels.

For example, the Home and Community Care Program provides cooking services to clients who may not be able to cook for themselves if they are sick or rehabilitating from an illness. This program also provides motivation to support new babies for the best nutrition start in life: for example, breastfeeding. In addition, Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre offers programs such as the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program.

Women that attend this program are provided with milk vouchers while they are pregnant in addition to learning about healthy prenatal and postnatal child development.

A story that was shared about assisting an individual to maintain food security involved the collaboration of different health and social departments and a local business. An individual that was experiencing food insecurity due to addictions, lack of money management skills, cooking equipment and age related issues utilized programming in the community to meet nutritional needs. Credit was arranged at a local restaurant to enable the individual to order food from the business. The other departments involved then communicated directly to ensure payments. More information is not provided here due to the confidentiality of this situation. The point is that due to communication across programming, this individual was assisted in a way that maintained his food security.

> 'Our goal was to ensure the individual had access to food' (Site Visit One, February 24, 2006).

Table 4.3 describes the various barriers to maintaining individual food security resulting from this research.

Table 4.3. Barriers to Maintain Food Security at the Individual Level

Themes
Access to nutritious food at convenience stores on-reserve
Addictions
Beliefs
Breastfeeding
Cooking Skills
Laws and policy
Income and Social Assistance

Participants were asked: *What are the barriers to maintain food security?* This question was asked to elicit individual responses and to provide recommendations to the

barriers identified. Some of the same themes emerged throughout the continuum of individual to family.

Access to Nutritious Food at Convenience Stores On-Reserve

At the beginning of this study, two main stores were selling a variety of grocery products. By the end, one store closed down to eventually to be replaced by another selling comparable food. The bigger convenience stores sell general food items such as milk, bread, luncheon meat, bacon, cookies, eggs, many non-perishable times and as described to me "items that sell . There are other candy stores that sell limited items. Local stores in the community are busier when welfare cheques (i.e. Ration Day) and Mother's Allowance cheques are issued. Field observations show that on these aforementioned days, children can be found purchasing up to three different kinds of high calorie, low nutrient junk foods. Each store has a basket of fresh fruit by the checkout counter. However, each piece of fruit cost one dollar. Another key observation is that every establishment in the community from smoke shops to convenience stores sell ready-made subs. Some stores offer credit but the policy differs depending on the storeowner (Observation Notes – March 23, 2006).

Participants described access to food at stores in the community as a barrier by either referring to their personal situation or feeling for other community members who do not have a car:

> 'The local convenience store, they are not selling vegetables and fruit. They sell more ready to eat things like subs' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

> 'If you do not have a car, it costs money to be driven to the store in town. And if you are going there to buy fries, potatoes and items like that, you might as well buy them on reserve. It's cheaper to buy ready made things' (Site Visit Three, May 16, 2006).

The dietitian in the community offers grocery store tours to the grocery store in town under various themes, for example, budgeting. While I was in the community, a grocery store tour was coordinated by the Health Centre and transportation for the event was provided as an option should participants not have transportation. Unfortunately, although publicized, there were no participants on the tour. The dietitian works on an individual basis with clients about budgeting. She has heard numerous times that people cannot afford to buy a healthy diet (Observation Notes, February 21, 2006).

Addictions

Addictions, as described by participants, involve the replacement of something with something else. Individuals I spoke with suggested that a barrier to food security is addictions like smoking, alcohol, drugs, gambling and materialistic addictions:

> 'Welfare covers the basic needs of the community. It is not meant for other things. However, people cover their secondary needs first and then their primary needs such as food...drugs are a major issue right now and people will feed this first before feeding themselves' (Site Visit One, February 21, 2006).

> 'People don't eat when they're gambling' (Site Visit One, February 23, 2006).

> 'It's difficult to offer cooking services to elders in the community through our program if there is no food in the cupboard to cook with because money is used for other things [referring to gambling or other addictions]. I hope there would be a program to help elders get a least one cooked meal a day. I have seen Meals on Wheels in another community' (Site Visit One, February 24, 2006).

> 'I don't understand the word food security per but I see how it is important in a historical sense because food is important and the community has changed so much. There is a need for more and more money. Some people don't care about what they put into their bodies and the mindset as food as subsistence is lost' (Site Visit Three, May 12, 2006).

Beliefs

Beliefs refer to the outlook individuals have on what is food security. What does it mean to be food secure? Is it just filling the void of hunger? The belief that healthy eating costs too much money and that food security is not possible today was shared. Other beliefs include:

> 'Individually putting one's food on the table is learning about things, having the money to do so but not just the money, having the desire to cook' (Site Visit Three, May 12, 2006).

> 'While teaching a cooking class for the Home Based Program, the mothers' believed that they did not like moose meat because they never tasted it. I taught how to cook it, how to prepare it and make it look delicious and make it taste good...at the end they went for seconds, this is young 19-21 year old mothers' (Site Visit Three, May 16, 2006).

> 'Involve people, so that people learn and change the laziness attitude that they have about food' (Site Visit Three, May 16, 2006).

Breastfeeding

A barrier identified to food security for children is the lack of breastfeeding as their first nutritional source. Through observations, I noticed that maternal programs support breastfeeding through education. I did not have the opportunity to speak to women who were currently breastfeeding. I attended a class of six expecting women where two women expressed their desire to breastfeed. In conversation with management at the health centre, this individual shared the following:

> 'For mother's who are older and the pregnancy is planned or that they know about health issues and perhaps they are married and support, breast feeding is done most of the time. I don't have the actual stat's but since 90% are young mothers and some of them are high risk, they do not have any interest in breastfeeding and state lack of time, energy or resources to do so' (Site Visit One, February 25, 2006).

Cooking Skills

The lack of cooking skills was identified as a barrier to maintaining food security because individual food consumption was limited to ready-made foods, which are usually processed, full of calories, saturated fats and salt. A link was made about the inability to benefit from traditional foods if individuals do not know how to cook them:

> 'To my knowledge working with the community, young people do not eat the way the rest of the community used to eat. It's take out, or chicken nuggets and fries and things that can be microwaved. Perhaps cooking knowledge is minimal?' (Site Visit One, February 24, 2006).

> 'Turkeys are given to every family at Christmas time by the Band, if you don't know how to cook it; the turkey will just sit in your fridge. Luckily, you can usually take it somewhere to be cooked' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

> 'For our community, we are now in the process if we were given a salmon – the young people would not know how to cook it, or at most know how to clean it. This is the basis of our food security' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

A suggestion made by an Elder in the community while she was talking about cooking:

> 'When you talk to the younger generation ask them what food they like to cook and then ask them what food they like their mom cooking and I bet you will see the difference' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

Laws and Policy

Some participants would make a connection between food security and their treaty rights as First Nations People. They would share their right to fish and hunt for personal consumption and how this increases food security. Also, acknowledging the culture connection to past generations who ate this way and were healthy. However, references were made to youth in the community as to whether they know how much fish or seafood can be caught for personal consumption as a First Nations person.

> 'If you told a young person to go out and get their food, could they?' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

A participant who works in the Fisheries and Wildlife Department on reserve briefly explained some of the Fishing Agreements. She said:

> 'With these agreements you can go out and catch one lobster for personal use but not to sell. You can put your one box in to catch. The same is for smelt but not bass or salmon from the river' (Site Visit Two, March 23, 2006).

The question that Elders proposed to me in the community is that it is difficult to know what traditional food sources are at risk and what's contaminated. They felt that other community members probably feel the need for this knowledge too. In the summer, the Food Distribution program in the community gives community members lobster. However, there has to be an Elder in the household to receive a lobster. If you do not have access to the water to get lobster, how can you get the one lobster that you are entitled to? One participant shared an actual situation as a result of government policies:

> 'The river is closed for fishing. If you were poor before you could always go down the shore and fish for your family. Last week a person came to my house. I knew that he had no money. He asked if he could borrow some meat, some steaks for his family. I gave it to him; I did not let him borrow it because I knew he would not give it back' (Site Visit Three, May 15, 2006).

Income and Social Assistance

The sheer fact that money buys food was discussed by each participant. A fact stated repeatedly was that the rate of welfare has not increased in over 10 years. Some participants stated that there has not been an increase in welfare in 25 years, while the cost of food and other necessities have increased. The result as described by participants is to buy cheaper food.

Observations about those who live on Social Assistance were shared with me:

'Drugs take the lead over other stuff. I have seen a cycle in this community that people who are welfare get into. When people get a job it may not last long, especially when it comes time to pay hydro. When you are on welfare, your hydro is paid. But it's not seen that having a job makes more money than welfare, even after the bills are paid' (Site Visit Three, May 15, 2006).

'I look into my friend's cupboards that have babies and sometimes there is no food like there is at my house. But in the freezer there is ready made food. This is because you only have about 120.00 every week' (Site Visit One, February 20, 2006).

'The high cost of diapers and baby formula for a young mother is enormous. People don't have food sometimes to last them from one cheque day to another. As a carpenter, I have noticed this around the community. I have seen people without food' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

In 1989 welfare, for single persons was set at a rate of $40 per week. An ex-officio Councillor informed me that he and other members of that office met with Indian Affairs in 1989 and negotiated an increase to $80.00 per week. By 1990 single persons and other rates were also increased per family size. I was told by several participants that to this date, it is estimated that welfare rates have not increased in over 16 years since it has been initially increased.

Food Security at the Family Level

Table 4.4 summarizes the themes derived that relate to historical practices that maintain food security at the family level.

Table 4.4. Historical Practices to Maintain Food Security at the Family Level

Themes
Farming, gardening and harvesting
Few staples and seasonal eating
Recipes and the ability to cook
Sharing
Using everything (i.e. using every part of a moose)

Farming, Gardening and Harvesting

The theme farming, gardening and harvesting appears as a historical way to maintain food security at the family level because participants referred to these individually and also as something families did for each other and with each other. For example, when one participant discussed his memory of potato gardens that existed many years ago in the community, the reference was framed within the context of gardens based on family lots. He noted that the harvest was shared with other families in the area (Observation Notes, February 28, 2006). This is different as compared to today where people live in individual households rather than on family lots.

Few Staples and Seasonal Eating

"The food is always on the table (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

The above statement was shared with me by an Elder in the community; when asked to elaborate on the meaning of the statement, the individual spoke about having less food choices when he was younger compared to now. This was shared in a positive light. Similar explanations were shared about having few staples and the need to stretch what families had on hand to feed the immediate and extended family. The theme "few staples is connected to seasonal eating and survival because families relied on seasonal eating to modify recipes based on the staples that were on hand year round. The same individual repeatedly said:

> 'As long as this was done we were happy. Get flour, milk, and tea bags for the winter. We had potatoes when they were in season and we had different meats, vegetables and fruits depending what were in season' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006).

Another younger individual thought that because there was less variety of food like the amounts of fruits and vegetables that are available today, that the food was not as healthy. He later clarified his answer stating that the diet was 'better than a diet of processed food' (Observation Notes, May 15, 2006).

Recipes and the Ability to Cook

Food security was maintained in Elsipogtog historically because people knew how to cook. This was essential to survival.

> 'Historically the first thing that I remember was eating for survival and women doing the cooking' (Site Visit Three, May 15, 2006).
>
> 'People do not know how to cook for their families today and this is essential' (Site Visit One, February 20, 2006).

When visiting an Elder in the community, I asked about family cookbooks after the individual shared stories about family recipes. I was immediately informed that because of the narrative nature of First Nations People, many of the family recipes are just known because they are shared from learning and listening to older family members.

Sharing

Sharing is identified as a family practice to maintain food security as well as an individual practice as identified earlier. Historically, participants referred to sharing as something that was done without question or remuneration. Families anticipated that food would also be shared with them. One participant remembered their parents sharing fish with other families and then receiving vegetables in return at a later date (Observation Notes, May 16, 2006).

Using Everything

The term 'using everything' was the exact terminology used by participants. Using everything is connected to the ability to cook as well as hunting, fishing and harvesting knowledge. In the past, families were regarded as not being wasteful. Jokingly, one participant recalled another family coming to his house to borrow some bones to make soup. The borrower was asked to return the bone, so that it could be used again (Site Visit Three, May 15, 2006).

The notion of using everything was also shared in educational storytelling. One Elder alluded to this by sharing a story that was shared with her when she asked her parents "why is food plentiful? She was told that a long time ago we would use every single piece of the animal's body. This is the reason why it was plentiful. The bones were given back to mother earth after everything was used (Observation Notes, February 28, 2006).

The current practices used to maintain food security at the family level are summarized in table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Current Practices to Maintain Food Security at the Family Level

Themes
Attending Celebrations
Eating with Family
Food Bank
Income (welfare, working, mothers allowance, extra money blueberry)
Traditional Recipes

Attending Celebrations

A current practice to maintain food security at the family level, as a result of living in a community where there are so many families, is to attend celebrations. There was pride in participants' voices when this was shared. One said:

> 'Families have birthday parties. It's not like outside. You have family here and you have extended family. There are graduations, feasts, religious events, holidays; weddings and they involve food and feeding your family' (Site Visit Three, May 15, 2006).

In a community this size, most people who live here are usually related to someone. Families are big and during some months there are a number of birthday parties to attend. One participant commented that you could actually not buy groceries and attend birthday parties to eat. Of course in exchange you bring a nominal gift and when it's your time to throw a birthday party, you would have to provide the food (Observation Notes, February 20, 2006).

An older person in the community reflected on a phone call that he received from his sister-in-law. There was a birthday party that he and his wife could not attend. The sister-in-law knew some of the specialties were his favourite and called to say they were sending over some plates (Site Visit Three, May 12, 2006).

Eating With Family

A definition for food security was never provided to participants. Participants responded according to what they felt it meant. Participants felt that eating with family is necessary to maintain food security today. I was invited to share meals with families in the community as a way to demonstrate what it meant to maintain food security.

Further, one participant stated that for his family, everyone knows where to go on a Sunday at eleven in the morning: to have roast beef brunch. This provides a way for older families where siblings are grown, to have their own families come together and share a meal with each other (Site Visit One, February 19, 2006).

Food Bank

In emergency situations, that is, when there is not enough food to feed the family, the Kent County Voluntary Food Bank was referred to by participants. It was not shared as in the same positive light as eating with family or attending celebrations. The food bank in Rexton is explained above under the individual section on maintaining food security.

Income

Participants in this study ranged from individuals who had income security to individuals who did not have income security. Income from any source was referred to as being essential to feed the family even when immediate children were grown, as income assists grandparents to feed their children's children.

Social assistance was referred to as being vital in maintaining food security at the family level. Contradictory to social assistance being a way to maintain food security, one participant's reflection on the impact of social assistance is as follows:

> 'I remember my dad walking to town, about 15 kilometres, with a knapsack on his back, buying food and returning. He was active. Over, the years the community has become more dependent on ration and you don't see knowledge about preserving food or gardens' (Site Visit Three, May 12, 2006).

In August, families in the community go to Maine, U.S.A. to pick blueberries as migrant workers. This has been identified as a way to make extra money to buy school clothes for children. It was also identified that the left-over food stamps that migrant workers receive is used to buy non-perishable items that can be taken back to Elsipogtog. This offsets the cost of grocery costs when returning to the community (Observation Notes, February 27, 2006).

Traditional Recipes

This theme further elaborates on the ability to cook. Cooking traditional recipes was defined as a way to maintain food security at the family level. This means that if a family experiences income insecurity, many traditional recipes have ingredients that are inexpensive and allow them to maintain food security. Some of the low cost traditional recipes identified were *Oiosai Petaan* (meat pie); this is made with a *Loosginign* (Bread) crust top and bottom, filled with fresh pork, salted pork, onions, salt and pepper. This traditional plate is usually prepared only at Christmas and New Years. Another specialty is *Teamoai* (Moose) prepared using all parts of the moose. This can be prepared as a roast, cooked similarly to beef or by cooking hamburger moose, to be used either in spaghetti sauce, burgers or casseroles. Also, *Teamoai* can be prepared as steaks or ribs. One moose can feed a family for the year at 1000 pounds or less. The *Gagpesaoo* (Smelt) is pan-fried, sometimes prepared with flour, salt and pepper and then fried in oil; others just fry the smelts in the oil with salt and pepper. These traditional recipes do not include processed foods. At educational events organized by the Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre that are directed at families, facilitators usually provide traditional recipe examples with added nutritional value to demonstrate how recipes can be modified. The individual who prepares the meal is usually on hand to share her knowledge (Observation Notes).

Several themes emerged as barriers to maintaining food security at the family level and are summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Barriers to Maintain Food Security at the Family Level

Themes
Access to programming
Access to nutritious food at convenience stores on-reserve
Priorities
Traditional teachings not being passed on

Many of the barriers at the family level were discussed in the individual level section of the research findings. I have further elaborated on the themes to provide a context with respect to the family level.

Access to Programming

Attending programs such as the Head Start Program, Daycare and summer camp were identified as ways in which parents are certain that their children will maintain food security through meals provided in these programs. However, I learned in conversation that programs like Head Start have a waiting list. The program provides services for children aged one to four years old. There are approximately 250 children in Elsipogtog who are five years old and younger (Observation Notes, February 22, 2006). Access to programming is a barrier to maintain food security because not everyone is eligible, as well, the program may be at its full capacity.

The school that is located on-reserve provides a free lunch service to its students. Families in Elsipogtog have the choice to send their students to a school outside of the reserve in Rexton (junior elementary school) and Richibucto (senior elementary school). These schools have provincial funded cafeterias with provincial nutrition policies implemented that provide healthy foods to children. However, for the children attending

school off-reserve there is no free lunch program; but there is a free breakfast program offered by the Lions Club in Richibucto.

Access to Nutritious Food at Convenience Stores On-Reserve

Access to nutritious food at convenience stores on-reserve was listed earlier as an individual barrier to maintain food security. Participants stated that families without a car may rely more on the convenience stores on-reserve for food resulting in access to more processed foods.

Priorities

A barrier to food security as described by many participants was the priorities that individuals, families and the community have. In the case of the family, if a car is required in the family home, car payments, insurance and gas will ultimately take the precedence in how household income is spent (Observation Notes, February 28, 2006).

A priority can also refer to time. Reasons cited for not having a garden or cooking nutritious meals (which were both thought as ways to maintain food security) was time. After one participant described what she felt food security mean, she said:

> 'But, I don't have the time to cook or have a garden' (Site Visit One, February 17, 2006).

Homecare workers indicated that postnatal mothers would comment that time and support were the reasons for not breastfeeding (Observation Notes, Site Visit One, February 23, 2006). Many participants stated that food is secondary:

> 'Food is an issue. Parents are feeding their children the cheapest things in order to have money for other things. These are empty calories' (Site Visit One, February 21, 2006).

Traditional Teachings not Being Passed On

Traditional ways were regarded as practices that enabled community members to be less reliant on others for food and to be more self-sufficient. It was acknowledged that a barrier to maintain food security in a family context is that traditional teachings are not being passed on. During Advisory Committee meetings throughout the research project, community members spent significant time discussing loss of traditional knowledge. The Elders stressed the importance of carrying forward the positive strategies that families have held. One participant stated that you could literally count on one-hand the number of family gardens, and that the hand would not even be full (Observation Notes, March 22, 2006).

In reference to hunting, a participant said:

> 'Moose is delivered to the butcher. If people were cutting their moose up, they could not be wasting and throwing everything away. For example the hides would be used for other things. We need to do this because we are not paying respect to these animals and our teachings' (Site Visit One – February 28, 2006).

Participants also shared their dreams for ways in which knowledge could be passed down if families are unable to do so. They encouraged research to collect this information and the ability to apply it to what could be done today. A few participants throughout the research project mentioned farming land that is situated across the river to Elsipogtog and imagined innovative ways that food security work could be accomplished there: such as, a community freezer, community garden and a different kind of food bank. What the meaning of a different kind of food bank is was not discussed. However, the participant indicated:

'The Food bank is not our way, Migmag people do not beg for food' (Site Visit Four, September 6, 2006).

Food Security at the Community Level

As the research progressed, I recognized that the community refers to the Band, Band departments and leadership in Elsipogtog First Nation. Themes regarding historical practices that are used to maintain food security at the community level are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Historical Practices to Maintain Food Security at the Community Level

Themes
Bartering, Sharing and Trading
Church and Spirituality
Support for Skills Based Food Procurement

Bartering, Sharing and Trading

At the community level, participants suggested that sharing was something that was encouraged and supported in the community. When people were in need in the community, there was always someone to help, for example, when a community member passed on. People would be there to provide food for the wake and cook day and night for the visitors that came to pay respect. Another example given, was bringing food to single men when their partner may have passed away. What ever the situation, people shared not for something in return but because this is the nature of Migmag people (Observation Notes).

Church and Spirituality

When participants shared how they believe food security was maintained historically in the community, there was a story that was told more than once that involved

the Easter Holiday and the church called *Opatooosg* (Old Boys Choir). This story exemplifies a sense of family, celebration of food and community. It was explained that at Easter there was an Old Boys Choir that would go to family houses from one end of the community to the other. They would carry a big basket or wagon and the household they were at would put desserts or food into the baskets after the choir sang. The next day, all the items they collected in the community would be auctioned off at the community centre. The food would be in paper baskets that were weaved together. was Although this was mostly sweets, the community would gather at the hall having tea and other food while the auction went on. The proceeds would go to the church. Below, I provide fond memories of this food related community event:

> 'Sometimes husbands would try to buy back the food that their wife made' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

> 'This does not happen anymore but it was beautiful. It would happen at Easter. It would start early and finish around two or three in the morning. Now they don't do this because the reserve got to big and it would take forever. If they were to do this today, they would need a couple more groups at each end. It would be harder and people don't cook' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

Participants did not go into great detail about ceremonies. However, it was shared that traditionally, each season a food and animal was honoured through a specific ceremony. Today, in Elsipogtog, Elders are working to promote these practices again.

Support for Skills-based Food Procurement

When participants discussed the variety of small gardens in the community, they also talked about the bags of potatoes that were given to community members encouraging them to grow potatoes. One participant reflected on the promotion of developing skills to

grow, gather, hunt and fish for your food which alleviates strain on limited income (Observation Notes).

Themes derived from this research on current practices that are used to maintain food security at the community level are summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Current Practices to Maintain Food Security at the Community Level

Themes
Education about Traditional Foods
Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre
Every Community Event Involves Food
Fight for First Nations Rights
Food Distribution Program
School Nutrition Program/Milk program at school (Discussed under Individual Section).

Education about Traditional Foods

While attending events during site visits in Elsipogtog, I witnessed a priority in to the promotion of traditional foods to all community members during several different programs. At the community school, I was invited to observe a presentation about traditional teachings. These teachings included a component on local traditional foods. Children were invited to look at pressings of the plants and colour photographs. During a community breakfast, sponsored by the Health Centre, the cooked shared with me:

> 'Breakfast provides an opportunity to socialize, demonstrate what healthy foods are, their appropriate portion sizes and talk about traditional foods' (Site Visit One, February 17, 2006).

At this same event, participants played 'nutrition bingo' developed by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch. The caller was able to speak Migmag, which allowed for her to call the appropriate foods out in Migmag. She would repeat in English for those participants who could not speak Migmag (Observation Notes).

During an interview with the Elsipogtog Fisheries and Wildlife Department, the Manager shared knowledge with me about the Salmon Restoration Project that was initiated by the Elsipogtog First Nation. This was undertaken in their efforts of one way to claim back Migmag heritage. The project included a research component, assessment, restocking of the river, and education to community members -- especially youth. A website is now available (http://salmon.elsipogtog.ca) which provides information about the project from beginning to where it is at now. This project demonstrates the pride that the community has in maintaining and promoting the importance of traditional food sources. The Band plays an important role in keeping these traditions alive. The manager shared:

> 'We are not saying that the salmon is our only food source and without salmon, our community would starve. It's about honouring our diet and our traditional diet. We know from past experience and from what our Elders tell us that this River was abounding with fish. You could scoop a number of fish if you wanted to. It is not our fault that this river is closed for salmon and striped bass and for conservations reasons as imposed by Department of Fisheries and Oceans' (Site Visit Two, March 23, 2006).

Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre

In my observations from the Health Centre where I attended programs and met with coordinators, I noticed that although the program did not indicate food security was a goal, it was definitely a component. The importance of eating healthy and having access to nutritious food is essential in prevention and promotion of health throughout every life stage. Some of the programs and services that assist in maintaining food security are: maternal and child health, disease prevention, home and community care, community wellness, mental health, and culture and spirituality. The Health Centre works with other departments in the community to enhance food security such as the Social Services

Department, schools and daycare programs. Some examples of work that is being done are: a grocery store tour, elder's bingos, smart budgeting, school nutrition involvement and nutrition support programs (Observation Notes).

Some of the responses that participants shared with me when talking about how the community maintains food security are:

> 'We sometime cook for clients if they want us to but we don't always meet everyone's need. We don't have Meals on Wheels here. I heard about this program. It would be good especially for single men who don't have family living with them' (Site Visit One, February 24, 2006).

> 'We try to use the community radio station for education. Each month we do a radio public service announcement. We try to make it fun and educational. This month we are doing a skit about a man named Joe who is asking the mock food show host about how to shop for his three children' (Site Visit One, February 24, 2006).

> 'Not all services are being utilized. When prenatal mothers come to the health centre. The carrot sticks that get them to come to the classes are the milk vouchers. There are other services they can use too, like the dietitian' (Site Visit One, February 23, 2006).

> 'In my job, I teach people by modeling what is good. I always try to bring this to work with me' (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006).

From the perspective of community members, the Health Centre was often discussed when talking about how the community maintains food security. Some people shared the events that they attend which involve food. One participant talked about the Women's Wellness Day, an event organized by the Health Centre. She said:

> 'It provides a day to meet with other women in the community to learn about health and also share a meal' (Site Visit Three, May 11, 2006).

Through culture and spirituality services at the Health Centre, many activities are delivered that promote food. The ceremonies facilitated by Elders in the community usually end with a feast. The feast includes traditional foods and ancestors are always fed

first to pay respect to them and the food as well. Funding is provided by the Health Centre for these feasts and the whole community is invited to participate. The Community Health Representative is always available to answer questions about the ceremonies throughout the year.

Holistic programming delivered by education, health, and social services are directed at the family, which helps to maintain food security. It was shared with me that over ten years ago, 90% of preschool children were affected by baby bottle syndrome. With increased education and prevention programming, the effects of baby bottle syndrome are virtually not seen today among children. This includes the promotion of proper nutrition for children (Observation Notes, February 16, 2006).

Advocate for Inherent Rights

The Band advocates for the rights of its members. These rights include the ability of First Nations to hunt fish and harvest their traditional food sources. This also includes ensuring that social assistance rates are on par with the rest of the province.

Food Distribution Program

The Food Distribution Program came about as one of the components of the Marshall Decision (described above). This program encourages commercial fisherman to distribute throughout the community for personal distribution. Over the course of years, financial restraints and resources have caused the program to be redundant. However, this program occasionally provides community members, mostly Elders with lobster and snow crab in the summer. An employee in the fisheries department shared:

> 'We wish to expand the food distribution program in Fisheries. Right now it just includes lobster. The distribution of the program is where we distribute fish to families in the community for ceremony and personal use' (Site Visit Two, March 23, 2006).

Each year, the Band for gives a turkey to each family in Elsipogtog; and all praised this effort. However, some questioned individuals' ability to cook the turkey. There was not a clear sense as to how this deed is financed aside from the Band. The Christmas turkey is a tradition in Elsipogtog today, and families expect their turkey at Christmas time. There is relief and pride when people talk about this gift. Leadership shared the importance of this:

> 'This has been happening for 6-8 years and it is good for families' (Site Visit One - February 27, 2006).

Another food distribution activity occurring at the community level was the annual fall moose hunt in the community funded by the Elsipogtog First Nation Band. The moose caught are then sent to the butchers where the meat is then bought by the Band and distributed to the community members or purchased directly by community members. This has been going on for approximately 5 years and provides a rich traditional food resource.

> 'This is an initiative where hunters' compete to get the biggest moose. The plenty is shared among the elderly and single mothers in the community' (Site Visit One, February 27, 2006).

As a result of this research, barriers to maintaining food security at the community level were identified and categorized by theme in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Barriers to Maintain Food Security at the Community Level

Themes
Planning
Lack of Sharing
No Budget in the Federal Budget in School for Nutrition/meal Program for On-reserve Schools
No Major Grocery Store in Community
Water

Planning

Although participants spent more time talking about individual and family barriers to maintain food security, some of the identified community barriers included the lack of sharing today in the community, community planning, lack of funding from the federal government and no major grocery store in the community. Planning refers to the fact that homes built today in the community do not include areas for gardening:

> 'People think that because this is a reserve that there are no apartment buildings. But there are a lot of apartment buildings now. Even if you knew how to make a garden, where would you build it?' (Site Visit Two, March 23, 2006).

An issue discussed in regards to the School Lunch Program on reserve was lack of funding for this initiative and the need for funding for updating the kitchen facilities in the school. When the Meals on Wheels program was suggested as program for the community, one participant stated that lack of an appropriate kitchen and resources is a barrier from this becoming a reality. No commitment has been made to improving the school home economics kitchen for wider use like a "Meals on Wheels program or cooking demonstration place.

The lack of healthy food selection in the community convenience stores was an identified community barrier to food security. There are future plans for a community grocery store in partnership with the Atlantic Super Store:

> 'This economic endeavour would provide forty full time jobs similar to the supermarket in Eskasoni First Nation, Nova Scotia. Currently, 2300 community members purchase their food at grocery stores in town. I was informed that an Elder on the planning committee advocated for a traditional food section in the grocery store' (Observation Notes, May 15, 2006).

Concerns about water safety were raised in the community. Many participants advised me that they do not drink their house water because of concerns that the water is not safe and that the water is discoloured. If community members are concerned about the water in their homes, they can contact the Health Centre to have their water tested. Elsipogtog is not under a 'boil water' advisory. One store in the community sells spring water by the gallon.

Findings from the Review of Elsipogtogeoei Newspaper

The *Elsipogtogeoei* is a monthly newspaper published in the community. One of the objectives of the newspaper is to create and promote an environment of constructive dialogue and information sharing within the community of Elsipogtog. Analysis of the newspaper occurred for one year, from September 2005 to August 2006. The local newspaper represented a voice of the community and enabled me to learn more about the community. From each issue, I recorded articles that included information about food related topics in the community. In Table 4.10, I have categorized the articles into themes. Below the table, I provide examples of highlighted themes. To my knowledge, the newspaper has not been previously evaluated in this way.

Table 4.10. September 2005 to August 2006 Food Security Issues covered in Elsipogtogeoei Newspaper

Month / Theme	Sept 05	Oct 05	Nov 05	Dec 05	Jan 06	Feb 06	Mar 06	Apr 06	May 06	Jun 06	Jul 06	Aug 06
Activity promoted included healthy food	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓			✓
Blueberry picking											✓	
Elsipogtog Fisheries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education youth traditional food and nutrition			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Feast/traditional event	✓									✓	✓	✓
Food provided at community event		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Health centre information on back page about nutrition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Message from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New convenience store / new business							✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Nutrition Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personal stories		✓					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Programming including nutrition	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Health Advisory for food vendors/policy	✓	✓							✓			
Recipe		✓										
Research						✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Salmon Conservation/restoration Project Update	✓			✓				✓		✓	✓	✓
School meal program		✓										
Sustainability of river			✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓

Note: Checkmark (✓). Illustrate the month the theme appeared in Newspaper.

Elsipogtog Fisheries

The Elsipogtog Fisheries Department submits an article to the newspaper every issue. The article provides an opportunity to speak to the fisherman in the community as well as to let community members know what is happening in this department. The articles throughout the year shared the economic variations in commercial fishing for fisherman in the community, as well as new ventures that the band has embarked on such as tuna fishing. Readers are provided with information about how commercial fisheries operations assist with employment in the community as well as community programs such as:

> ...Elsipogtog plans to fish smelt utilizing the fish count personnel to record the by-catch, release the bass that may be caught (it is illegal to catch bass). and to learn how this type of fishing is done. The revenue will be used to help with buying the Christmas Turkey's. (Elsipogtogeoei, December 2006, p. 12).

In May 2006, the article discussed whether there would be enough money for fisherman to prosper due to the decreased cost of snow crab. Community members are given the opportunity in this newspaper to respond to issues. One mother shared her concerns about economic prosperity for all:

> I'm a single parent and parenting is hard enough without money. Yes, I remember the good old days, but I remember it differently. My wallet was empty. My son was wearing my old sneakers. I have no sports car. We weren't decked out on new stuff. Where is our fair share of the Bands quota from the so called "good old days and last years? Hopefully this poor single mom will finally get some of our (mine). quota this season. It wasn't fair to me and my son. Signed single parent, Elsipogtog. Name withheld (Elsipogtogeoei, June 2006, p. 11).

Education to Youth about Traditional Food and Nutrition

Many of the messages about food and nutrition are directed at youth. Parents are encouraged to be positive role models. The Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre contribute to the newspaper and always include information about youth and nutrition.

This year, two pictures in the newspaper spoke to the importance of teaching Migmag youth essential fishing skills. In January 2006, a child is pictured with his father releasing fish back into the river for *Follow Your Parent to Work Day*. As well, in August 2006 issue, the front page has a picture of three boys eel spearing and the caption reads:

> These three boys went eel spearing lately and they skinned all 21 of them themselves. (Elsipogtogeoei, August 2006, p. 1)

Health Centre Information

The Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre contributes to the newspaper every month from advertising events at the Health Centre to sharing easy to read information about food and health. The messages in each issue are geared to what is happening in the community. For example, in the October 2005 issue, the Health Centre Dietitian shares a snack guide with healthy snack ideas. In addition, information about the School Nutrition Program is provided encouraging volunteers to assist with the program.

At the back of the newspaper, the page is dedicated to Elsipogtog Health and Wellness Centre information. Some of the topics include: budgeting, osteoporosis, starting the New Year right, prenatal health and food safety. Events that are advertised include: diabetes lunch and learns, Moccasin Challenge, Halloween party, Women's Wellness Day, Men's Wellness Day, and specific programs like Home and Community Care, Healthy Beginnings and Home Visiting Program. When activities are promoted, advertisements usually state that participants will receive lunch and or a snack.

Message from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans submits a monthly article to the newspaper beginning in January 2006. The article is directed to the broad population but primarily focuses on issues pertaining to fisheries and oceans, and those that affect commercial fisherman in the community. For instance, in January 2006, the article discussed the Species at Risk Act (SARA), sharing how the act affected commercial fishermen in Atlantic Canada. The author provides the names of species at risk that if caught in the nets of fisherman must be released.

The DFO article promotes stewardships of the waterways and its surrounding habitat and overall environmental issues. Each article provides contact details for the author and encourages readers to comment on articles in *Strait Talk* and provide suggestions.

Personal Stories

Community members are encouraged to submit their comments and stories to the paper. For example, for this research thesis, I submitted three articles, which were accepted and published in the paper (see Appendices E and F). In March 2006, a story about an Elder who was recognized for her services at a conference was shared:

> ...Josie is actively involved in promoting diabetes prevention and proper nutrition. She was instrumental in having the health centre staff distribute Clementines instead of candy canes to children during the community Christmas parade. (Elsipogtogeoei, March 2006, p.10)

The same Elder was also recognized by the Home Based Outreach program for sharing cooking skills with young mothers in the program. Throughout the year, under the *Best Wishes* section, I found community member's thanking other community members for providing food at wakes and the page is also filled with many birthday wishes.

In August 2006, one community member shared his perspective that the most sacred thing that you could give another human being was food or nourishment. This statement reinforces earlier comments from many participants that this historical belief was understood and enabled community food security. Today, however, this belief has lost meaning, and now acts as a barrier to food security.

The author wrote:

> My name is Henry Augustine, and through the years of my travel, going to pow wows, gatherings and ceremonies, I have learned the most sacred gift that you can give to another human being is Nourishment, food, etc. The first six years of the powwow here in our community, I asked people from our community to cook food for the pow wow. People brought their own specialties - soups, stews, meats, home made breads, bannock, cakes, pies. They brought these specialties from their own homes to share with people at the pow wow. This has been lost! Today we hardly have anybody sharing their specialties (Mik'Maq foods) that they enjoy at home. It would be nice that if we all brought this all back to our pow wow or Maiomi. Myself, I'm a good cook and I am willing to share my cooking specialties with the community and the people that come from other communities. Like most of the women and men that cook in their home, I think most of the cooks put the magical ingredient: love in with their cooking. My mom taught me how to cook at an early age of seven. That I remember, and she told me of the magical ingredient who you cook food. So at this coming pow wow, I'm looking for whoever knows how to cook, bake, or make sandwiches to come and share with the people of the community and the people of other communities that come to our pow wow and I would like to see that we all share this sacred gift that we can all enjoy with our friends, family and one another. (Elsipogtogeoei, August 2006, p. 4)

Salmon Conservation and Restoration Project

The Salmon Conservation and Restoration Project contained many components. One component involved youth from the school in Elsipogtog who would take care of the salmon and release them into the waters. As well they also participated in launching the website. Below, I have provided some exerts from these articles in the newspaper:

> Baby Salmons Almost Ready. Close to 150 000 finger length salmon ready to go back in the river...Salmon has disappeared from the river and it is important to educate the kids the importance of the preservation of the river as well as the conservation of the salmon. We want to restock the river again and assure the children that they will eventually be able to enjoy the traditional use and taste of the salmon. (Elsipogtogeoei, September 2005, p.13)

> Upon Reflections...We have already reclaimed our identity, our name, our territory – ELSIPOGTOG. It is in this reclaiming we are responsible to make sure that the river system be sustainable for the future. We know from past experience and from what our Elders tell us that this river was abounding with fish. You could scoop the number of fish if you wanted to. This would be all you took to feed the family and a neighbour. It is not our fault the river is closed for salmon and striped bass and for conservation reasons imposed by DFO. (Elsipogtogeoei, November 2005, p. 11)

> Elsipogtog School Life. Students visit the hatchery. The idea around the project is to release the fingerling salmon into the Richibucto River to help boost salmon stocks. This has traditionally been a very good salmon river. However, since 1998 the Richibucto as well as several other rivers in eastern NB (rivers flowing into the Gulf of St. Lawrence) has been closed to salmon angling because of low stocks...The adults from the community felt it was important to take children to the hatchery to explain how these little fish got their start, to give them some background for the release of the fish on Elsipogtog Day and to teach them about the importance of Salmon to their Mi'kmaq heritage. (Elsipogtogeoei, December 2005, p. 7)

An educational component to these articles is provided:

> We catch the fish in the downstream traps and release them and we hope to recapture them in the upstream trap...The grade two kids from Elsipogtog School were involved in releasing the fish. TEK advisor visited the kids at school for a drawing contest and discussion about the importance of the salmon. (Elsipogtogeoei, April 2006, p. 13)

In the May 2006 issue, children from the school and community members are pictured releasing the fish back into the Richibucto River. This project was started as a vision by the community members.

Focus Group Findings

As discussed in Chapter 3, the fourth site visit differed from the first three in that the data collected was obtained from a focus group representing new and diverse perspectives on food security in Elsipogtog. The knowledge gained from this focus group is summarized below in Tables 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13. The contents of the table are from the flip charts that focus group participants developed. They have not been summarized. The

wording appears as it did on the flip charts. The findings below are compared and contrasted to the information, which I learned and summarized above from the first three site visits. The specific question that was asked to participants revolved around the concept of "putting food on the table . My Advisory Committee suggested that I ask focus group participants:

- *How the individual puts food on the table?*
- *How the family puts food on the table?*
- *How the community puts food on the table?*

Collected Individual Responses

Table 4.11. Focus Group Responses to: *How do you put food on the table*?

Responses
Cooking (making meals from scratch). But barrier for those who cannot cook
Hunting (storing it).
Fishing (and storing it).
Learning from Elders
Conserve everything in terms of food
Freeze things for later
Eating traditional food – moose-meat, deer, salmon, and fish of all kinds: bass, trout, smelts, eels.
Seasonal hunting (But having knowledge for hunting is needed first).
Policies impact eating Traditional foods such as bass.
No car (so you have to hire)
You work to buy food
Healthy foods expensive – so purchasing cheaper foods that may not be healthy is the only option even though you know it you need your kids to eat.
Land base – you could garden like they used to here but because people live close together it is harder.
Use traditional recipes: Loosginign (Baked Bannock); Onisaoai (Potato Soup); 4 cents (Fried Bannock); Homemade Beans
Smoking Meats and Fish
Seasonal Eating to increase good healthy foods
Buy big bag of apples – to preserve foods – Sauce
Shopping
Creator (he puts food on the table for us).
Income from welfare – to buy food (but does not reflect provincial rates – hasn't increased in 16 years but food went up).
Go to farmers market in summer (a barrier is for those who don't have access to vehicle).
Stores in the community (it is more expensive even though it is tax free). But sometimes better because you have to pay someone gas if you don't have a car.
Shopping: grocery store in town
Shopping: Moncton cheapest (but this requires a car).
Seasonal Fishing Knowledge – this could be a barrier
Barrier: what if you don't know what and how to access resources: i.e. where to fish What to fish, how much can you fish – meaning if you are not a commercial fisherman what can you do?
Barrier: Lack of job/therefore no money – if employment
Barrier: There are a lot of apartment buildings now where families live – how can think of making a garden, the option not there. Also many people have forgotten how to garden.

The focus group members conveyed food security practices that both demonstrated ties to traditional ways as well as current practices. For example, as shown in Table 4.11,

the participants discussed a continuation of such traditional practices, as hunting, fishing, smoking meats and fish, seasonal food practices and learning from Elders and traditional food recipes. They also demonstrated that current policies may limit opportunity to eat traditional food. For example, the river is closed to bass because bass is a species at risk. Therefore, this traditional food source is no longer available.

Furthermore, the participants described that the influx in apartments and houses being built closely together results in not enough space for people to have family gardens. Also, many people now do not know how to properly plant vegetables and maintain the traditional way of living.

Focus group members recognized that food security could be enhanced through making meals, gardening, seasonal eating, and fishing. Many people are limited in food they purchase by only having knowledge of how to prepare food from packages. Others expressed that food security could be achieved from conserving, buying bulk and freezing food for later. However, they noted that healthy food is more difficult to acquire because of the higher cost. Additionally, for those that depend on welfare, the welfare rates have not increase in 16 years while the cost of food has increased.

Participants shared some of the barriers to food security, confirming previous barriers to food security that was reported in the first three site visits. Some of the specific barriers identified by participants were a lack of car, which results in the need to hire transportation, thus reducing the amount of income that can be used to purchase food. As well, with limited money you are forced to buy cheaper foods that are not nutritious. One participant shared:

'I have two children, an 8 year old and a 3 year old. I am a single parent. I find it very hard to put food on the table for my children. Especially to put healthy food on the table, as it is hard to make ends meet with the amount of money I receive from welfare. I have no transportation, and it cost money to go to town and I guess that's just life' (Site Visit Four, September 7, 2006).

Participants expressed concerned that they don't have knowledge regarding what to fish, how to fish and regulations as to how much fish you can catch.

Collected Family Responses

Participants spent a lot of time sharing the importance of celebrations in maintaining food security at the family and community level. Some of the celebrations shared were birthday parties, Easter, Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, weddings and family gatherings in general. One participant shared:

'At celebration times we get together and cook and food is there like birthday parties, anniversary parties, holidays and special days. We cook and we enjoy eating and celebrating with family and children. We share what little food we have and the children enjoy their parties. The parents and grandparents do the cooking and eventually the next generation will take over the same duty as they know it is a tradition of the family...' (Site Visit Four, September 7, 2006).

Similar to the first three site visits, participants talked about the role of this historical practice in maintaining food security. They remembered how sharing and helping each other was important to put food on the table. One participant remembered how in the 1960's, it was more common that one fisherman would share his bounty with local people who lived around him and his family. People did not go hungry (Site Visit Four, September 7, 2006).

Table 4.12 provides a summary of the responses that the focus group felt was most important to share about how the family puts food on the table. There was consensus among participants that in the community of Elsipogtog, that the family structure continues

to celebrate with food. Similar to what has already been mentioned, participants worried about young families who may not have cooking skills.

Table 4.12. Focus Group Responses to: *How does your family put food on the table*?

Responses
Holidays are a big time for healthy food, Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and New Years.
Historically, Old Boys Choir – Historic – Opatoosg (Old Boys Choir). – family sing in exchange for food and would be auctioned off (feast after).
Family Gatherings
Birthday – you can attend many and eat but then you also have to throw them
Among families there was, one skilled person who shared plenty fish
Cooking for Families: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner. There are other people you can count on and go to their house.
Warrior Society – used to help those in need
Attending Sunday brunches or dinner
When you are out of some ingredient – borrow from family
Historically – there was more of borrowing from next door neighbour.
Families help each other
Weddings
Funerals – Wakes. People are always there to cook and prepare meals

Collected Community Responses

The focus group responded to: *"How does the community put food on the table?"* by referring to the Elsipogtog First Nations Band. Table 4.13 provides a summary of the answers the group provided. Many of the answers confirm the findings from the individual interviews and community observations in Tables 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9.

Table 4.13. Focus Groups Responses: H*ow does the community put food on the table for its members?*

Responses
School, on reserve provides meal time lunch (it's known not to be healthy).
Band, gives turkeys at Christmas to each head of households (family).
Band, in August lobster and snow-crab are given out (but not now as it was before – because food fisheries program is no longer in existence)
Fight for treaties to protect our traditional food sources and land (from government). Cigarette money – you get royalties back.
Helps other people – the community helps others when in need by sharing food – like when someone is going to hospital. But sometimes not the case.
Welfare – will give food vouchers, but then it is taken off the ration
Band gives $$, But welfare hasn't changed in over 16 years the amount of $$ per person, food has gone up!!!!!!
Emergency funds – but do not have anymore or cannot be relied upon
Annual Moose Hunt
Community traditional events like Pow-Wow, Sundance
Independent businesses assist the elderly through reimbursement from the band
To be employed by the band
School provides meals on reserve
All workshops and events – provide food to participants
Christmas Daddies raise money because Christmas is important in community – this help with gifts & food
Bingo – when you win to top up your money
Event – Halloween
Food Bank*, But you need a slip from welfare, helping still would not be food banks
HISTORY we don't beg for food
HISTORY – community helped each other – now materialism, need more than just thank you
Grocery store, stores in community
Programs in community like Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program – provide milk for pregnant women
Programs - when students graduate, a meal is provided
Home-care for people who need it. Help to cook and provides meals and shop (but you need food for them to do this).
Community bake sales
Organize contests traditional cooking, family wellness Nov/Feb (Prize Money).

Overall, the Band's efforts in fighting for treaties that honour the Migmag traditional diet was recognized. As a result of these efforts, there is now employment for community members as fisherman. Moreover, as a result of commercial fisheries, food based fisheries also provide seafood such as lobster and snow crab to elders in the

community. Some participants expressed that they did not receive seafood from the food-based fisheries before.

Respondents discussed how the Band works to help out in times of most need. For example, as already mentioned, at Christmas there are turkeys given to every household. One participant asked what happens on other days of the year when families are in need. This question led other participants to discussing food related events like the Annual Moose Hunt, and the Christmas Daddies Fund. The Christmas Daddies Fund provides presents and food baskets for families who have financial need at Christmas so that children will not go without.

The fact that all Band led programs offer food for participants was also shared in the focus group. The School Lunch Program was praised for providing one meal per day to students on the reserve who may otherwise go without food. However, the quality of food provided at the lunch program was questioned.

Given the fact that most people in the community are either on Social Assistance or work for the Band, income was discussed:

> 'Welfare for a single person has not increased in over 16 years in this community. You receive $80.00 per week. Yet food costs have increased' (Focus Group Participant, September 7, 2006).

Participants discussed how the rate of welfare has not increased in many years. One participant shared the history of how welfare came to be provided on a weekly basis in the community and at one time was lower than the rest of the Atlantic Provinces. The same participant noted that it was an effort of women in the community who changed the rates to what they are today. Discussions about welfare led into not being able to meet the rising costs of food. Due to the rising costs of food and the frozen rate of welfare, families are

forced to purchase cheaper foods with less nutritional content. Participants discussed the food bank as a means to offset the cost of food. There were strong feelings about the need to get a slip from the welfare department before accessing the food bank in Richibucto. Some of the participants thought that the Band provides money to the food bank when members in the community access it. Participants also indicated that if someone is in need, they can contact Social Services and they will help.

Participants briefly discussed the feasibility of having a food bank in the community. An Elder in the audience shared that Migmag people do not beg for their food. One participant shared that a food bank with a different model could be developed in the community. A few people agreed and shared:

> 'At the food bank, people say that we are no good drunks and can buy our alcohol and not our food. Where are we supposed to go if we can't afford anything' (Focus Group Participant, September 7, 2006).

Another source of income defined by participants was royalties that community members receive. One example of a source of royalties is from cigarettes sold in the community.

Participants felt that in Elsipogtog, the Band plays a role in putting food on the table for its members. It was also shared that historically the community always shared with those people who were in need but today it is more about materialism.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

In order to achieve food security, community members themselves must identify a shared vision of food security and translate it into locally controlled food and nutrition policy in order to ensure a vibrant healthy community (Campbell et al., 1997). In this research, participants shared mechanisms used to maintain food security in Elsipogtog First Nation in both present terms and historical time periods. Thus, this research linked the past with the present to enhance the depth of food security perspectives (Baker & Daigle, 2000). Through community participation, I was able to identify the "essence of human experiences concerning food security as described by the participants in this study, which allowed the data to speak for itself (Creswell, 2003).

Participants in Elsipogtog shared their personal stories and talked about how food security is maintained and achieved. At the same, participants discussed the barriers and challenges that exist in achieving the availability, accessibility, adequacy and acceptability of food as well as the policies and processes that enable food security.

Table 5.1 describes a framework for interpreting the findings of this research using the five characteristics that comprise food security: availability, accessibility, adequacy, acceptability and agency. Within each characteristic, the themes that were identified in Chapter Four have been used to demonstrate how food security is maintained in Elsipogtog. Although it is important to share what is learned, it is equally important to provide the community with recommendations based on what was learned. Under each characteristic, recommendations to increase food security have been prepared for the community. These recommendations were confirmed by the focus group. However, to give credit to the participants who shared their stories with me, I have included the focus group

recommendations in the post-script. I was cautioned by the community that a document without recommendations for action is only a document. These recommendations arise from the voice of the community and are not meant to be interpreted as expert driven recommendations.

Table 5.1. Five Characteristics of Food Security in Elsipogtog

Availability: Farming, gardening, and harvesting; Fishing and hunting; Seasonal eating; Use of food bank off-reserve; Fight for First Nations rights; Food distribution program; School nutrition program Barriers: Availability of food on-reserve; Breastfeeding practices.	**Accessibility:** Bartering, sharing, and trading; Cooking; Eating with family Barriers: Cooking skills.
Adequacy: Seasonal eating; Using every thing (all parts of animal) Barriers: Traditional teachings not being passed on.	**Acceptability:** Bartering, sharing and trading; Attending community events; Cooking traditional foods; Use of traditional recipes; Eating with family.
Agency: Survival, Community events provide food to participants, School lunch program Social Assistance; Income, Fishing & hunting policies, Support for skills based food procurement, Christmas turkeys.	

Availability

Availability is described as food in sufficient amounts to meet people's needs (Centre for Studies in Food Security, 2006). This research reveals that when participants talked about the availability of foods historically, they talked about meeting the needs for survival. Participants shared how their families would eat what was in season, how they would rely on the abundance of traditional food sources and how the community members shared with each other any excess of available foods. Many participants shared stories

about cooking, harvesting and other traditional practices involving food. This also included the Migmag language when talking about food. Participants would share how their parents gardened, hunted, harvested, fished; and because of this knowledge, they were self-sufficient. This experiential knowledge and expertise is required to transfer knowledge across generations to maintain food security.

Participants presented several reasons for the erosion of self-sufficiency. First, the participants made the connection between historic times when food was available because of self-sufficiency and the negative impact of welfare being introduced to the community. The availability of welfare placed a damper on achieving food security through self-sufficiency. Interest in learning self-sufficient skills to maintain food security diminished. Neufeld (2003) noted this impact of welfare when talking with Aboriginal grandmothers and mothers where there is now an increased dependence on purchased foods and staples.

Secondly, acculturation has affected availability of food and thus consumption. This is due to contamination of food sources, loss of skills in order to access available foods and location of reserves (Medical Service Branch, 1994; First Nations Development Institute, 2002). Availability of traditional food sources throughout Canada has been affected by environmental changes. Researchers have documented this in the north through nutrition research (Kuhnlein, Receveur & Chan, 2001). In the *National Action Plan on Food Security*, the need to preserve traditional food availability for Aboriginal peoples has been thoroughly discussed (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998, 2004, 2006).

Recommendations:

- *Action 1: Develop new programs and enhance existing programs that promote self-sufficiency to obtain available foods;*
- *Action 2: Engage in input to regional, provincial, and national policies to reverse environmental degradation that impacts the availability of food from land and water resources;*
- *Action 3: Develop programs that support community members to eat more wisely by seasonal availability.*

Accessibility

Accessibility is described as having the assured physical and economic access to food (Centre for Studies in Food Security, 2006). Available foods can be accessed by three main methods: traditional food systems, purchasing from suppliers, and/or obtaining it through charity food providers

Firstly, participants shared that it is easier to access what is available in the community from the local store while recognizing that the food isn't as healthy as going to the grocery store off-reserve. Financial barriers to accessing more nutritious food in large grocery stores that are located off reserve exist for those without independent transportation.

Other financial barriers to accessing food exist among First Nations peoples. Similar to findings in this study, previous research has shown that when First Nations women are asked the meaning of food "women commented on the lack of food, or lack of money to buy food. The women remembered payday as the day when there was lots of food in the house (Guiliano, 1995, p.33). Further, previous studies have found that First Nations peoples on-reserve are influenced by the available food that local businesses have on hand (Gittelson, et al, 2006). This is an important finding, as appropriate interventions could improve food security for First Nations peoples residing on-reserve. For example, the

Healthy Stores Strategy is one example of a culturally appropriate, store-based intervention that increases the accessibility of healthy foods and promotes their purchase (Johns Hopkins University, 2006). This project has been started in Canada in remote communities where food prices are high. "In exchange for them [store owners] agreeing to stock those foods, the project leaders agree to promote them through educational displays, cooking demonstrations, recipes, special labels, and the local media (Nunatsiaq News, 2005).

Analyses have shown that the cost of basic needs, including a healthy diet, are not affordable for low-income households on social assistance or minimum wage employment (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2004, 2005 & 2006; Community Nutritionists Council of British Columbia, 2004; Dietitians of Canada, 2005; OFIFC, 2003). More than 80% of Elsipogtog community members are on welfare (Communication with Elsipogtog Social Services, 2006). Throughout the research, participants talked about economic barriers to accessing food. One participant shared that "food is an issue and parents are feeding their children the cheapest things in order to have money for other things. It's empty calories (Site Visit One, February 21, 2006). Some programs/departments in the community address the need to ensure children are not going hungry in the community. But children and youth are one part of the lifecycle and a community approach addresses the whole community.

Secondly, older participants whom I spoke with discussed the loss of skills such as hunting, cooking and preserving food as a barrier to food security. One participant said 'if you told a young person to go out and get their food, could they?' (Site Visit One, February 28, 2006). However, while in the community, I was able to witness programs funded by the

Health Centre and the Fisheries and Wildlife program aimed at teaching about meal preparation and traditional food such as fishing geared to the younger population.

Thirdly, physical access to foods can be hindered by age or health. The Home and Community Care Program in Elsipogtog is sensitive to this. Through their program, home care workers can assist the elderly and those who may be recovering from an illness or hospital stay with cooking and assistance for grocery shopping to overcome physical barriers (Observation notes). One participant and employee suggested a Meals on Wheels model to provide food to community members when in need. Currently, fast food take out stores in the community provide this service in extreme situations. However, there needs to be greater assurance that the food is nutritious and culturally acceptable. A barrier to implementing a program such as Meals on Wheels is that there is no institutional kitchen with facilities. As previously mentioned, the school lunch program is run out of a dated home economics kitchen.

Recommendations:

- *Action 1: Assess the feasibility of developing a community kitchen for members to preserve foods, a Meals on Wheels Program, cooking classes and meet the requirements for a proper school lunch program kitchen;*
- *Action 2: Implement a healthy stores program in Elsipogtog that supports store managers in promoting healthy food options;*
- *Action 4: Build on programs and traditional practices to teach youth skills and policies related to hunting, fishing and harvesting;*
- *Action 5: Develop a capacity building food security project that would help to decrease the economic costs of healthy foods such as a food buying program;*
- *Action 6: Develop curriculum for community gardening training.*

Adequacy

Adequacy is described as the availability and accessibility to food that is nutritious and safe, needed to maintain healthy lifestyles, and produced in environmentally sustainable ways (Centre for Studies in Food Security, 2006).

When participants talked about the adequacy of food historically in the community they did not make reference to the abundance of food. Rather, participants shared that traditional food was nutritious as it was less processed and there was a sense of respect for the food. For example, during my Advisory Committee meetings, the Elders who shared their knowledge talked about seasonal eating, using all parts of an animal and knowing where your food came from. Food is more than just purchased and then forgotten about, as the relationship is important. First Nations peoples were very conscious of the adequacy and acceptability of food in order to survive historically (Medical Services Branch, 1994). This also includes the cultural value of sharing. Sharing and communal processing of traditional foods are also important to communal health (Van Oostdam et al., 1999).

The School Lunch Program on-reserve was highly praised as it provided food for children in the school who would otherwise go hungry (Augustine, 2002). However, while talking to participants, I learned that many questioned the adequacy of the food served through this program. Some of the reasons for the choice of meals prepared at the school in the community are due to the kitchen facilities available and policies that affect broader funding of School Lunch Programs on-reserve. There is not an actual budget for the program and the superintendent of the school has to allocate money to the program from the total school budget (Site Visit Two, March 22, 2006). In an Environmental Health Inspection of the lunch program, recommendations to upgrade were provided due to the fact that the area in which meals are prepared does not meet institutional cafeteria standard due to inappropriate sanitizing facilities (Hawkes, P, personal communication, October 11, 2005).

Elsipogtog First Nation has been active in promoting the belief of respect for sustainable food systems through efforts with the Elsipogtog Fisheries Department. For example, the Salmon Restoration Project was initiated by Elsipogtog First Nation as a means to claim back Migmag heritage that included both a research and education component to community members in learning more about sustaining salmon levels in the river so that community members will have access to salmon in the future.

In the spring, many participants talked about picking fiddleheads. This requires knowledge as to where to find fiddleheads and when to pick them as the season is very short. Opportunities for promoting traditional plant based foods, such as fiddleheads could be further expanded and included in existing programming such as Head Start, the school, and the day care centre.

Recommendations:

- *Action 1: Revitalize and provide education on sustainable ways of producing and securing local foods;*
- *Action 2: Engage in research to determine if local food sources which community members eat are safe;*
- *Action 3: Continue to promote greater vegetable and fruit consumption through educational campaigns in the community about the connection between disease prevention and healthy lifestyle, which includes nutritious foods.*

Acceptability

Acceptability is important to discuss as it relates to the culture of First Nations peoples. Acceptability is referred to as food that is culturally acceptable, produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect and human rights (Centre for Studies in Food Security, 2006).

If families are not able to afford or access traditional foods this presents a challenge. Yet, there are still many aspects of sharing and providing culturally acceptable food that continues today. For example, all community events that I attended provided food

for participants, and if possible, traditional foods were served. In research exploring the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion it was found that food was a factor that encouraged women to attend hand-drumming circles, and that food is an important part of gathering (Goudreau, 2006).

Interestingly, when discussing the food bank accessed by community members from Elsipogtog, the coordinator of the food bank expressed the desire to have moose meat available so that traditional foods could be provided to clients of the food bank. Conversely, Elders in the community stressed that a food bank should not be a recommendation of this research because it is not culturally appropriate. More culturally appropriate programs that target food security could include such projects as the White Earth Land Recovery Project; a project that promotes initiatives such as restoring cultural relationships with traditional foods and increasing local food systems to provide acceptable, nutritious foods for community members.

Participants were open to learning about models that incorporate traditional culture as well as build skills around food security. There needs to be a catalyst to bring ideas like using "existing land across the river for food security projects (Observation notes) to reality. A possible catalyst might be providing a venue to explore opportunities for the vacant land across the river for food systems development.

Recommendations:

- *Action 1 - The methods, skills and history of traditional Migmag foods should continue to be celebrated, for example, the practice of recipes being passed down through oral tradition. A small project that could be taken on is a collection of stories that celebrate food and communal practices such as sharing;*
- *Action 2 – Revitalize community celebrations that celebrated food around holidays such as Easter;*
- *Action 3 - Continue to finds ways to incorporate traditional teaching about food into school curriculum;*

Agency

Agency refers to the policies and processes that enable the achievement of food security (Centre for Studies in Food Security 2006).

A major theme to emerge from this research as acknowledged by participants is that social assistance does not provide for basic necessities such as food. It was cited time and time again that 'welfare rates have not increased, yet food costs have'. This is also noted in the rest of Canada (National Council on Welfare, 2006). However, within this community the compromise has been cheaper, less nutritious food.

During the course of this research, it became apparent that recommendations to teach individuals about gardening without looking at broader policy issues would be futile. Today, many families are living in private apartment buildings on reserve. However, the opportunity for the Band to assess the feasibility of developing community gardens exists. Yet, one participant commented that recommendations to make community freezers or gardens will only become a reality once there is someone to take the dream to reality (Site Visit One, February 23, 2006).

The policies and processes that enable food security can range from very small individual policies, towards community policies and external where the community attempts to change policies that affect their livelihood. Elsipogtog First Nation is already engaged in many activities that affect positive change.

Recommendations:

- *Action 1: Land development policies such as housing policies should require that any new developments include surrounding healthy living space for activity and food production;*
- *Action 2: Some of the community based food security initiatives discussed in Chapter Two, such as White Earth Land Recovery Project should be explored as opportunities for Elsipogtog First Nation;*
- *Action 3: Explore outside opportunities to engage with agencies such as Heifer International to secure seed funding for food systems based activities in the community;*
- *Action 4: Continue to build on this research to further develop and enhance food security in the community by applying for small funding to support a food security working group in the community. This group could engage in community based research projects to enhance food security in the community through action based research;*
- *Action 5: Development of healthy food policies for band operated programs that might include local food buying, healthy whole food options and environmental responsible options such as limited use of Styrofoam;*
- *Action 6: Continue to use the community newspaper as an opportunity for sharing knowledge about food security.*

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to learn and share how food security is maintained in Elsipogtog First Nation by presenting the voices of community members. In the words of a community member, 'researchers come to Elsipogtog, present research ideas, study, examine and then process what they learn. The researcher returns to the community to present their ideas, excited and with good intentions – but they return to tell the community what they already know'.

Thus, findings of this research demonstrate the essence of lived experience as shared by community members. The participants whom I spoke with in the community identified how they maintain food security. At the same time, the findings of this phenomenological research demonstrate that food security is at risk in this First Nations community.

This research has revealed how food security is emerging as an important topic within Elsipogtog First Nation. This does not mean that food security issues were not and have not been important to First Nations communities beforehand but a fundamental shift in language from individual food security to realizing food security as a broader concept has resulted; one that is more holistic and thus reflects First Nations and Aboriginal models of health. For example, risk for chronic disease can be increased as a result of having a diet in excess calories and inadequate nutrients. A broadened definition includes the economy of the community, the availability of foods in the community, the environment of the community, skills of the individual, culture and the social environments. Participants in this research were given the opportunity to share their perspectives and as a result their voices provide a spectrum of what food security means to residents of Elsipogtog First Nation. As

demonstrated in the Post-Script, community members have shared their wisdom, recognizing that food security is at risk. In order for change to occur, community members, businesses, Band leadership and government must *all* be involved to change local and external policies that impact food security. Hopefully, this research has addressed the wishes stated in the original letter of approval from Elsipogtog. This read "This kind of research is very relevant as it will help us better understand the community's health status and how we can work towards improving it (Appendix B).

7. Post-Script

Focus Group Recommendations

Table 7.2 summarizes recommendations provided during the focus group session in September 2006. One participant commented that by reviewing what the collective responses were, the participant was able to see the bigger picture and how research could be applied to real life. At the request of focus group participants I have included the flip chart unchanged and the recommendations as described by participants.

Table 7.2. Focus Group Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS 2006
Welfare rates increased to reflect inflation
Incorporate recommendations into Elsipogtog community plan - Make enough room for gardening in housing lots
Education to develop skills for gardening, seasonal eating and hunting.
Information – to help people reach sufficiency so they are able to provide food for themselves.
Increase individual knowledge about ("LEGAL RIGHTS). Lands, resources, fishing and the skills to do so.
"Community Based Food Bank (but a Migmag model).
MORE SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE and how well this served our community in the past about food – but bring doable options to the present - Preserve the HISTORY of the helping among the community unconditionally
Have our Elders be more INVOLVED.

Welfare Rates Increased To Reflect Inflation

During the focus group time was spent discussing why rates for welfare have not been increased in the community. This issue is not isolated to Elsipogtog First Nation; in fact, welfare incomes in New Brunswick are among the lowest in Canada (National Council on Welfare, 2006).

Incorporate Recommendations into the Elsipogtog Community Plan

Participants made reference to the *Community Plan* that was developed by Chief and Council in June 2001. It is important for recommendations from this research to be incorporated into the *Community Plan,* as this would signify support from decision makers.

Participants of the focus group stressed that when looking at the issue food security, Elders need to be involved in planning and then should be incorporated into the Elsipogtog Community Plan which was developed in June 2001. Without Band support issues such as land use are not addressed. There is a willingness by councillors and the Band to incorporate recommendations of this research. For instance, the Chief requested a presentation to Council of the findings of this research.

Education to Develop Skills and Knowledge

Gardening was an example that was used as a method to increase food security. One participant thought that this would provide an opportunity for activity as well as off set the costs of food in the summer months. Another education opportunity presented by focus group participants was to teach younger people about seasonal eating and skills required to access traditional food sources such as hunting.

Information to Help People Reach Sufficiency So They Are Able to Provide Food For Themselves

We spent some time discussing skills and education. However, focus group participants stressed that food security is not only about increasing the availability and access of food. Income was described as a necessity because of the way life is today. One person felt that their might be economic opportunities using food as a resource.

Increase Individual Knowledge About Legal Rights: Land, Resources, Fishing and the Skills to do so

Currently Elsipogtog has committees and programs in place that could help in to increase individual knowledge about 'legal rights'. This is something that would need to be brought to the bands attention given communities members are interested in learning about these topics.

Community Based Food Bank: Migmag Model

Participants talked about the need to have a food bank in the community. This does not mean that there is a desire to replicate the food bank that community members access in Richibucto, New Brunswick. One participant, an Elder stressed that food banks are not respective of Migmag culture (Focus Group Participant, September 7, 2006).

I have been told by an Elder that 'food is medicine and food is prevention and we have always known this, when and why we separated this is unknown'. I believe in what I was told and reiterate that food security is essential to maintaining health. It is therefore important to look at what is being done in Aboriginal communities so that we can build on the successes and continue to work towards a healthy community.

Educational Programs for Seasonal Eating and Hunting

Community involvement and education about food security issues are necessary in order for Aboriginal communities to take control over their unique food systems. Food security issues are central to the health and well being of the entire community (Neufeld, 2003). One proposed model for community education activities included a piece of land owned by Elsipogtog to develop community gardening, educational activities about sustainable agriculture, and engaging Elders in the community. The model that emerged from the focus group participants has many similarities to components of community based

food security initiatives including both the Tohono O'odham Community Action Project and the White Earth Land Recovery Project.

The salmon restoration project, brings hope and pride residents that value the importance of creating health, wellness and sustainability for their people and their community (Elsipogtog First Nation, 2006). Traditional food systems are part of the web of life with strong connection between food, health and the environment (Bell-Sheeter, 2004). This project is a success for Elsipogtog and thus should be continued and expanded upon.

More Sharing of Knowledge

Indigenous researchers have suggested support for the "traditional Mi'kmaq diet as a means of cultural renewal and as a solution to the present and growing problem of diet related disease (Milburn, 2004). Participants in the focus group expressed the desire to learn about traditional practices. One finding from this research was the oral tradition of recipe sharing. Hence, an appropriate and important tool for sharing knowledge could be a program that supports the oral telling of recipes.

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Appendix A

Our criteria for "Successful Research

1) The research carries a practical and heuristic value. It also adheres the PAR and OCAP principles.
2) Can be used for advocacy purposes including lobbying for new and sustained funding for new and existing community initiatives.
3) Strikes a balance between focusing on strengths/resilience and identify/prioritizing challenges.
4) Fosters community involvement without impeding quality service deliver to the community.
5) Incorporates elements of capacity building throughout the whole research process in ways the community feels is useful.
6) Rather than appropriating community voices, the research process increases community creditability, legitimacy and ability to articulate needs and address challenges.
7) The research projects acts as a stepping stone for future research projects.
8) The research helps the community the legitimize its own ontological and epistemological discourses.
9) Research that is always grounded in the socio-historical and cultural specificity of the community.
10) Research that acknowledges the expertise of the community members that go beyond professional borders.
11) Research that considers and addresses the implicit power imbalances between the researcher and the "researched .
12) Research that makes a break from a "deficit framework to adopt a "solution oriented framework.
13) Research that values both process and outcome as necessary success indicators.
14) Research that supports the development of community-based means of doing and disseminating "research .

By: Andrea Colfer - Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Healing Networking Center Coordinator Mawiw Council and Denis LeBlanc - Research & Evaluation Coordinator Elsipogtog First Nations

As cited in the Presentation by authors above at First Nations Research Conference "Doing Research Our Way- Celebrating 10 Years of RHS" November 13, 2007

Appendix B

Scanned Image
February 28, 2007

Big Cove Health Centre

205 Big Cove Road, Big Cove, N.B. E4W 2S1
Tel: (506) 523-8227 • Fax: (506) 523-8232
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January 10, 2006

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M4K 2L7

To Whom It May Concern:

As director of the Elsipogtog Health & Wellness Center, I am pleased to offer my endorsement to support Elisa Levi's request to complete her master's thesis project based out of Elsipogtog in the area of "food security". This kind of research is very relevant as it will help us better understand the community's health status and how we can work towards improving it.

We also recognized the proposed research process as being a valuable opportunity for the community to increase its capacity to develop, direct and implement research-related activities. In an age where information management and development are increasingly crucial to successful health and wellness service planning, delivery and evaluation, we welcome this research project. Should you require additional information, please feel free to contact us at the coordinates provided below.

Sincerely Yours,

Claudia Simon, Director
Elsipogtog Health & Wellness Center
205 Big Cove Rd.
Elsipogtog, NB
E4W 2S1
Ph: (506) 523-8227
Fax: (506) 523-8232

We believe in the promotion and provision of holistic health and wellness services responsive to our community needs to affirm confidence, pride and self-responsibility.

Appendix C

Scanned Image
February 28, 2007

Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

Office of Research

Tel (807) 343-8283
Fax (807) 346-7749

February 1, 2006

Elisa Levi
Master of Public Health Program
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1

Dear Ms. Levi:

Re: REB Project #: 043 05-06
Granting Agency name: N/A
Granting Agency Project #: N/A

Based on the recommendation of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project entitled, "Maintaining Food Security in Elsipogtog First Nation: A Case Study at the Community, Family and Individual Levels".

The Research Ethics Board requests an annual progress report and a final report for your study in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines. This annual review will help ensure that the highest ethical and scientific standards are applied to studies being undertaken at Lakehead University.

Completed reports may be forwarded to:

Office of Research
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1
FAX: 807-346-7749

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Maundrell
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/len

cc: Dr. C. Nelson, Social Work
Graduate and International Studies
Research Office

Appendix D

Letter of Introduction

March 15, 2006

Project Title: Maintaining Food Security in Elsipogtog First Nation: A Case Study at the Community, Family and Individual Levels.

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Elisa Levi. I am a student completing a Master of Public Health at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario. Dr. Connie Nelson, Department of Social Work is supervising the research.

A part of my degree is to complete a thesis in effort to answer a research question. The topic area is "food security and "public health .

You might say "What is food security? Food security means different things to different people. But one thing is for sure, our bodies need food for survival and our children's children will need food for survival. The research question I will be working from is **"What are the (individual, family and community) strategies to maintain food security and what are the barriers to maintain food security in Elsipogtog?"**

Some of the methods I will use to learn about this topic are observing what is happening in and around the community. I will review documents and speak to people. Later, when possible and appropriate I will gather information on a digital voice recorder. But at other times I will take print notes. In the case where a discussion is recorded, I will have the participant sign a consent form. In all situations all the information will be kept confidential and participants will remain anonymous.

As a volunteer and community member, you would be assisting me in gathering this information to determine how food security is maintained in the community. You are under no obligation to participate in this project. I do not see any risks to your participation.

I am interested in spending time with you so that you can share with me your knowledge about food security and what this means to you.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at **506 523-7249 or elevi@lakeheadu.ca** or my supervisor Connie Nelson at 807 343-8110.

Sincerely,

Elisa Levi

Letter of Consent

I _____ consent to take part in the in the qualitative study called Maintaining Food Security in Elsipogtog First Nation: A Case Study at the Community, Family and Individual Levels. As a volunteer, I will be sharing my knowledge about what it means to be food secure. I have read over the cover letter and understand the purpose of your research and what is expected from me.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, even after signing this consent form. I have been provided with contact information for you and your supervisor at Lakehead University. Any information that is collected about me during this study will be kept confidential and if the results are published, I will not be identified in any way, unless I decide in a separate consent form to allow you to acknowledge my contributions to your thesis.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

I _____ have consented to take part in the in the qualitative study called Maintaining Food Security in Elsipogtog First Nation: A Case Study at the Community, Family and Individual Levels.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, even after signing this consent form. I have been provided with contact information for you and your supervisor at Lakehead University. Any information that is collected about me during this study will be kept confidential and if the results are published,

I have decided to allow you to acknowledge my contributions to your thesis. Please identify my contributions as

_____.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

Third Party Witness

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____

Appendix E

Newspaper Article #1

Food Security in Elsipogtog

Elisa Levi is a Master of Public Health Candidate from Lakehead University completing her thesis in the community.

"I wanted to carry out research that would be useful to the community rather than have information sit on a shelf somewhere. This was her aspiration when applying to the research-based stream of a Master's of Public Health Degree.

The first round of field work was completed during February 16 to February 28, 2006. While in the community she observed events, met people and learned about programs and activities that might be relevant to the topic of food security

The topic that Elisa is learning about is called food security. You might be wondering 'What's food security?' or you might ask 'why is this topic important?' Elisa found that this was the first response she received numerous times when talking to people. She says, "This is exactly what the project is about. I want to find out what are the individual, family and community strategies to maintain food security and what are the barriers to maintain food security? This is important to her because maintaining food system historically was necessary for survival among First Nation communities. "Food is still a significant part of our culture and it's amazing how we overcome barriers. Many things have changed and impacted our relationship with food. Nonetheless, we need food to survive. One way to look at this is what we are doing individually, in our families and in the community to maintain food security?

Food insecurity means not being able to get enough food or enough healthy foods. It means worrying about where your food comes from or wondering if the food is safe to consume. Food insecurity can also mean not knowing how to prepare meals. Globally, it means wondering if there will be less food because of the modern techniques we are using to grow, harvest and produce food. There are many more other examples to describe this term.

In Canada, there is evidence that Aboriginal peoples experience high levels of food insecurity. "I feel that there is so much research about what we lack and how bad our health is as First Nation Peoples and I hope this research speaks to what we do to preserve our food system, at least specific to Elsipogtog.

During the next phase of the project, Elisa hopes to meet with individuals in the community to discuss this topic. She stresses she is the "learner and is only the "gatherer of community perspectives. As part of the project she is honouring the individuals she speaks to by sponsoring a draw for gift certificates to a grocery store. She will draw the prize at the end of the project.

If you have any questions related to this article or would like to talk to Elisa during her next visit please email her at elevi@lakeheadu.ca or leave a message with Denis Leblanc at the Health Centre (523 8222). Elisa sends her thanks to everyone in the community for helping her learn about the meaning of food security for our community of Elsipogtog.

Appendix F

Newspaper Article #2

FOOD SECURITY PROJECT

By: Elisa Levi, graduate student

I was in the community again visiting with people and learning about past and present stories about where, when, what and how food gets from mother earth (land and water) to our tables and more importantly our bellies.

Some of the people I talked to shared strategies like buying from the local farmers, to know where their vegetables come from. Stories were shared about historical activities in the community that enhanced food security like fishing and hunting and sharing the plenty. And when money has been a barrier to accessing food, some families go to the food bank. I have learned about traditional recipes that people continue to use today. There are many stories I have not heard and everyone has one.

For those of you who did not read my article in the March 2006 issue, my name is Elisa Levi, and I am a graduate student doing my thesis project in Elsipogtog. I will be here again next month so if you would like to share how you maintain food security or how you overcome any barriers, please let me know. All Stories Count!

I am honouring participants by funding a draw for 4 prizes of gift certificates to a grocery store (1st Prize = $100.00 and 4 prizes of $50.00). This will be drawn at end of project.

Phone: 523 7249 or Email: elevi@lakeheadu.ca

Thank you to those who have taken time to speak to me!