



UAKN
Urban Aboriginal
Knowledge Network

RCdU
Réseau de connaissances des
Autochtones en milieu urbain

RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

UAKN Atlantic

Name of Project:

Wi'kupaltimk (Feast of Forgiveness) A film exploring the culture of food security and food sovereignty among the Urban Aboriginal population of Kjipuktuk (Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:

Following a 2004 project entitled, “Many Paths toward Common Goals” the topic of food security emerged as a number one priority for Aboriginal people living off reserve and in urban settings. Defining food security is a multi-faceted process involving such issues as access to food, income, knowledge, location, isolation, community, power relations, and racism. Food is equally about continuity, context, community and empowerment as it about physical survival and a healthy lifestyle.

The film, *Wi'kupaltimk (Feast of Forgiveness)*, will look at the experiences of Urban Aboriginal people residing in Kjipuktuk (Halifax Regional Municipality) within an historical and cultural context. *Wi'kupaltimk (Feast of Forgiveness)* is a very fundamental concept that will run throughout this film. In the words of Mi'kmaw linguist and Elder, Bernie Francis, “There is sacredness about this concept in the form of ‘forgiveness.’ *Wi'kupaltimk* can be extended in meaning as in ‘feeding one another's spirit’ since it's the reciprocal form of the verb. It's difficult to capture in three words—‘Forgiveness Feast while extending kindness and compassion’ is another way of expressing it.”

The film is a celebration of the long rootedness of the Mi'kmaw and Aboriginal people in general, to their landscape prior to colonization, and the sacredness of the food that sustained them spiritually, culturally, and physically. While addressing many of the current issues of poverty, isolation, and food insecurity many Urban Aboriginal people face, this film is ultimately about how people can and do respectfully connect with the urban landscape as a source of food and medicine. This process involves connecting and re-connecting with the knowledge of the Elders, the importance of community, and the cultural importance of “feast” that is at the heart of the community. The film is a way to show how Urban Aboriginal people are attempting to retain their traditional knowledge and establish their own food sovereignty. An important aspect of this project is to connect people of all generations to one another and their knowledge holders.

Engagement Objectives:

Develop a 40-45 minute film capturing the experiences of Aboriginal peoples living in Kjipuktuk highlighting what being an Urban Aboriginal person means to the participants

and what it means to be a part of an urban community. A question implicit to this process will be asked, “What is urban traditionalism, and how does food sovereignty play a role in what it means to people? A main goal of this project is to educate the general public about the growing urban Aboriginal population. The film will be broken into 5 sections asking the questions, Who are we? Look at what it means to be a part of an urban Aboriginal community. How did we get here? Examine pre-history, history and the historical shifts in food sovereignty for Aboriginal peoples. What do we do? Examine various ways in which participants perceive and seek to find their own food security in an urban setting. How are we getting there? Lastly, this section illustrates ways that urban Aboriginal peoples living in Kijipuktuk are attaining food sovereignty and how they are learning to adapt their traditional knowledge to their contemporary settings.

Collaborators and Team Members:

Community Partner: Pam Glode-DesRochers, Executive Director, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre

Principal Investigator, Academic/Producer: Dr. Trudy Sable, Director, Office of Aboriginal and Northern Research, Goresebrook Research Institute, Saint Mary's University

Filmmaker/Director/Mentor: Kent Martin, former National Film Board producer/filmmaker

Student/Artist/Co-Director: Salina Kemp, fourth year student, photographer, researcher, Saint Mary's University

Community Researcher: Florence Blackett, All Nations Drumming Group, food security researcher, Millbrook First Nation

Elder: Dr. Bernie Francis; Membertou First Nation. Mi'kmaw linguist, musician, author

Government Representatives: Roger Lewis, M.A., Curator of Ethnology, archaeologist, author, Nova Scotia Museum, Shubenacadie First Nation
Lynn Langille, Health Disparities Coordinator for Public Health Canada

Main contact:

Dr. Trudy Sable, Director, Office of Aboriginal and Northern Research,
Goresebrook Research Institute, Saint Mary's University
Email: Trudy.sable@smu.ca