



IUNS Task Force on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and Nutrition

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Current members of the IUNS Task Force on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and Nutrition

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IUNS Task Force on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and Nutrition: Chronology of activities

A basic chronology that shows the evolution of the IUNS-ICN Task Force (TF) is as follows:

- 2001 – Creation of the TF following the IUNS meeting in Vienna. Funding for initial activities was provided by FAO and IDRC to document traditional food systems (TFS) of 5 groups of Asian Indigenous Peoples: Bhil (India), Dalit (India), Karen (Thailand), Miao (China), and the Mogh and Nayakrishi (Bangladesh).
- 2001 – Meeting of Asian case study partners in Salaya, Thailand, to draft the food system documentation methodology. Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus provided key input on strategies to work successfully with Indigenous Peoples.
- 2002 – 2003 – Preparation of a WHO publication on Participatory Health Research with Indigenous Peoples: Planning and Management and Preparing Research Agreements. http://www.who.int/ethics/indigenous_peoples/en/index1.html
- 2004-2006 – Communication with colleagues developed the case studies in the program: Awajún (Peru), Ainu (Japan), Baffin Inuit (Canada), Bhil (India), Dalit (India), Gwich'in (Canada), Igbo (Nigeria), Ingano (Colombia), Karen (Thailand), Maasai (Kenya), Nuxalk (Canada), and Pohnpeian (Federated States of Micronesia). Funding quest for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of research with these 12 case studies of rural-dwelling Indigenous Peoples.
- 2004 – Meeting of case study partners at The Rockefeller Foundation's Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy. Confirmation of phase 1 research methods and plans for intervention proposals. Creation of CINE web document for IP food system methods (Task Force Publication 1- Book 1). <http://www.mcgill.ca/cine/research/global/>
- 2005 – Meeting of Awajún and Ingano partners in Lima. Preparation of draft versions of adaptable food security and physical activity interview methods.
- 2005 – CBD initiative with SCN established in Brazilia, highlighting Indigenous Peoples' food systems.

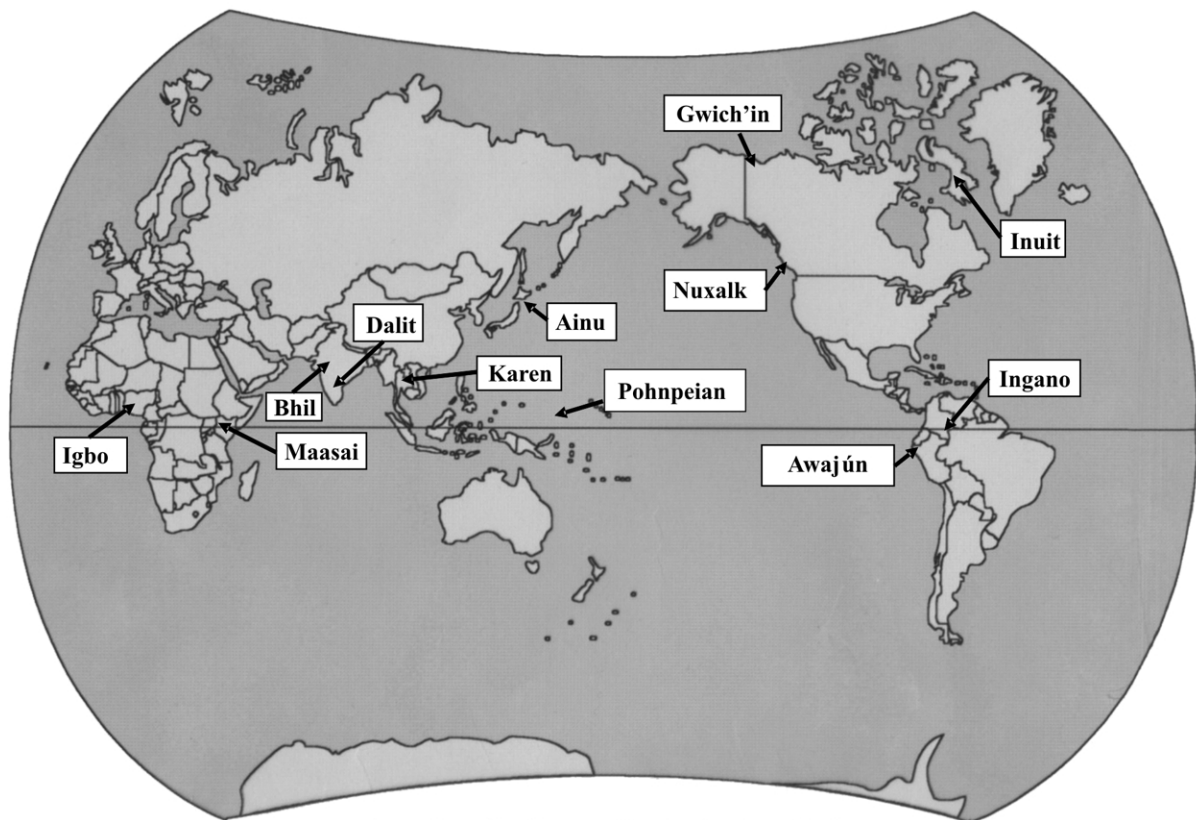
- 2005 – Funding established for photo documentation of case study food systems.
- 2005 – Meeting of case study partners in the Futululu Environmental Centre in St. Lucia, South Africa; a symposium and several presentations were made at the IUNS-ICN meeting in Durban.
- 2005-2006 – Four posters prepared and internationally distributed with support from FAO and IDRC to highlight food diversity and for the International Decades of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Global, Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands.
- 2006 – Case study partners' meeting in Montreal to compile Phase 1 results publications
- 2007 – Second meeting of case study partners at The Rockefeller Foundation's Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy. Finishing details on book chapters of Phase 1 results. Consideration of appropriate ways to identify Indigenous Peoples in international settings. Discussion of policy activities at several levels for case studies.
- 2007 – The project is considered in the Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) of the United Nations System meeting in Rome – the Working Group on Household Food Security and the Working Group on Nutrition, Ethics and Human Rights-Task Force on Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Food.
- 2008 - Case study partners met for a third time at the Bellagio Study and Conference Centre in Italy. Reports on intervention strategies used, and drafts of chapters for the third publication from the IUNS Task Force. Manuscripts of chapters from the 12 case studies delivered to FAO for publication.
- 2009 – Release of Task Force Publication 2 (Book 2). *Indigenous Peoples' food systems: the many dimensions of culture, diversity and environment for nutrition and health*. HV Kuhnlein, B Erasmus and D Spigelski, FAO, Rome, 2009.
- 2009 – Meeting of the Task Force and case study partners at the IUNS ICN in Bangkok and at a Satellite Workshop with the Karen case study partners at Mahidol University and in Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand. Symposium delivered at the ICN. Submission of chapters for the Task Force Publication 3 (Book 3) with publication by FAO projected to 2010.

Update on Progress with Case Study Research

Our program has the overall goal to gather a spectrum of data from 12 deliberately diverse case studies of Indigenous Peoples (IP) in different parts of the world to document the inherent strengths of TFS, the circumstances of the nutrition transition in indigenous communities, and to provide evidence that local resources are critical for food security, nutrition and health. Our objectives continue to be to address scientific issues, public health, and policy, with the ultimate goal to influence local, national and international policies for environmental protection of IP land and food resources. In this way communities can be encouraged to use, develop and sustain their local food systems knowledge for well-being and health, as well as for protecting their culture. Case studies in the program are Awajún (Peru), Ainu (Japan), Baffin Inuit (Canada), Bhil (India), Dalit (India), Gwich'in (Canada), Igbo (Nigeria), Ingano (Colombia), Karen (Thailand), Maasai (Kenya), Nuxalk (Canada), and Pohnpeian (Federated States of Micronesia). In each case study, CINE, academic partners in the country and the IP communities collaborate for research in 2 phases: 1) documentation of the cultural food system with a defined protocol (see <http://www.cine.mcgill.ca/documents/manual.pdf>) and 2) implementation of health promotion interventions using culturally sensitive and environmentally relevant elements of the local food system. The overall program is led by Dr. Harriet Kuhnlein as the academic leader partner and Chief Bill Erasmus as the community leader partner.

All case studies completed Phase 1 methods to document the local food systems, and presented chapters for publication in a book released in 2009 by FAO (see Chronology above). An

impressive array of food species and varieties are documented, some of which still require scientific identifications and nutrient composition analysis. Locally available food species numbers varied considerably depending on ecosystem. The Maasai of Kenya documented 35 food species in an arid, drought prone zone. There were 381 local food species/varieties documented for the Pohnpeian culture in the Federated States of Micronesia. Other preliminary results show 220 species/varieties in the Igbo environment in West Africa, 221 for the Amazonian Awajún and 387 for Karen. Data on the food systems were prepared and presented for the CINE website: <http://www.mcgill.ca/cine/resources/data/>



Location of Indigenous Peoples for Case Studies

The Ainu, Dalit, Igbo and Pohnpeian case studies have publications in preparation or pending on food composition analysis studies. Several publications are already in the literature on unique food species and preparations of Canadian Gwich'in, Inuit, Nuxalk, and Pohnpeian food systems. The second publication from the Task Force (Kuhnlein et al, 2009) highlights extensive new food composition data.

The extent of use of these impressive food systems varied. For example, the Awajún and Igbo consume close to 100% of dietary energy from these local food resources. The Karen, Pohnpeian, Bhil and Dalit cultures have considerable erosion of dietary energy supplanting traditional species in the form of commercial (or donated) white refined rice. The Canadian Gwich'in, Inuit and Nuxalk have less than 45% of dietary energy as traditional, local food, with the majority of the balance of energy derived from refined wheat flour, fats and sugar. Contribution of these local food systems in contrast to commercialized foods is being computed for several key nutrients.

In addition to documentation of species and varieties and the % of energy and nutrients from local vs commercial food items, the indigenous community case study researchers document change in food sources (local vs commercial) and environmental quality using qualitative methods, physical activity, food security, process notes on intervention activity effectiveness, and correlations of increasing dietary nutrients with increasing food species diversity.

Interventions to improve dietary intake and health by using elements of indigenous food systems are now being documented for the Nuxalk, Dalit, Gwich'in, Inuit, Ingano, Karen, Awajún, and Pohnpeian. The Ainu partners have proceeded to re-introduce Ainu traditional food into the local food culture in Japan. Unfortunately, funding applications have not been successful for the Bhil, Maasai and Igbo intervention programs. Intervention activities that have found resonance with indigenous communities and strategies for their evaluation have been compiled and published (Kuhnlein et al. *Public Health Nutr.* 9(8):1013-1019, 2006). A publication on identification of Indigenous Peoples in the international context has also been published (Bartlett et al, *Int. J Circumpolar Health* 66(4): 287-307).

The Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE)

The Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE, see www.mcgill.ca/cine) is a multidisciplinary research and education resource established in 1992 by Canada's Aboriginal leaders and McGill University in Montreal. CINE was created in response to a need for participatory research and education to address concerns about the integrity of IP traditional food systems resulting from recognition that environmental deterioration has adverse impacts on health and lifestyles of rural-dwelling IP, in particular nutrition as affected by food and food traditions. Professors with academic backgrounds in human nutrition, anthropology, natural resource sciences, epidemiology, plant science and food science form the backbone of the Centre's interdisciplinary activities, which involve more than 40 national and international collaborators. CINE is a unique Centre, not only within McGill, but nationally and internationally. CINE has a Governing Board comprised primarily of aboriginal organization representatives and chaired by Chief Bill Erasmus. Internationally recognized for its research and its model of participatory methods, CINE strives to advance understanding of benefits and risks of IPs' food systems and effects of both natural and human-generated environmental phenomena on health of IP.

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