



## **IUNS Task Force on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and Nutrition**

**Report to IUNS, August, 2007**

### **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**

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

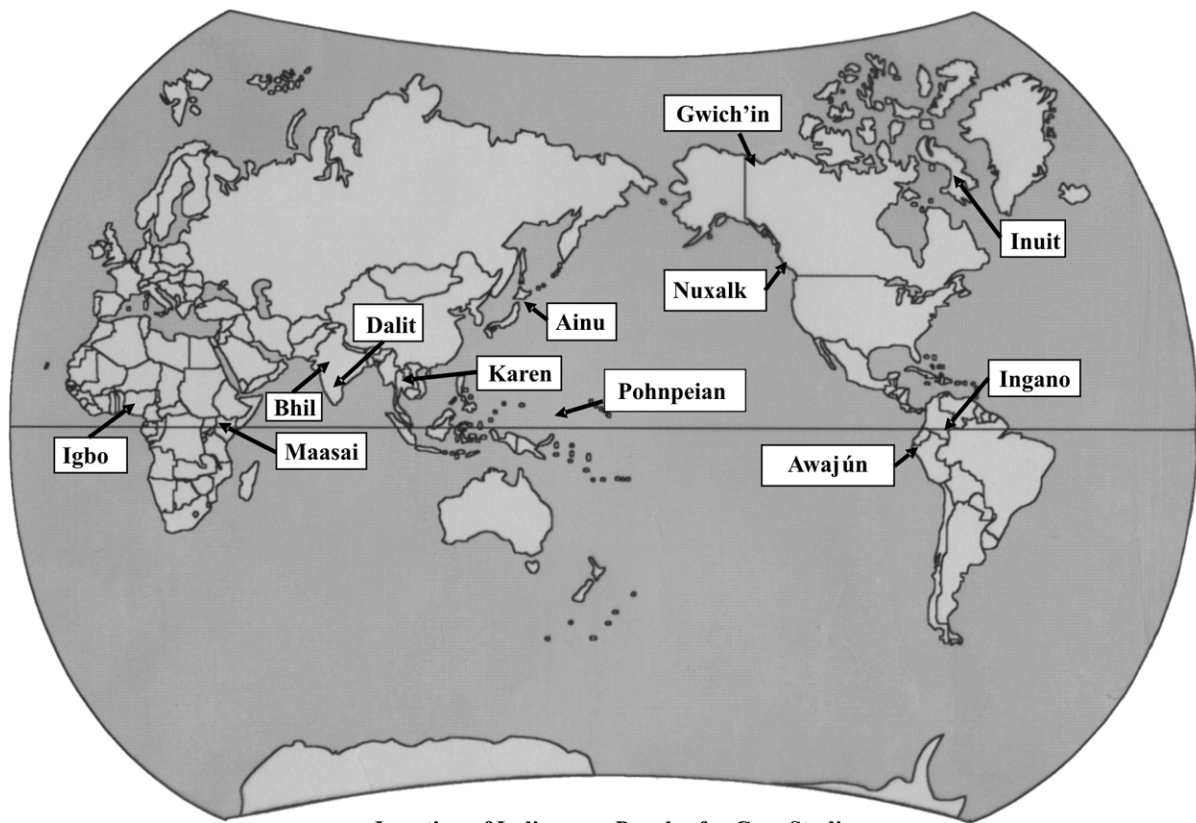
- 2001 – Creation of the TF following the IUNS meeting in Vienna, with the objective to have support from FAO and IDRC to document traditional food systems (TFS) of 5 groups of Asian Indigenous Peoples: Bhil (India), Dalit (India), Karen (Thailand), Miao (China), and the Mogh and Nayakrishi (Bangladesh).
- 2001 – Meeting of Asian case study partners in Salaya, Thailand, to draft the food system documentation methodology.
- 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](http://www.who.int/ethics/indigenous_peoples/en/index1.html)
- 2004-2006 – Funding quest for 12 case studies for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research.
- 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. <http://www.cine.mcgill.ca/documents/manual.pdf>
- 2005 – Meeting of Aguaruna 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.
- 2005 – Funding established for photo documentation of 12 case study food systems.
- 2005 – Meeting of case study partners in the Futululu Environmental Centre in St. Lucia, South Africa; several presentations at the IUNS meeting in Durban.
- 2005-2006 – Four FAO and IDRC posters prepared and internationally distributed 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 of chapter of Phase 1 results. Consideration of appropriate definitions of Indigenous Peoples. Considering policy activities for case studies at several levels.
- 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 - Anticipated case study partners meeting. TBA
- 2009 –Anticipated case study partners meeting in conjunction with the IUNS meeting in Bangkok.

## **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 are 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.

All case studies have completed Phase 1 methods to document the local food systems. 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 250 local food species documented for the Pohnpeian culture in the Federated States of Micronesia; however when unique varieties of food species were considered, the number increased to 372. Other preliminary results show 254 species in the Igbo environment in West Africa, 201 for the Amazonian Awajún and 137 for Karen. Data on the food systems is prepared and presented for the CINE website: <http://www.mcgill.ca/cine/resources/data/>



Location of Indigenous Peoples for Case Studies

The AINU, Dalit, Maasai, 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 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 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 30% of dietary energy as traditional, local food, with the majority of the balance of energy derived from refined 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 will 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. All case studies have prepared chapters for a book to be published by FAO this autumn.

Interventions to improve dietary intake and health by using elements of indigenous food systems have been completed for the Nuxalk and Dalit, and are now in progress with the Gwich'in, Inuit, Ingano, Aguaruna, and Pohnpeian. The Karen project is proceeding with Thai funding. 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., (2006). Indigenous Peoples' food systems for health: Finding interventions that work. *Public Health Nutr.* 9(8):1013-1019. A publication on definitions of Indigenous Peoples in the international context is now submitted.

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

The Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE, see [www.mcgill.ca/cine](http://www.mcgill.ca/cine)) is a multidisciplinary research and education resource established in 1992 by Canada's Aboriginal leaders and McGill University. 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. Four professors with academic appointments in the School of Dietetics and Human Nutrition 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. Interdisciplinary activities draw on several units in the Faculty and University (Plant Science, Natural Resource Science, Medicine, Arts, and Science). 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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