

Pozole: Crafting an Indigiqueer Sovereign Meal in Portland, Oregon

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy in Department of Anthropology

Title: Pozole: Crafting an Indigiqueer Sovereign Meal in Portland, Oregon

This dissertation is based on fieldwork with Indigiqueer (Indigenous & queer) farmers and diasporic Mexicans in Portland, Oregon, and its surrounding suburbs. I use the term diasporic to challenge understandings of Indigenous Mexican communities as being anchored in a single traditional homeland and the expansion of tending to the land that surrounds one. Most of my research activity occurred at two farms, which are also the homes of two families who are interconnected with other farmers in community kitchens, local food markets, and seed-sharing. I also worked at a grocery store for six months and learned about the distinction between at-home and store butchering. In addition, I draw on my participation as an Indigiqueer Mexican community member and researcher. My research examines the relationships and *antojos* (desires) of multigenerational Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican community members in creating pozole. Cooking pozole is about relationality – the exchange between human, plant, and animal beings. I evoke Chicana lesbian feminism to define *antojos* as desires beyond a white palette and towards Indigiqueer sovereign meals and kitchens that focus on cultural preservation of foodways. My research also investigates the landscape between foodways and *rasquachismo* – Indigenous Chicanx working-class sensibilities among diasporic Mexican community members in Portland, Oregon. It examines how pozole shapes relationships between people, plants, and animals, despite the many challenges of living in a white utopia.

Making pozole with products grown in community gardens, kitchens, and homes serves as a sovereign space for Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican community members, functioning as a food made from what one already has. I coin the concept of *environmental rasquachismo* which describes how food scraps and all parts of animals are embedded in the recipes and *antojos* that community members contend with daily. Even though Portland, Oregon is considered a white utopia, the experiences shared in my dissertation disrupt the notion that community of colors are not present. Understanding the historical and present realities of Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexicans demonstrate the relationship between place and food.

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This dissertation is dedicated to *our homelands*.

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PLANTITA (PLANT) GLOSSARY
An addition to your kitchen and apothecary

Pozole Plantitas	Page
<i>ingredients from the pozoles in this dissertation</i>	
Native Language – Mexican/Spanish – English	
cacahuazintle (Nahuatl) - hominy	113
purhu (Purépecha) - ayotli (Nahuatl) - calabaza - pumpkin	113
hongo ostra - oyster mushroom	113
hongo melena de león - lion's mane mushrooms	113
achtli (Nahuatl) - pepitas - toasted pumpkin seeds	113
repollo - cabbage	113
limón - lime	113
cilantro	113
oregano	113
col rizado - kale	113
tatsini siuari (Purépecha) - frijoles - beans	96
assortment of chiles (guajillo, árbol, ancho etc.)	97
tomillo - thyme	98

a vinegar based immune building and warming remedio casero (homemade remedy) that can be added to pozole, teas, lemonades or taken on its own. The ingredients vary but generally contain warming and spicy plants like onion, garlic, chiles, and horseradish.

Native Language – Mexican/Spanish – English

anis estrella - star anise	113
clavo de olor - clove	113
cúrcuma - turmeric	81
k'suasĩ (Purépecha) - chile serrano	81
ajo - garlic	81
cebolla - onion	81
rábano picante - horseradish	81
sḡ ^w iac (Puyallup) - oregon grape	82
tengatsi (Purépecha) - xometl (Nahuatl) - saúco - elderberry	82
akuitse uarhírakua (Purépecha) - ruda - rue	82

Additional Medicinal Plantitas	Page
Native Language – Mexican/Spanish – English	
valeriana/hierba del gato - valerian	73
iztauhyatl (Nahuatl) - estafiate - mugwort	73
ashwagandha	73
uirapen kauerin (Purépecha) - diente de león - dandelion	73
tsitsiki (Purépecha) - milenrama - yarrow	73
chichicaxtle (Nahuatl) - ortiga - stinging nettles	73
tirineni (Purépecha) - cempasúchil (Nahuatl/Spanish) - marigold	89
rosas - roses	82
avena - milky oats	82
jauaxola (Purépecha) - capuchina/mastuerzo - nasturtium	82
romero - rosemary	82
malva - marshmallow	82
cicoria (Italian) - Italian dandelion	82
calendula	82
huacatay - Peruvian marigold	82
tamarindo - tamarind	82
borraja - borage	82
Tceqa' Qu' Si (Hopi) - Sunflowers	55

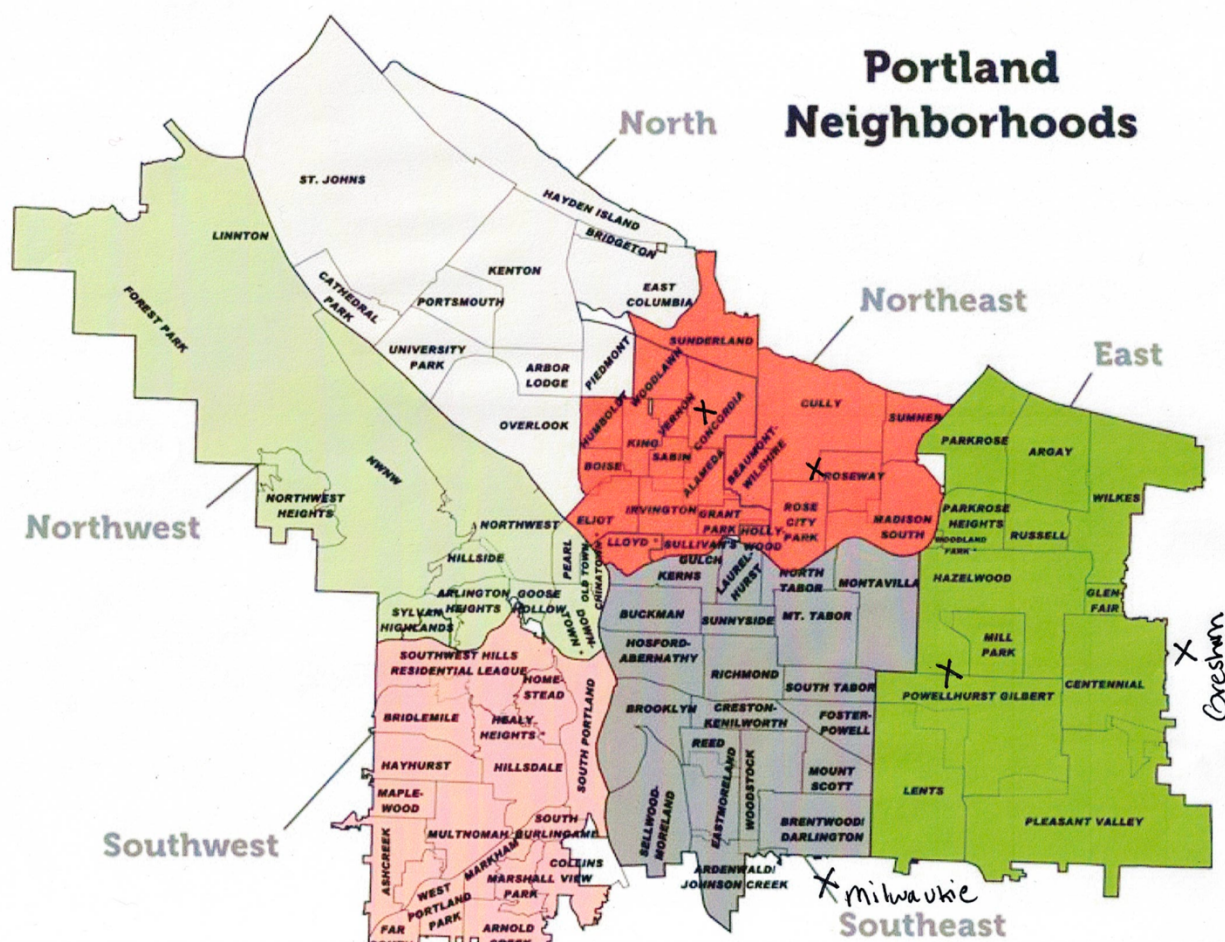
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Figure 1. Map of Mexico with Participants' Homelands



Figure 2. Map of Portland with approximate locations of participants' homes, gardens, and community kitchens



This Is Pozole

This is Pozole
These are my communities' recetas
¡échale!

This is Pozole
These are chiles, hominy, and beans
¡échale!

This is Pozole
These are my bones
Here is my heart.

This is Pozole
Open your spirit
Now, take a spoonful.

*Polet Campos-Melchor
Portland, Oregon
2023*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My partner Rubi and I were invited to a party at Marie's, her childhood friend's family farm. The farm was located outside of Forest Grove, Oregon. Approximately twenty people were in attendance, and the majority were white. The host, a white Jewish young adult, was showing us the farm and the taco bar that she had set up for the evening. Most of the food was gone, cold corn and flour tortillas were scattered around the table, and unopened tortillas chip bags were the only appealing option. As I looked around the seated crowd, I noticed full plates, yet the tortillas were still cold. Rubi caught my glances and asked Marie, "What is this?" Marie turned to her and responded: "It's a taco bar."

Rubi was expressing her concern at the lack of warm nutritious food; we were arriving to the scraps. In addition, the taco bar was a paltry adaptation of food that actually has history and meaning for us as Mexican American and Indigiqueer people. The significance of highlighting the livelihoods of Indigiqueers, particularly those who are non-binary and trans is to understand the refusal of perpetuating white cisnormativity. According to C. Riley Snorton, white cisnormativity refers to the assumption that the default human experience is that of a white, cisgender person.¹ My use of Indigiqueer is to be responsible to my community. Considering the most recent Executive Order by President Donald Trump, the state's insistence on using "sex" rather than "gender" in federal documents is a recognition of the entanglement of race and gender.² A cisnormative Christian body politic within itself is an ideology and it impacts the lives of trans people and anyone who is deemed a blemish to its image.

¹ C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

² "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," The White House, January 21, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential->

As Rubi, Tessa, and I walked into the house, I noticed it was decorated with Guatemalan and Mexican décor. I was told that their mother is fascinated by Mexicans, yet she did not greet me when I introduced myself to the group. I understood this as a disinterest in me and possibly an inability to rectify the reality of my presence with the objectification of Mexican culture and her blatant cultural appropriation. I quickly looked around the house while searching for the bathroom. As I walked back to the kitchen to help prepare the fruit, I saw a bag of “Los Chileros, White Corn Posole” bag that said it was “the sacred food of the Aztecs.” I focused on the use of the word “sacred” and “Aztec” – and thought about how nixtamalization and pozole had been commodified by two white men in the Southwest.³ By treating the processes and dish as a mere commodity, it sets pozole as being both of the past and a white palette’s future. Both which are untrue as Mexica communities remain present throughout Abya Yala⁴ and the dish remain an established meal beyond the Mexica.

I sat reading the bag as Rubi cut the fruit and shared with her what it was. She rolled her eyes and shared that Marie and her fiancé, Jake, are obsessed with Mexican food. A few minutes later, Marie and Jake came to the kitchen and excitedly shared that they made a chicken pozole using the bag. I was offended. I responded smarmily and told them that it was interesting and that “I loved that for them.” I later overheard them say that I was being judgmental. One of the particular assumptions of white supremacy is the expectation that those of us who are non-white will conform to the social norms of whiteness- in this case, “being nice” or accommodating white desires.⁵ They had ignored my presence for most of the night, except to share with me their

[actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/](https://www.loschileros.com/about/).

³ “About Us,” Los Chileros, September 19, 2012, <https://www.loschileros.com/about/>.

⁴ Understood to be the *Americas or land of fertile blood* – in Guna language

⁵ Bell Hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance,” in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 21–39.

various attempts at cooking Mexican cuisine. At no point was there an attempt or genuine interest in learning about my cooking or even about the roots and significance of pozole for Mexican Americans. Throughout the evening, I felt increasingly invisible. Though Rubi kept me company, I told her I just wanted to observe the farm. However, I ended up observing the party.

After over three hours at the gathering, I began to walk away from the group with Rubi and feed the sheep they had. As soon as Rubi said, “We can go.” I agreed. While I had tried to stay longer to reassure myself and her friends that I was interested, I had to leave. Having not grown up in Oregon - and having grown up in a dense Mexican American community in California - I had not ever been in a gathering with that many white people. The scenario, however, was one my mixed Mexican partner had experienced in the clashing of multiple racial realities that exist in Oregon.

My experience of being ignored and objectified as a visibly brown person in a majority white group is a shared experience. Other Indigiqueer friends and community members were able to relate and affirm the pain that comes from being ignored and simultaneously objectified within a white majority social space. As white community members struggle with their whiteness, they are also signaling a struggle with difference.⁶ Rather than hear my partner’s concern about the lack of nutritious food or to engage my very visible brown Indigiqueer (Indigenous and queer) presence, Marie and her company dismissed us in favor of white palatable food and conversation. I use the term Indigiqueer as they are woven within my being and those of community members. We walk as whole beings in spaces and refuse to conform to white heteronormative ideals of existing or taste. This is a critical distinction as we handle food and preserve it for future generations. This experience really illustrated to me that while white

⁶ Lucas Burke and Judson L. Jeffries, *The Portland Black Panthers: Empowering Albina and Remaking a City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).

Oregonians are lauded for their liberal “niceness”, the perspectives and experiences of people of color demonstrate a more nuanced reality of existing beyond white desires and palettes.

This dissertation focuses on the lived experiences and Indigiqueer food landscapes in Portland, Oregon.

This story is also an example of how my engagements with white spaces in Oregon shape my work and the realities of Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexican community members in Oregon. None of my participants are immigrants or migrants, their parents or grandparents fall into those categories. As the children and grandchildren of immigrants their stories hold a different magnitude in how they walk in the world, but also how they are racialized in the state of Oregon and specifically Portland. I highlight the terms Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexicans to signal the cultural reality and politicization of Indigeneity for community members. All the community members I worked with had at least one Mexican parent, and several were Indigenous. The communities represented were Yaqui, Apache, Chichimeca, Mexica, and Purépecha. Luz, an Indigiqueer farmer, identified as reconnecting, and it was an important distinction as they work on implementing ceremony and community in their everyday life. The other community members I worked with identified as Mexican Americans and Afro-Mexicans and are not connected to a pueblo or tribe. While several shared interest in knowing their roots and becoming connected, many were hesitant of ways to approach their relatives and where to begin.

In my case and for other Indigiqueers, I emphasize the politicization of identity and gender, which is established throughout my project by including how gender, community, and age shape our realities. I also mobilized the term diasporic Mexicans to emphasize how community members experience racialization and fortify solidarities based on queerness,

Brownness, and Blackness. These entanglements are furthered in the inclusion of central Mexican Nahuatl throughout my work as it maintains an imperial power but is commonly used within various community languages and is one my family uses and navigates. As I reconnect with learning Purépecha, I also honor Mexica relatives and my ancestors for holding a language for us to keep our foodways beyond the Spanish language. Addressing imperial powers and settler colonialism is a huge task, this research is only an entry for future Indigiqueer research.

Settler Colonialism, Race, and Food

The United States is a settler colony and an imperialist state. According to Victoria Haskins, a settler colony is a space in which, “an imperial population occupy, and exploit lands taken from Indigenous peoples.”⁷ This project has been ongoing project for more than 150 years of broken treaties and historical injustices. The United States is diverse, yet, Portland, Oregon remains a white-majority city with a population of over 500,000.⁸ Its exclusionary history and distinct form of colonialization have worked to “eliminate Native peoples in order to appropriate their land.”⁹ Its forceful removal of Native communities from 1853-1856 to reservations contributed to Portland’s current white majority. Similarly, Oregon’s Black exclusion laws which first began on June 18, 1844, and stated, “that Black people who tried to settle in Oregon would be whipped publicly – thirty-nine lashes repeated every six months until they left.”¹⁰ Later in June, the law was changed so that instead of being whipped, Black people would be forced to do public labor. These laws continued to expand and discouraged Black people from living in

⁷ Victoria K. Haskins and Claire Lowrie, *Colonization and Domestic Service* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁸ Kristine de Leon, “Portland Is Still the Whitest Big City in America,” *The Seattle Times*, October 3, 2022, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/portland-is-still-the-whitest-big-city-in-america/>.

⁹ Laura Pulido, “Geographies of Race and Ethnicity III: Settler Colonialism and Nonnative People of Color,” *Progress in Human Geography* 42, no. 2 (2018): 1.

¹⁰ “National and Oregon Chronology of Events,” *Black in Oregon 1840-1870*, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/black-history/Pages/context/chronology.aspx>.

Oregon. In many ways, the history of Oregon is a history entrenched in settler colonialism and anti-Blackness.

Portland straddles the Willamette River and the Columbia River; as such, the Willamette Falls are essential for shaping a sense of belonging as they represent a fishing platform. Oregon's whiteness and settler tactics are shown in its history. As such, Black histories overlap with Indigenous Histories in Oregon. The connection of the two is a crucial step in moving toward justice and awareness in the present. Portland and the state of Oregon's history is entrenched in its ties to whiteness and white supremacist groups. Systemic racism supported by racist ideologies and racial hierarchies made the language in the constitution not only clear but also situated Black people as unwelcome in Oregon. The exclusionary laws mentioned above forbade Black people from settling in Oregon, and while the Oregon Constitution was ratified in 1859, the prohibition stated,

"No free Negro, or Mulatto, not residing in this state at the time of the adoption of this constitution, shall come, reside, or be within this state, or hold any real estate, or make any contracts, or maintain any suit therein; and the Legislative Assembly shall provide by penal laws, for the removal, by public officers, of all such Negroes, and Mulattos, and for their effectual exclusion from the state, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the state, or employ, or harbor them."

The clause was repealed in 1926, but the language remained in the constitution until 2001. Nonetheless, as early as the 1800s, Black people known as Black Pioneers made significant shifts and called Oregon their home.¹¹ While Oregon's racist laws made life impossible for Black community members, the story of Jacob Vanderpool showcases the impacts of institutionalized racism. Jacob Vanderpool, a Black businessman in Oregon City in the mid-

¹¹ Oregon Black Pioneers, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://oregonblackpioneers.org/>.

1800s was the first Black person expelled from Oregon under its anti-Black exclusionary laws. An important aspect of Oregon's history was that white settlers saw free Black people as competition.¹² The documented history is limited, but Vanderpool owned a Saloon and Boarding House, and his neighbor Theophilus Magruder made a formal complaint against him. They were in direct competition with each other, but Magruder was white, and the judge ruled in his favor which set the precedent for using Oregon's anti-Black laws to expel Vanderpool.¹³ He was given 30 days to leave, and never returned.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Black Americans moved to the Pacific Northwest.¹⁴ In Portland, the Willamette River shaped economic and social realities. Black workers and residential areas became present on the east and downtown Portland. The Williams Avenue YWCA was created for black families and provided a meeting center for community members.¹⁵ Later, during World War II, shipyard jobs drew Black Americans into the area and the connection to the river became a hub of Black culture and connection in Portland.

Throughout the early twentieth century, Oregon had the highest per capita Ku Klux Klan membership in the country and the group developed relationships with political leaders in the state.¹⁶ In 1922, Walter Pierce was elected governor of Oregon with active support from the Ku Klux Klan. Pierce's politics enacted nativist legislation using the Klan's endorsements. He notably supported the Columbia River hydropower, which blocks large areas of salmon habitats.

¹² Sarah L. Sanderson, *The Place We Make: Breaking the Legacy of Legalized Hate* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2023), 12.

¹³ Ibid. Pg. 34.

¹⁴ William Toll, "Black Families and Migration to a Multiracial Society: Portland, Oregon, 1900–1924," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 3 (1998): 39.

¹⁵ Kimbar MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1885 to 1915* (Portland, OR: The Georgian Press Co., 1976), 535.

¹⁶ Matt Novak, "Oregon Was Founded as a Racist Utopia," *Gizmodo*, 2015.

Such alliances between political leaders and white supremacists have long term effects on the state's overwhelming control of Native foodways and life. Recent reports suggest that Portland's infrastructure planning still overlooks the needs of Portland communities of color.¹⁷ In Portland, diasporic Mexicans constitute 6.2% of the population and white people make up 70% of the city. This is a result of Oregon's exclusionary history and settler colonialism, which has led scholars to dub the city of Portland a "white utopia."¹⁸

Today, community members push against the claim that Portland "is so white" as it minimizes Native, Black, and communities of color that have persevered for generations. Portland's Black community has a history in Northeast Portland and present-day Albina District. The area faces ongoing gentrification and community members attempt to preserve its Black History and complicate its purported white utopia. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a White flight from Albina and Black residents found ways to become tenants and create neighborhoods for Black community. At the time it was difficult to access mortgage lending policies and even today, Black homeownership rates remain the lowest amongst communities of color.¹⁹ As stated by Karen Gibson, "the Albina district saw its proportion of Black residents drop from 41 percent in 1990 to 15 percent in 2017 after years of disinvestment and subsequent renewal."²⁰

According to Portland State's Indigenous Traditional Ecological & Cultural Knowledge Program, Portland is home to the nation's ninth largest urban Native American population.²¹

¹⁷ Brian S. McKenzie, "Neighborhood Access to Transit by Race, Ethnicity, and Poverty in Portland, OR," *City & Community* 12, no. 2 (2013): 138.

¹⁸ Ibid. 5.

¹⁹ Joanne Zuhl, "Staring Down the Homeownership Gap," *Habitat Portland Region*, November 25, 2024, <https://habitatportlandregion.org/placeholder-for-homeownership-gap-story/>.

²⁰ Karen J. Gibson, "Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940–2000," *Transforming Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (2007): 3–25.

²¹ "Undergraduate Program Indigenous Traditional Ecological & Cultural Knowledge," Portland State University, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://www.pdx.edu/academics/programs/undergraduate/indigenous-traditional-ecological-cultural-knowledge>.

At the same time, Portland's yuppie culture was broadcasted on the show "Portlandia" to showcase its bohemian paradise. However, it failed to capture those that produce the food landscapes enabling the bohemian paradise to exist.²² In many ways, Portland continues to reflect its broader racial contradictions. In 2022, the four largest racial and ethnic groups were whites, who made up 68.3 percent of the population in Portland, while Black or African Americans comprised 5.8 percent, Latinxs 9.7 percent, and Asians 8.3 percent.²³ The racial tension and state violence from that moment, continue to remind the city of its ongoing racial history. Most recently, the protests for racial justice, more specifically the Black Lives Matter protests, shut down the city's downtown area which has yet to financially recover.

White supremacist heteropatriarchal food landscapes look like colonial agriculture that does not practice relationality and corporate capitalist economy that limits giving, sharing, trading, and a cooperation amongst peoples.²⁴ Community members' surroundings shape their lives in ways that reflect the effects of historical legacies of racism on local and Native communities, as well as the physical and spiritual space that racial beings inhabit in a place. To find sustenance within the socially alienating aspect of whiteness in Portland, community members created and sought out Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic community groups. Indigiqueer farmers transform articulations of Indigeneity beyond borders in their community gardens and kitchens in Portland.²⁵ To counter racism, many purposely established relationships with BIPOC organizations. The community members in this research are working class and

²² William Roseberry, "The Rise of Yuppie Coffees and the Reimagination of Class in the United States," in *Food in the USA*, ed. Carole Counihan (New York: Routledge, 2013), 149–68.

²³ "Portland, OR," Data USA, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/portland-or>.

²⁴ Dawn Morrison, "Reflections and Realities: Expressions of Food Sovereignty in the Fourth World," in *Indigenous Food Systems: Concepts, Cases, and Conversations* (2020): 17–38.

²⁵ Maurice Rafael Magaña, "The Politics of Black and Brown Solidarities: Race, Space, and Hip-Hop Cultural Production in Los Angeles," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 5 (2022): 7.

many possess forms of cultural and social capital that they use to share resources within their communities.²⁶

Being of the Mexican diaspora in Oregon

The history of Mexicans in Oregon began before the 1880s and Oregon's history of Native tribes predates the history below, but I begin there as it is the earliest point from which participants document relationships with Native tribes in the state. In the mid-1880s, the Mexican border came into the territories of various Native tribes in the Pacific Northwest and those who have tended to this land since time immemorial. Today that looks like just south of present-day Ashland, Oregon. Mexican, Indigenous, and Spanish speaking communities have been entangled for centuries. Following the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico had lost more than half of its territory. Many people living there were Mexican citizens and 90% opted in for U.S. citizenship.²⁷ The opportunity for citizenship alone did not protect many Mexicans' rights over their property or ability to freely move across the states. This would then be further exacerbated by the creation of the U.S.-Mexico border and the intense border enforcement.

The presence of the U.S.- México border itself has been moving through time and onto people.²⁸ These expansions, however, have been fueled by anti-immigrant sentiment and white supremacy.²⁹ Lynn Stephen identifies this historical shift by documenting how the expansion of

²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu and John G. Richardson, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58.

²⁷ Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and Marcela Mendoza, *Mexicanos in Oregon: Their Stories, Their Lives* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010).

²⁸ Polet Campos-Melchor, *Amadas: Trans Asylum Seekers Re-Conceptualizing Love in Ciudad Juárez* (Master's Thesis, University of Oregon, 2020).

²⁹ Yolanda Chavez Leyva, "Faithful Hard-Working Mexican Hands: Mexicana Workers During the Great Depression," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 5 (1995): 63–77.

U.S. territory was justified based on the notion of the “white race” proceeding forward.³⁰ In 1845, John O’Sullivan famously coined the saying “manifest destiny,” which urged U.S. imperial desires of colonizing the southwest while also racializing people of Mexican descent as not belonging to the region. The issue of borders is central to the story and desire to keep Oregon a “white-only” state. Yet, Oregon has heavily relied on Mexican and Latine labor for centuries.

According to writer Yuri Lee, “Food can be an antidote to oppression. Reclaiming our cultural foods and connecting to the land can help us recover from the effects of racial trauma, both physically and emotionally.”³¹ With roots stemming from Guanajuato, Mexico, my relatives have worked in American fields and orchards since my bisabuelo was recruited as a Bracero in 1942 and continued in this work into the late 1960s in California. More than 15,000 Mexican men worked on Oregon farms from 1942 to 1947 as Braceros.³² Braceros were Mexican male laborers permitted into the U.S. for a limited time as seasonal agricultural workers. Oregon’s lack of a substantial Mexican and Mexican-American enclave meant that Braceros courted Anglo women. Growers policed the boundary between Braceros and local women. Bracero Contreras recalled, “We were warned about socializing and flirting with gringas. He [the camp manager] told us that if we flirt with gringas they would call the police and take us to jail!”³³ According to Bracero Contreras, “The gringas looked for us!” Jimenez argues that the absence of rivalry between men created a unique situation that blurred the lines of race and ethnicity while validating their masculinity. Anglo women’s approval demonstrated their masculinity when it

³⁰ Lynn Stephen, “Towards a Transborder Perspective: U.S.-Mexico Relations,” *Iberoamericana* 12, no. 48 (2012): 88.

³¹ Womanly Magazine, “Decolonizing Food: An Antidote to Oppression,” *Womanly Magazine*, October 19, 2020, <https://www.womanlymag.com/issue-no-6/decolonizing-food-an-antidote-to-oppression>.

³² Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942–1947* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984).

³³ *Ibid*, 58.

might have been called into question because of their subordination at work. Camp managers tried to maintain social boundaries, but Braceros and local women constantly transgressed them.

As Jiménez-Sinfuentes, complicates narratives of Bracero histories, L. Heidenreich expands on the defiant Bracero perspective by centering trans narratives.³⁴ While a few Braceros saw or were in company with transgender individuals in their barracks, the in-between spaces have yet to be filled in how gender, nation, and citizenship impacted transgender people of color directly or from their perspective. In their work, Heidenreich interviewed Gwen Amber Rose Araujo's mother, Sylvia Guerrero, and decided they needed to delve deeper into the issue to understand how her murder occurred. The complexity with trans figures is that, like Gwen Amber Rose Araujo, they were never allowed to share their own stories due to their ultimate murder and young deaths of trans women of color. Antoinette Burton shares how this work is an ongoing process and states, "like colonial modernities themselves, the latest work on gender and empire must be considered as unfinished, and therefore as open to re-interpretation as any other material practice or discursive regime."³⁵ It is through piecing and identifying witnesses and stories to unpack how gendered social challenges today are reminiscent of the past.

According to Alexandra Stern, US Border Patrol has been active since World War I and intensified in 1924 over boundary maintenance.³⁶ Border patrol was officially formed in 1924. Kelly Lytle Hernández traces the racial and class politics both in the U.S. and in Mexico. Lytle Hernández argues that Border Patrol's racialization of the legal/illegal divide relied on Mexican officials' participation in the racialization of the class difference between Mexican labor

³⁴ L. Heidenreich, *Nepantla Squared: Transgender Mestiz@ Histories in Times of Global Shift* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020).

³⁵ Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 13.

³⁶ Alexandra Minna Stern, "Nationalism on the Line: Masculinity, Race, and the Creation of the U.S. Border Patrol, 1910–1940," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 300.

workers. Enabling Border Patrol officers to target “Mexicans” based on constructed class and complexion social categories.³⁷ In 1996, Clinton promoted and built the first border wall that began what has become an ongoing project for all U.S. presidents. In the wake of September 11th, 2001, border surveillance at the U.S.- México border expanded.³⁸

In complicating the past, the various ways that the development of a white settler US state and political economy remain hyper present. As many Braceros were selected for their agricultural experience and marital status because there was the incentive to return to their families.³⁹ However, after the program ended, it is unclear how many Braceros remained in Oregon.⁴⁰ They are now a part of the Latinx diaspora that has developed in the state. According to the 2020 U.S. census revealed that Oregon is 18.7% “Hispanic or Latinos,” which means there are approximately 588,757 Latinxs in the state.⁴¹ The numbers on Indigenous Latinos are way under reported and share higher numbers of Mexican-Latinx farmworkers and their family. Oregon has an estimated 174,000 farmworkers who speak diverse Indigenous languages.⁴²

My family’s story, however, did not begin in migration or the Bracero Program. My family has been a part of intricate trade routes that have been a part of broader Indigenous collaboration since time immemorial.⁴³ Though this story will not be written for academic

³⁷ Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 10.

³⁸ Daniel E. Martínez, Josiah Heyman, and Jeremy Slack, “Border Enforcement Developments Since 1993 and How to Change CBP,” *The Center for Migration Studies of New York* (CMS), August 24, 2020, <https://cmsny.org/publications/border-enforcement-developments-since-1993-and-how-to-change-cbp/>.

³⁹ Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando el Espíritu* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

⁴⁰ Jerry Garcia, “Bracero Program,” *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed January 5, 2025, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/bracero_program/#.YnjXhBPMIbl.

⁴¹ United States Census Bureau, “Oregon Census Data,” *Explore Census Data*, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://data.census.gov/profile/Oregon?g=040XX00US41#race-and-ethnicity>.

⁴² Lynn Stephen, “Vulnerabilities and Collective Care: Indigenous Guatemalan and Mexican Farmworkers in Diaspora Confronting COVID-19 in the Western United States,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 39, no. 1 (2023): 117–44.

⁴³ Deborah L. Nichols et al., “Chiconautla, Mexico: A Crossroads of Aztec Trade and Politics,” *Latin American Antiquity* 20, no. 3 (2009): 443–472.

archives, it sets the tone for which stories are written for this dissertation. My family is from Guanajuato through and through. More specifically, I grew up in a pueblo in the sierras. As a child, I was told stories of the giant frogs that lived with us in the mountains, of the corn that passed down generations of ancestors, and of the women who came before me. I used to dream of the mountains my mom would describe as giant frogs. I would greet them, be quiet at night while they rested, and told them my secrets. When I was a child, I wrote my first book. I wrote about corn as it was my favorite relative. I shared memories of daydreaming in my family's milpa. My Amá, an elementary school teacher still looks for this book to this day. While it has not been found, I imagine it to be somewhere in the San Joaquin Valley of California's Central Valley. I wrote it in first grade, and I told her I would write it again. This dissertation is part of the return.

In my family, women are the keepers of our stories and food. My Abuela Guadalupe taught me that I can always learn in her kitchen, in this world, and as a free woman. I used to believe this was a way for her to avoid saying lesbian, but rather because I am not entangled in a heteronormative relationship. In my day-to-day and my kitchen, I am not financially dependent or serving a cisgender-man. I use Indigiqueer instead of lesbian to show how my roots and my participants roots have informed our freedoms from heteronormativity and settler colonialism. Julia Ehrhardt taught me that queer Chicanas have been disrupting the heteronormative Chicano kitchen in literature and praxis for decades.⁴⁴ I expand on this work with the inclusion of Indigiqueers who move in Chicanx spaces on their own terms and histories. Our pueblo in the sierras is my home and the one I will return to live, learn, teach, and die. It is the place where I

⁴⁴ Julia C. Ehrhardt, "Towards Queering Food Studies: Foodways, Heteronormativity, and Hungry Women in Chicana Lesbian Writing," *Food & Foodways* 14, no. 2 (2006): 91–109.

learned about *being corn*.⁴⁵ I still only remember the stories as a kid, but early on was taught that we are related to the seeds that we carry and that those seeds must be kept for all relatives. This includes the dead, those living, and future ones who depend on it.

Some of my first memories ever were in my Abuela Guadalupe's kitchen. The first was when I woke up to a whole pig on display. I woke up seeing how my family members would use the whole pig. This was a lesson and one that I draw from whenever my parents or relatives ask me where I got my interest in school. Similarly, they ask, how did you get so many questions? Who gave you this brain? My Abuelas were my first teachers and always told me to observe.⁴⁶ I was raised in my Abuela Guadalupe's kitchen in the sierras and felt the most security in shucking corn, playing with masa, and attempting to flip tortillas at an early age. Thus, corn is foundational to my learning and being. Our family's corn is one passed through my Abuela's family and presents the way power and food are facilitated by the women in my family. The women in my family run the campo and kitchen.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Traditional ecological knowledge is defined by biologists and ecologists as the practice concerning the relationship of living beings to one another and to the physical environment.⁴⁷ It attempts to integrate scientific and cultural knowledge intrinsically, but has not always credited Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The concept has also been contested and re-articulated as Indigenous science. According to Leanne Simpson, traditional ecological knowledge cannot be disconnected from its spiritual foundations or merely converted into

⁴⁵ Linda Black Elk, "Native Science: Understanding and Respecting Other Ways of Thinking," *Rangelands* 38, no. 1 (2016): 3–4.

⁴⁶ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 22.

⁴⁷ Madhav Gadgil, Fikret Berkes, and Carl Folke, "Indigenous Knowledge for Biodiversity Conservation," *AMBIO* 22, no. 2–3 (1993): 151–56.

written form. Simpson shares, “When our knowledge becomes a commodity it can be used at will by the power structures of the dominant society to support existing doctrines and the status quo.”⁴⁸ My dissertation examines how understanding traditional ecological knowledges in the kitchen is necessary for Indigiqueer and Mexican survivance. Examining the day to day, traditional ecological knowledges, and relationality practices of Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans can demonstrate how food landscapes are actively shifted in politically and demographically white and liberal cities. While scholars like Lynn Stephen, Erlinda V. Gonzales-Berry and Marcela Mendoza have examined the racial and political structures experienced by Mexican migrants in Oregon, I document the experiences of Indigiqueer farmers and their multifaceted communities. These stories are important because of the labor accomplished by Native migrant farmworkers in active settler colonial farming practices and orders. The overlap with the work crafted by Indigiqueer farmers presents the ways in which the broader landscape of foodways is changing for generations of Native farmworkers. This project explores how Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans expand on food sovereignty with their incorporation of *rasquachismo* – which “[mirrors] the social reality of the majority of Chicanos who were poor, disenfranchised, and mired in elemental daily struggles for survival.”⁴⁹ I argue that this is an everyday sustainable practice that connects animal, plant, and human beings.

Rather than settling for foods that do not serve spirits and bellies, Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexican community members show up every week to sow seeds, tend to land, and harvest. While Portland is known for its liberal politics, the stories, recipes, and experiences of Indigiqueer farmers address a space of colonial difference within food landscapes. Maria

⁴⁸ Leanne Simpson, “Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge: Decolonizing Our Processes,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 21, no. 1 (2001): 140.

⁴⁹ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, *Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility* (School by the River Press, 1989), 7.

Lugones theorizes this decolonial methodology to identify how colonized inhabitants create their own meanings in being situated in colonial and modern paradigms.⁵⁰ I extend this into my dissertation to share and document the day to day, traditional ecological knowledges, and relational practices of Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans with a range of community entanglements. In my work, traditional ecological knowledge and relationality are interconnected in community member's kitchens and gardens. They show up as practices of *comunalidad* passed down orally that shape one's connection to land and their surroundings. Due to migration and gentrification, connection to land can be fleeting, but Indigiqueers and diasporic Mexicans remain rooted in their service for one another. For the community member's in my dissertation, they share seeds, food, and holistic care amongst Native organizations, reservations, and community gatherings.

Food Sovereignty in Portland, Oregon

There is no food sovereignty without land back. The term "land back" refers to the movement for the restoration of Indigenous lands to Indigenous peoples, tribes and nations.⁵¹ In order to access food, grow food and propagate seeds to the degree that it sustains a community, land is required. For Indigiqueers and Mexicans in the diaspora, growing food like corn and beans requires access to yards, community gardens, and agricultural land. Meat requires access to both hunting grounds (in the case of deer and elk), fishing rights and lands for animal husbandry. Being Mexican in diaspora is by definition often about being far from ancestral lands, while also being in relationship to the Indigenous lands of our adopted homes. Land is an essential part of

⁵⁰ María Lugones, "Gender and Universality in Colonial Methodology," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 8, no. 1–2 (2020): 1–20.

⁵¹ Saturnino M. Borrás, Jennifer C. Franco, and Sofía Monsalve Suárez, "Land and Food Sovereignty," in *Food Sovereignty* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 170–87.

Indigiqueer foodways and food systems. By exploring food systems and foodways we engage a lacuna in the historical accounts detailing Oregon's long history Black, Indigenous, people of color land rights.

The study of Indigenous foodways allows us to explore traditional food systems' ecological and cultural importance. Culturally specific foodways signify identity, with foods and techniques of harvesting, love, and cooking symbolic of rituals and daily life. I draw on bell hooks' definition of love, which is a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust to explore community member's *antojos* (desires). My concept of love adds to hooks' theorizations by expanding love within a family structure into a community one and centering the experiences and stories of Indigiqueer farmers to argue that love manifests as service towards satisfying a loved one's *antojos*. As a care practice, love is what Chela Sandoval articulates as social movement between citizen-activists who work towards collective freedom.⁵² Love then creates a discourse on space and action. Chicana lesbian feminist theory attends to the creation of *sitios y lenguas* through discursive action in oral and academic archives. I accomplish this by listening to stories and collaborating with community members in kitchens, apothecaries, and community gardens to unpack how Indigiqueers today challenge social ideologies that are reminiscent of the past.

In my use of queering, I borrow from L. Heidenreich's articulation of *nepantla* as a middle space that is also about generative motion.⁵³ For scholars like Dr. Yolanda Chávez Leyva, *nepantla* is a literal space for the Mexica people. However, for many Chicana scholars like Emma Pérez, Carla Trujillo, and L. Heidenrich, *nepantla* expands into a liminal space of

⁵² Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 183.

⁵³ L. Heidenreich, *Nepantla Squared: Transgender Mestiz@ Histories in Times of Global Shift* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 6.

creation and identity-making. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, “The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react.”⁵⁴ Thus, queering in my work is about evoking nepantla to sustain and revive relational practices like farming, seed keeping, and working with humans, animals, and plants.

As articulated by Emma Pérez, “our work emerges from *un sitio y una lengua* that rejects colonial ideology and the by-products of colonialism and capitalist patriarchy—sexism, racism, homophobia...Chicanas seize sociosexual power [to create] our own sitio y lengua.”⁵⁵ I engage theorizations of care to consider new *sitios y lenguas*, as shared between Mexicans in the diaspora and their communities to inform their care practices. As discussed by Gloria Anzaldúa, “It is the responsibility of some of us who tap the vast source of spiritual/political energies to help heal others, to put down a drawbridge; at the same time, we must depend more and more on our own sources for survival.”⁵⁶ Community care considers deeper commitment to the liberation of people and commitments to make that happen as a collective actions. This demonstrates the concept of *comunalidad* as articulated by Indigenous writers in Mexico and Guatemala. Arturo Guerrero Osorio describes *comunalidad* as naming the ways of being and living for the pueblos de la Sierra Norte de Oaxaca.⁵⁷ With the example of *tequios*⁵⁸ which illustrate work that is done for the wellbeing of the land and community, service operates under the guideline of reciprocity between humans and lands.

⁵⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 91.

⁵⁵ Emma Pérez, “Sexuality and Discourse: Notes from a Chicana Survivor,” in *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1991), 161.

⁵⁶ Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th ed. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015), xxviii.

⁵⁷ Arturo Guerrero Osorio, “La Comunalidad como Herramienta: Una Metáfora Espiral II,” *Bajo el Volcán* 15, no. 23 (2015): 119.

⁵⁸ Indigenous practice of labor or work in service for the benefit of the community.

Significance of Research

I explicitly consider the community care practices of these diverse communities of Indigiqueer farmers and communities in the diaspora. In the context of challenging social, economic, and political conditions, Indigiqueer farmers and communities in the diaspora have community care practices such as food sharing, medicine making, and community organizing.⁵⁹ A majority of these community care practices take place in the kitchen. The kitchen offers the possibility of extending our understandings of Indigenous, Black and people of colors' relationships to land into sites of intimate community care practices: from the land, we find the home and, in the home, the kitchen. I am focusing on the kitchen because the spatialization of the home and recipes varies by person, but I am looking at the particularities of Indigiqueer community care practices in Mexican kitchens to show the ways in which there may be a place for everything and everyone. According to ethnographies in Chicana Literature, Mexican kitchens can include a national identity entangled with norms surrounding gender and sexuality;⁶⁰ and gendered labor that complicates the kitchen as a "woman's space".⁶¹ This represents the kitchen as an antecedent to the space, downplaying the important social role of gender norms that exist beyond a binary. For Rita Urquijo-Ruiz, she comes from a long line of *tortilleras*. In their case, her maternal grandmother and mother made and sold flour tortillas. Tortillas sustained their family economically, for Urquijo-Ruiz, a *tortillera* lesbiana – tortillerismo sustains and nurtures her.⁶² Open and explicit Indigiqueer kitchens offer sustainable

⁵⁹ Timothy Herrera, "COVID, Climate Change, and Carework: Mesoamerican Diasporic Indigenous and Latino Communities in the Willamette Valley" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2022).

⁶⁰ Holly R. Cashman, "Queer Latin@ Networks: Languages, Identities, and the Ties That Bind," in *A Sociolinguistics of Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 66–80.

⁶¹ Brett Williams, "Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales: Foodways as a Basis for a Revisionist View of Tejano Family Life," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 113–26.

⁶² Rita E. Urquijo-Ruiz, "Coming Home: The Latina/o Queer Zone of Comfort," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 39, no. 1 (2014): 252.

spaces for community members to exist as their whole-selves. In this sense, my work examines how Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican practices and recipes are shaped by their intimate and platonic relationships. In my work, I share stories about pozole. These stories are also recipes that have been passed on by generations. They may not be new to some, but they have yet to be shared with others.

Chapter Outline

My dissertation provides insight into the relationship between Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican survivance and their pozole recipes. By engaging recipes as traditional ecological knowledge, this research will contribute to anthropological scholarship on Food Studies and Xicanx Studies. My previous research with LGBTQ+ migrants in Ciudad Juarez highlighted three important aspects of migrant community care practices. It demonstrated the ways in which love is a verb, power, a set of values that directly shapes the lives of trans asylum seekers. Through this research, I was able to identify that community care practices are central to how migrants mobilize their families and communities to help them navigate institutional and social violence. Community care practices are enabled by the sharing of monetary and food resources as well as storytelling.

I center relationality in community kitchens, apothecaries, and gardens to push against scholarship that centers struggle and survival paradigms for Mexican migrant livelihoods.⁶³ This scholarship, while necessary, is only one part of the story about Mexican migrants. Through my research, I engage Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans directly to learn about how access to farms, plants, and foods shape their roles in various kitchens. Through cooking and sharing stories their perspectives may offer us lessons on how Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic

⁶³ Jennifer Scott, “La Lucha: Framing the Struggle for Survival, Double Consciousness, and the Economy of Identity for Undocumented Latina/os,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47, no. 12 (2021): 1–20.

Mexicans confront the social, economic and political conditions affecting their daily lives in Portland, Oregon, including experiences of discrimination, exclusion and cultural appropriation. My dissertation provides insight into a historically marginalized community by documenting how Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans mobilize community care practices in their kitchens. Despite a large body of work on Mexican migration and migrant farmworkers, there is currently limited scholarship that focuses explicitly on recipes as traditional ecological knowledge.⁶⁴ My research provides significant contributions to Queer and Feminist Anthropology, Food Studies and Xicanx Studies. My dissertation is divided into five additional chapters which are summarized below:

In Chapter II: A Rasquachismo Methodology, I set the foundation of my methodology as being Ybarra-Frausto's rasquachismo theory. I examine the scraps in the field, or what is considered excess or of no value, and reimagine a rich field of belonging, love and care. This looks like seed sharing, planting, animal pelts, and sharing recipes. In my work, research is ceremony and is informed by Shawn Wilson. I include my research journey and those of my relatives. I write as a researcher, community member, daughter, granddaughter, and land steward. Similarly, my research is also informed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, where community research helps pose the questions 1) why this work is being done, 2) what questions are asked, and 3) who is participating. This even extends to how work is disseminated, what stories are written down, and which are only told orally.

In Chapter III: Love, Labor, and Land, I discuss relationality as a key means for engaging with community members in conducting community research. With *rasquache* and decolonial approaches: cooking, farming, and working with plants became instinctual and part of my

⁶⁴ Carolina Gutiérrez Sánchez et al., "Living Community Cookbook: Transdisciplinary Collaboration for Constructing Recipes with Biocultural Value," *Ecology and Society* 29, no. 4 (2024): 1–20.

everyday way of walking as a researcher and community member. By focusing on food sovereignty in Portland, Oregon, farmers share their strategies for ensuring their human to human and human to non-human relationships. The strategies shared in this chapter provide deeper insight into the ways in which recipes are lessons for engaging with relationality.

In Chapter IV: Rabbit Farming as an expression of Food Sovereignty, I define food sovereignty and share the ways in which it enables Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans to create within community networks. While facing white supremacist and heteropatriarchal landscapes, Indigiqueer farmers utilize food sovereignty to support each other and provide means for ensuring cultural survivance.

In Chapter V, Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican Survivance, I demonstrate various pozole recipes and practices to share how pozole acts as an avenue for the transmission of traditional ecological knowledge. By reclaiming scraps without shame – in *rasquache* style – community members fiercely share their family and community recipes to showcase their homelands. Each pozole shared has its own engagement with what is or is not traditional. Regardless, each participant's pozole is their own.

Lastly, in my Conclusion, I share my own pozole recipe and synthesize the importance of understanding relationality and traditional ecological knowledges in kitchens is necessary for Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican survivance. I explore avenues for working with communities in Portland, Oregon and adapting *rasquachismo* to account for Indigiqueer survivance.

CHAPTER II

A RASQUACHISMO METHODOLOGY

As Indigiqueers we have not only managed to survive but reveal knowledge about settler colonialism and share methods for surviving it. My research reorients anthropological discussions of the field and observation by weaving Indigenous methodologies informed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's theorization of community research, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's articulation of *rasquachismo*. Shawn Wilson's conceptualization of research as ceremony, and my family's traditional ways of knowing. I work with a decolonial approach to ethnographic research by reframing anthropological fieldwork as Linda Tuhiwai Smith's articulation of community research.⁶⁵ Community research comes with a protocol of how research is conducted: 1) why is this work being done, 2) what questions are asked, and 3) who is participating. They even extend to how work is disseminated, what stories are written down, and which are only told orally. It enables Native scholars to work with their communities and make their own project and definitions of community practices with community. My decolonial approach to ethnographic methodology enabled me to work alongside Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans in farms as a volunteer, a grocery store kitchen as a worker, and a community kitchen as a teacher, participant, for the past three years in Portland, Oregon. The work was a process of gathering the ingredients – time together, sharing of meals, passing of recipes, gathering literal scraps - for a community conversation.

Detailed accounts of the field by anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz require a view of cultures by becoming insiders that remain objective. I believe it is not possible for scholars like me who belong and work in the fields and homelands of their relations to remain and choose

⁶⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 127.

to be objective. My use of a decolonial and *rasquachismo* methodology aims to preserve pozole as a sovereign meal. A *rasquachismo* methodology encompasses taking the scraps, or what is considered excess or of no value, and reimagining a rich field of belonging, love and care. This methodology was crafted in conversation with community members who shared seeds, plants, animal pelts, and recipes with each other and me to outline how and where foodways intersected. In this work, I queer the concept of *rasquachismo*, a working-class sensibility defined by Ybarra-Frausto of “doing the most with the least.” It is a non-linear attempt at tracing the unwavering spirit and frugality manifested in Chicanx spaces, more specifically our art and life.⁶⁶ Ybarra-Frausto articulates *rasquachismo* as a strategy that gives a new function to something that would conventionally be considered as useless. Gaspar de Alba expands on this definition *rasquache* as “alter-Native” to account for Chicanx Indigenous roots.⁶⁷ The concept is a stretch as Indigeneity is not a blanket for Chicanx identities, but I agree with Gaspar de Alba on highlighting the roots of *rasquachismo* as a Native strategy informed by being part of a diaspora with man-made borders.

I queer *rasquachismo* to center and extend to the ways in which Indigiqueer and diasporic kin carve out love in the form of *antojos*, to capture the queer and public ways that food and farming provides traditional ecological knowledge with the use of scraps. *Antojos* in my work stems from the pleasure one has in making their loved ones and communities’ favorite meals. Anita Mannur discusses affective pleasure to tease one’s senses – with the sound, smell, taste and ways in which food promotes intimacy.⁶⁸ Eating together, sharing food, and cooking to

⁶⁶ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, *Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility* (School by the River Press, 1989), 5.

⁶⁷ Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master’s House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 74.

⁶⁸ Julia C. Ehrhardt, “Towards Queering Food Studies: Foodways, Heteronormativity, and Hungry Women in Chicana Lesbian Writing,” *Food & Foodways* 14, no. 2 (2006): 66.

please one are a relational addition to intimate kinships. It is through sovereign food practices and relationality that community preserves traditional ecological knowledge for future generations in Portland, Oregon. Relationality in the context of environmental *rasquachismo* highlights community uses of all parts of animals: such as bones, gizzards, and furs. By understanding *recetas* and relationality as traditional ecological knowledge, practices in kitchen and farms can be recognized and preserved as acts of environmental *rasquachismo*. Earlier, I shared how my family used all parts of a pig. This would look like an aunt pickling pig feet, skin being used for chicharrónes⁶⁹, and meat being distributed amongst community. In the following chapters, a community shares their craft with rabbits, others with elk, and engagements in grocery stores.

Research Methods

I include my research journey, similar to how Shawn Wilson details his path to academia and his family relationships.⁷⁰ Wilson writes of his story as one that began before him. In Chapter 2, "On the Research Journey," Wilson shares the story of his Aunt Sandee (now a PhD from Harvard) being automatically placed in the remedial class in high school, which resonated with me. This experience is not new; it is ongoing and familiar. My mother was placed in remedial classes during her schooling and is now a teacher. My father was also in remedial classes but did not finish school. The two experienced different schooling policies in Mexico and the U.S. that questioned people's intelligence based on their community and native tongue. Other narratives surrounding this experience highlight how people survive such school settings. For Wilson, walking into an academic institution is marked as moving beyond the personal but a

⁶⁹ Pig cracklings,

⁷⁰ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2020), 24.

structural issue. While he does not walk alone in his academic work, the university constructs students as individuals. By writing his story, Wilson challenges ideas of who belongs in universities and how stories and knowledges should be shared. He guides readers into an account beyond the abstract. In positioning himself, he moves an Indigenous research paradigm as one that stands alongside his peers and does not compete. For Wilson, an Indigenous research paradigm does not critique other research paradigms or strategies but works from its own goals. Wilson explains this before moving into complex research concepts to demonstrate how, as scholars, we have to be aware of both Western and our communities' understandings of knowledges – that we are never alone and that our knowledges can be both informed before we enter a university setting and during.

I have conducted decolonial ethnographic research with Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans in Oregon. As part of my decolonial ethnographic research methodology, I engaged in participant observation at a community farm, family farm, grocery store, and community kitchen to gather stories and recipes. With these methods, I am interested in how Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans' practices in their farms and kitchens shape their recipes and ideas of relationality. Such recipes and relationships changed by season, food supplies, and labor practices. I used participant observation and storytelling in my community research to work with an existing and growing lineage of methodological interventions by feminist theorists of color.⁷¹ Oral archives are important as they defend the sovereignty of knowledge as it remains in the hands of those who share it. Storytelling is audience focused – it requires readers to listen and interpret the lesson of the story and recognize, in my work's case how Indigiqueers are marginalized and are the most knowledgeable about how to overcome its

⁷¹ Irma McClaurin, ed., *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

failings and restore equilibrium in our worlds. In my dissertation research, storytelling was also the most natural means for community members to share their stories in public and private settings. In my case, it is the only way knowledge is passed down between generations. None of my grandparents read or write in Spanish, and so my ability to write is transforming this knowledge, but I remain in the thick of it. I remain a storyteller and witness to storytelling because it is vital for preserving histories and memories. For my work, this meant asking community how and when they wanted their information shared. It also meant that some stories and recipes can only be shared orally as that is how it is passed down.

Storytelling is not a neutral methodology but requires community members and researchers to evaluate relationships. Storytelling is one of my primary methods, it allows people to share their varied realities, find commonalities with others, and create new norms without having to negotiate their existence. Storytelling is an implicitly understood community practice.⁷² According to Mishuana Goeman, “storytellers, in all informal and formal forms, make space come alive by imparting a knowledge that travels and connects to other knowledge systems.”⁷³ This is especially true for Indigiqueers who possess, “a wealth of theory and critical analysis regarding settler colonialism that straight bodies cannot.”⁷⁴ Our bodies possess strategies of survival and love embedded in our livelihoods and ways of navigating U.S. and Mexican settler states. Storytelling requires an audience and for the audience to witness and later possibly share stories. By sharing stories, community’s ways were crafted by my participants’ own definitions of existing in the diaspora. Storytelling began before I entered the spaces and

⁷² Polet Campos-Melchor, *Amadas: Trans Asylum Seekers Re-Conceptualizing Love in Ciudad Juárez* (Master’s Thesis, University of Oregon, 2020).

⁷³ Mishuana Goeman, “From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the Discussion of Indigenous Nation-Building,” *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 24.

⁷⁴ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 127.

have enabled me to share and be alongside community members in farms, grocery stores, and in peoples' homes.

My use of participant observation has entailed working with and observing community members in their farm kitchens, community kitchens, and at a grocery store. I observed community members daily lives, events, and work alongside community members to document how they strategize their day-to-day realities and celebrations. I also conducted participant observation work in their home kitchens, grocery shopping with community members, shared meals and worked together in their gardens. While engaging in participant observation, I gathered stories and *pláticas* which looked like bits of gossip and recipe sharing. It is a method that centers one's day-to-day experiences and survival tactics. Stories are held in the same respect but deviate in how they are shared afterwards. *Pláticas* are conversations that can appear informal yet carry seriousness in tone and content.⁷⁵ They provide a different insight into stories and storytellers. Yvette Saavedra weaves *pláticas* and embodied experiences to “provide insight into the complexities of Chicanas feminism, as well as forms of knowledge absent in institutional archives.”⁷⁶ Thus, oral and now written archives are critical in re-remembering and accounting for stories that have been made invisible.

Similarly, Ángel de Jesus Gonzalez, Roberto C. Orozco, and Sergio A. Gonzalez articulate queer *pláticas* as, “a form of recovering and remembering relationships to our familial and chosen kinships as queer and/or trans Latinx/a/o people.”⁷⁷ In my work, *pláticas* account for all the shared conversations between multiple community members and in open spaces. The

⁷⁵ Nasario García, *Pláticas: Conversations with Hispano Writers of New Mexico* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2000).

⁷⁶ Yvette J. Saavedra, “Of Chicana Lesbian Terrorists and Lesberadas: Recuperating the Lesbian/Queer Roots of Chicana Feminism, 1970–2000,” *Feminist Formations* 34, no. 2 (2022): 102.

⁷⁷ Ángel de Jesus Gonzalez, Roberto C. Orozco, and Sergio A. Gonzalez, “Joteando y Mariconadas: Theorizing Queer *Pláticas* for Queer and/or Trans Latinx/a/o Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 36, no. 9 (2023): 1741–56.

pláticas in my work focused on emphasizing shared tips, strategies, and conversation as knowledge. These conversations were around 30 minutes to two hours long each and were recorded with an audio recorder when a participant gave permission to do so. *Pláticas* are a method that centers one's day-to-day experiences. Conversations begin with a recipe of home, and what home or belonging looked like them for them. I asked, what are the ingredients that make a place feel like home? I follow up by asking participants in the present are a place they search for and or have crafted. I am interested in how recipes have produced traditional ecological knowledges in their shared kitchens.

My approach adds to current conversations of witnessing and is informed by Ana-Maurine Lara's use of *confrontación* to work in the present and enable people to be their only real witnesses.⁷⁸ I expand on Lara's conceptualization of being a witness with the inclusion of *convivencia* (living with and by others). This work is also informed by Alai Reyes-Santos and Ana-Maurine Lara, who define *convivir* as "to be in relation with each other across a long span of time."⁷⁹ Similarly, Bianet Castellano nurtures this practice of *convivencia* by upholding its Indigenous Maya roots known as *u kuxtal ye'etel u ma'atsil ma'ako'ob*.⁸⁰ According to Castellano, "*u kuxtal ye'etel u ma'atsil ma'ako'ob* is a Maya ethic of devising place-making strategies that help them forge a sense of belonging and cultivate reciprocal relations in urban spaces."⁸¹ I mobilize *convivencia* in my work as an act of living with and by others through community care practices such as cooking for elders and community members, and storytelling. I

⁷⁸ Ana-Maurine Lara, *Streetwalking: LGBTQ Lives and Protest in the Dominican Republic* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

⁷⁹ Ana-Maurine Lara and Alai Reyes-Santos, "Afro-Indigenous Women Healers in the Caribbean and Its Diasporas: A Decolonial Digital Humanities Project," accessed January 5, 2025, <https://healers.uoregon.edu>.

⁸⁰ Translation: Living well together.

⁸¹ Bianet Castellanos, "Indigenous Urbanisms in Pandemic Times: Countering Settler Violence with *Convivencia*," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 39, no. 1 (2023): 146.

build off of Audre Lorde's use of the erotic,⁸² as a connection to others, specifically my interviewees in that curating a methodology such as *convivencia*, a kind of co-living that requires reciprocity. This is not new, but a restoration project that remembers and calls to the work of feminists of color to flesh out community care practices in conducting community research.

⁸² Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 339–43.

CHAPTER III

LOVE, LABOR, AND LAND

I have spent over a year conducting participant observation and collecting oral histories for my doctoral dissertation. My theorization of relationality and survivance in my work is informed by my Master's research with trans Central American migrants in Ciudad Juarez in a shelter kitchen. Through our work, I learned that love enables trans migrants to create a space for themselves at the intersections of transmisogyny, xenophobia, and homophobia during their experience with the Remain in Mexico Policy in Ciudad Juarez. Among trans migrants, love is a care practice that involves cooking for each other, watching out for each other on the street, passing information on the migratory process, sharing food and stories. This entrée into the role of food in fomenting intimacy, demonstrating care, and expressing love have informed my doctoral research inquiry of relationality between Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexicans in Portland, Oregon.

My community research involved me listening to plants and people, cooking, and caring for community members.⁸³ In this chapter, I present a relational ethnography focusing on the food sovereignty movement within kitchen and farm spaces of Portland, Oregon. By weaving decolonial methodologies and *rasquache* approaches, combined with hands-on cooking and farming experiences, an exploration into the world of diasporic Mexican culinary arts, cuisine, and culture are achieved. This research journey reveals the nuances of embodied ancestral memory, examining how such memories are transmitted and activated through kitchen practices.

⁸³ Informed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's articulation of community research, I work with a decolonial approach to ethnographic research by reframing Anthropological fieldwork as community research. Community research enables Native scholars to work with their communities and make their own project and definitions of community practices with community. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 127.

Through this work, deeper insights of food sovereignty and its significance in contemporary movements centered on Indigiqueer survivance. By weaving love, labor, and land, Indigiqueer traditional ecological knowledge is rich with recipes and stories that demonstrate relational responsibilities for engaging with human and non-human relationships.⁸⁴ For the Indigiqueer farmers and cooks I worked with, they taught me that relationality lives within all our daily kitchens. The following stories are from their labor and love in Portland, Oregon.

Ruda and Rosa

Siblings and farmers, Ruda (they/them) and Rosa (she/her), began as artists and students who both worked and were born into plant and farming backgrounds. Their creations come from the land and are nurtured by their relatives' knowledges with plants and the landscapes that host them. I met Ruda at the University of Oregon, as members of the Emerging Leadership Project hosted by the Holden Center for Leadership and Community Engagement. We were part of the first-year long cohort that met biweekly to enrich our leadership skills, direct service experiences, career readiness, and community connections. Throughout the program we were tasked with creating our own civic engagement project or work alongside a community-based action group surrounding environmental issues in our cities. The Center's mission states, "The Holden Center provides high-impact experiential and community-based learning that fosters socially responsible leadership, empowers and challenges students to make positive impacts in their communities, and develop transferable skills for personal and professional growth."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Mishkos Kenomagwen, the Lessons of Grass: Restoring Reciprocity with the Good Green Earth," in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 33.

⁸⁵ "Holden Center for Leadership and Community Engagement," Holden Center, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://holden.uoregon.edu/about>.

Throughout the program, a group of the cohort, including Ruda and myself would grab dinner after the meetings. We would try different mom-and-pop restaurants around the campus and chismear about the leadership workshops and our projects. It was a time to catch up and dial into what issues were surrounding our respective communities as some in the group were of Indian, Native, Black and Jewish descent. Many of us would end up working together on our final projects and becoming friends. Ruda would also talk about their adventures hunting and making elk brisket and tamales, which we would later end up making together.

The power to share stories in and around the kitchen is described in Chicana/x Studies literature as immediate and something that everyone has their hand in. For queer and non-binary community members of Mexican descent, the kitchen is relied upon as a site for crafting with traditional ecological knowledge. It is relevant in the practice of cooking, because recipes are not written but memorized and completed instinctually.⁸⁶ Christen Garcia shares how food practices are non-static, shifting, and not fully traditional. Being part of the diaspora calls on one to both surrender to the loss of familial relationships and call upon traditional ideas of food sharing and *comunalidad*. Garcia shares an example of her making tamales. She states, “It was not until I moved to State College that I realized how I had taken my family for granted and longed to make and eat tamales. I then learned how to make tamales from scratch in my kitchen. Without family, it was a bittersweet process.”⁸⁷ She uses the process of making tamales to talk about cultural hybridization in food memory and spaces such as the kitchen where the creation of recipes as storytelling can take place. Similarly, Ruda would make tamales for their roommates, and when their roommates did not understand the cultural significance or time that went into the

⁸⁶ Meredith E. Abarca, “Families Who Eat Together, Stay Together: But Should They?,” in *Rethinking Chicana/o Literature Through Food* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 119–40.

⁸⁷ Christen Sperry Garcia, *Borderlands Art Practice: Performing Borderlands Spaces Through Art//Food//Performative//Writing//Pedagogy* (PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 2018), 89.

preparation, they texted our small program's group chat to rant and share tamales. *Tamaladas* – the gathering of the preparation of tamales is a long-standing and thorough tradition of sharing. In the case of Ruda who was unable to share their tamales fully, they sought out an alternative to share beyond their roommates who did not understand them and towards a community network that enabled them to be their full selves.

A few months after the program was completed, I learned from a mutual friend in the group that Ruda had moved to Portland. I had just moved during the summer of 2022, and they moved in the winter 2022. They had their sister Rosa and dad Herb living just outside the city in Milwaukie and I asked if they needed help at the farm. Ruda said yes, and I drove out to see them. Right before I had arrived, Ruda texted me and asked if I was available for an impromptu photo shoot for their sister's flowers. Rosa grows an herbal and floral garden on her family's farm to expand her craft and income. I agreed to pose with her flowers and walked into their family garden. It was a warm summer day, the garden smelled of grapes and as I walked past a large house with a bountiful bush of rosemary, I greeted the plant and walked away with the aromatic scent on my fingers. Across the bush was the farm's kitchen that had various kales drying and tomatoes in vented basket squares. There was then a small herbal garden with chocolate mint, peppermint, catmint, and lavender. The bush was surrounded by dandelions that led me towards the green house. Across the greenhouse was what I would learn to be Rosa's flower garden which was beside the corn, beans, basil, and Hopi sunflowers.

As I walked around looking for Ruda, I saw them planting more sunflowers. They had me help and we sat together while digging small holes a few inches apart. These sunflowers were a different variety than the Hopi ones (Tceqa' Qu' Si), which can grow up to 7-11 ft. stalks with 5–13-inch heads. The seeds are also distinct as they have a natural dye that are used for basketry.

They were meant to keep insects away from the rest of the plants. While we planted, they showed me the different water well spouts located around the farm to add water to the plants after setting them. We then took a walk around the farm and green houses to greet and meet the plants. As we walked around, I heard ducks by the creek, bees buzzing, and hummingbirds around us. We followed the hummingbirds that led us to Rosa. She had picked flowers and arranged them in preparation for the photo shoot. Ruda introduced me to Rosa who presented her purple corncockles to me. They were bountiful and blooming. While the plants were unfamiliar to me, Rosa gathered more to send me off with some. As she gathered and prepared to take photos, I followed Ruda and Rosa's lead to get some more work done on the farm.

While working with Rosa's flowers, I spoke to her as she set up the shot. Rosa is the sole grower of the flowers, she shared her engagement with food sovereignty as, "the right of all human beings to have access to healthy fresh food, and have that food grown and channeled through ecologically sustainable systems." During the height of the pandemic in 2021, Rosa, Ruda, and their dad Herb believed that food sovereignty was more important than ever as nearby grocery stores were bare. At the start of their farming during the pandemic, they were able to donate to local families and organizations. They were even able to donate 250+ pounds of produce to Feed the Mass, a Portland-based organization who supplied meals to those who needed them. During that donation, it was especially important to provide food as many communities were affected by the wildfires. Rosa and Ruda strongly remember the fact that their father grew so much food that they had to just start giving it away. "He's like that. He saw a problem and he shared seeds." The Huerto family makes sure everyone gets fed. Ruda, Rosa, and Herb are not legible to a capitalist economy, while they have other jobs that enable them to exist within a capitalist economy, they do not engage with it for growing and harvesting food. After

the fires and initial first years of the COVID-19 pandemic, they started selling produce to local diners and organizations on a sliding scale. However, this is not their main source of income.

Food justice and food sovereignty are not the same thing but do work towards establishing access to cultural foodways. According to the Oregon Food Bank, food justice is rooted in the belief: “that food is a human right and works toward a future where all have food that is unrestricted, culturally relevant, nourishing, dignified, and fear free.”⁸⁸ For the Huerto family, they recognized that the food systems around them were not running effectively. Food sovereignty revolves around them being able to control all aspects of their foodways. This is shown in their planting pattern, a technique shown to me when we planted hundreds of garlic cloves. Ruda and Herb moved side by side in each of their respective rows. The dug holes with their hands, after finishing half of the rows, Rosa and I followed behind them to sow garlic cloves. Their pattern was distinct in how many inches separated the holes and the depth of the seeds. The Huerto technique remains within their family, and I only mention it briefly as it moves with them. While we were sowing seeds, we were caught in one of the last sunny days in Oregon. Herb mentioned that there were days hotter than this in Arizona when he and his brothers would have to wait until nighttime to finish. “We would work under the moonlight, and wow it was a lot of work but beat working in the heat.” From Arizona to Oregon, Herb addresses the needs of local community members and desire of cultural foods. The Huerto family take on the charge of reflecting their communities’ needs with their environmental knowledge of seed keeping and growing foods.

⁸⁸ “Part Two: Decolonizing Food Systems with Indigenous Practices and First Foods,” Oregon Food Bank, November 19, 2024, <https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/posts/part-two-decolonizing-food-systems-with-indigenous-practices-and-first-foods>.



Figure 3. 250 pounds of food gathered for community (2020)

As we finished sowing seeds, Ruda and I took a berry break and picked golden raspberries and strawberries. The sweetness of the plants gave us a time to bond a bit more as we shared our memories picking berries as children. Ruda shared that they would often rely on their siblings to help them gather as they tended to eat all their berries before returning home. Ruda grew up in Milwaukie, a suburb of Portland. As the youngest of five, they were used to their siblings helping them pick berries. Similar to Ruda, as a child, I loved to taste everything I gathered. As berries were squished from an unintentional pull, I would crush them further to then only have the option of eating them. We laughed as we made our way back to Rosa who had set up a backdrop, floral arrangements, and a scheme for the day. Rosa had us move around the floor and placed purple corncockles in our hair. She wove them into my braid and asked us to “act

natural.” Ruda let out a snort, which then made me giggle and Rosa took the photos as we posed, laughed, and played around.

While Ruda and Rosa collaborate with their father Herb to provide food for community, they also craft with plants to make a living. As we shared throughout the photoshoot, we became immediate friends and collaborators. We shared stories of our family’s milpas—theirs in Tucson, Arizona and mine in Guanajuato, Mexico—which are diverse and complex ecosystems that provide us with many of our traditional foods. Similar to the work done by Gladys Tzul on communal land shared by Indigenous communities, there was overlap in our communities’ communal harvest that could feed our entire pueblos and the ways in which we are dedicated to ensuring its and our survival. Tzul shares the concepts of “x’ax k’ol” a foundational Indigenous strategy named in K’iche’ that is not easily translatable but demonstrates the ways in which communal service is necessary for living and producing life.⁸⁹ This is an unpaid strategy, that everyone “pitches in.” For us, our milpas are more than an expression of our lifeways but our humanity and service. It is a critical source of foods such as corn and beans which sustain our lives and stories.⁹⁰ Relationality and communality are extended to seeds. The connection of corn is an interconnected relationship to my people. As corn is offered in death and their life in my life, we honor each other as I provide a similar return to our milpa in my eventual death. Corn and the practice of milpas are necessary for all of our lives.

The Huerto family farm began growing more food in abundance at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, their father, Herb, decided to work the family’s full acre of land to provide food for local families and food pantries. His decision and his children’s commitment

⁸⁹ Gladys Tzul, “Sistemas de Gobierno Comunal Indígena: La Organización de la Reproducción de la Vida,” *El Apantle* 1 (2015): 133.

⁹⁰ Jessica Hernandez, *Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes Through Indigenous Science* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2022), 60.

to providing food to community is a primary focus for food sovereignty.⁹¹ It was also the weaving of human relationships with land and each other to form radical coalition building at a time of heightened isolation. To this day, they continue to share and redistribute fresh produce to various community centers and local restaurants. Despite their team of three and occasional volunteers, the family continues to provide for their community which includes Indigenous, Black, and migrant populations throughout Oregon. Their farm and commitment attest to how food sovereignty is a series of commitment to everyday tending to land and feeding others.⁹² The reciprocated responsibility of food sovereignty is how they manage their farm and actively tend care for the land around them.



Figure 4. Squash gathered by Rosa and Ruda during the Oregon fires (2020)

⁹¹ See Dvera I. Saxton, *The Devil's Fruit: Farmworkers, Health, and Environmental Justice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021); and Sarah Bronwen Horton, *They Leave Their Kidneys in the Fields* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

⁹² Alyshia Gálvez, *Eating NAFTA: Trade, Food Policies, and the Destruction of Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

Herb has also shared that he grows traditional foods to serve community member's needs. As a Yaqui farmer, he grew up in Arizona and his family has maintained connections across the U.S.–México border. For him and many Indigenous and diasporic Mexican migrants, policies such as NAFTA have transformed connections between people and their traditional foods. The Huerto family intentionally grows food for Native communities practicing ceremony, celebrations, and other cultural gatherings. Scholar Alyshia Gálvez highlights food before, under, and post-NAFTA to mark the transformation of the Mexican food system. According to Gálvez, NAFTA eliminated tariffs and barriers to trade between Mexico, the United States, and Canada, uniting them in a single market and facilitating direct investment and the flow of goods across borders.⁹³ Gálvez unpacks the health consequences of NAFTA and explores how diet-related illnesses have been charged as personal rather than social responsibility. Her work also demonstrates Mexico's public response and shifting of blame when coming to terms with public health.⁹⁴ Recently, Mexico has implemented policies prohibiting genetically modified corn.⁹⁵ However, what happened to Mexico in the recent past is not isolated, but part of a three-country trade agreement, that increased the power of corporations over benefitting small-scale farmers. By mobilizing his farm as a site of food sovereignty, Herb's farming and seed keeping is embedded in the seeds sown, community members' food desires, and enables his children and community members to have a choice in their traditional foodways.

⁹³ Alyshia Gálvez, *Eating NAFTA: Trade, Food Policies, and the Destruction of Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 3.

⁹⁴ Alyshia Gálvez, *Eating NAFTA: Trade, Food Policies, and the Destruction of Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 188.

⁹⁵ Timothy Wise, "México Defiende Con Ciencia Las Restricciones Al Maíz Transgénico," Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy, March 14, 2024, <https://www.iatp.org/mexico-defiende-con-ciencia-las-restricciones-al-maiz-transgenico>.

Following the picture day, I have helped at the farm as often as possible. It is a time to learn, share, and work alongside Ruda, Rosa, and occasionally Herb who work the farm daily. Working land as everyday pedagogy reveals wisdom from family, community, and relationships to land and what is considered communal property.⁹⁶ It also helps reorient *rasquachismo* as a land practices. While city and urban spaces have shown the ways in which *rasquache* survival is established, queer environmental *rasquachismo* calls upon centering Indigiqueer relationality to food and land as needed for cultural survivance. Through preserving parts of their story and practices in my work, I establish the kitchen as a public site of knowledge making that recipes are affirmed and passed on as traditional ecological knowledge.

Sopas for Queer Communal Healing

On the other side of Portland, in Northeast, I met Carina (she/they) at a BIPOC meal shared by Luz (they/he) on Instagram. Luz provides food and herbs to Carina's workplace, where they make food for community. When I went to my first meal share in 2022, I bumped into Carina, who had a red N95 mask, and their hair braided. We introduced ourselves, and they asked if I was comfortable making tortillas de maíz; I said yes, and they showed me the outside stove and supplies. Inside there were five people in the kitchen. The community center has a mask requirement indoors, so I could not see their faces clearly. Still, they all looked up to greet me and had their own tasks making ensalada de nopal, salsas, and arroz con leche.

As everyone worked on their dishes and crafted food rooted in their ancestral memories, I moved around their spheres to see how everyone was connecting to their dishes. I did this as Carina and Dahlia set the patio grill for my partner Rubi and I to work on. I noticed that there was a couple making arroz con leche and they had cardamon with them. Rubi had immediately

⁹⁶ Roberto J. González, *Zapotec Science: Farming and Food in the Northern Sierra of Oaxaca* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 130.

smelled it and after I got a whiff, I had to go to the source. I asked them where their relatives were from and Sara, the woman with olive skin, hazel eyes and loose curls said, “My ancestors are from Copts, which is modern day Egypt and Greeks from Asia Minor.” She introduced her husband, Jose a tall brown skinned man who shared, “Soy Boricua y Mexicano segundo.” His partner rolled her eyes, and I did an instinctual head tilt which he noticed and laughed at. He followed up by sharing that his father is Puerto Rican, and his mom is Mexican, but that he grew up closely with his Puerto Rican family members. As Jose shared, I noticed his apron had a bright floral pattern and that he was also the only masculine presenting and cis-straight man in the kitchen that evening. In Chicana Literature, men in the kitchen are presumed to perform masculinity to ensure cultural meanings surrounding social and gender norms.⁹⁷ For Jose, this was not the case as he danced around in his floral apron.

⁹⁷ Hilario Molina II, “The Construction of South Texas Masculinity: Masculine Space, the Pico de Gallo, and the Barbeque Grill,” *Identities* 21, no. 2 (2014): 236.



Figure 5. Molcajete pictured above was used to grind the cardamon (2022)

The choice of dessert and accompaniment was interesting to witness. In *Migration and Transnational Food Studies*, scholars like Luz Calvo, Catriona Rueda Esquibel, Lidia Marte and Elspeth Probyn examine food sharing as a highly gendered labor and marks the kitchen as a contested feminized site.⁹⁸ However, because of migration and being part of the diaspora, kitchens and labor look different than in home countries. Food anthropologists such as Veronica Montes, Alyshia Gálvez, and Brett Williams share the gendered value of cooking as a form of reciprocity.⁹⁹ Williams complicates the kitchen and cooking as a site of reciprocity and care

⁹⁸ Lidia Marte, "Dominican Migrant Cooking: Food Struggles, Gendered Labor, and Memory-Work in New York City," *Food and Foodways* 20, no. 3–4 (2012): 280; and Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 12.

⁹⁹ Brett Williams, "Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales: Foodways as a Basis for a Revisionist View of Tejano Family Life," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 113–26.

between Mexican migrant families. She presents tamales as labor-intensive food items that symbolize and exaggerate women's routine nurturance of men. In the case of the community kitchen, racial and gendered constructions that cast Latinx men as macho, was demystified as he gently grinded cardamon while dancing around the kitchen. According to Veronica Montes, "migration creates the opportunity to get in touch with deeper emotions that would be overlooked under normal circumstances as a result of the social association with feminine identities."¹⁰⁰ For Montes emotional expressions run wholly counter to hegemonic masculinities for migrant men, and Jose exemplifies that with his movement and dance. While Jose is the child of immigrants, his gender role fluidity imitates the one's of migrant men who migrate and travel. Jose admitted that he loved trying new things, which points to the ways in which the space enables communities of color to expand on their emotions and experiences. Perhaps it was the space, and not him being the only masculine person in the kitchen that drove Jose's confidence.

Williams shares, "Anthropologists exploring women's status cross-culturally argue that women are most influential when they share in the production of food and have some control over its distribution."¹⁰¹ Foodways, can help us rethink both of these problematic areas and understand how women elaborate domestic roles to knit families together, obligate both male and female kin, and nurture and bind their husbands. For Sra. Compartida, an interlocutor of Williams, tamales help maintain that influence, and she uses them to express affection and obligate others and gather a network of merchants who watch out for her husband when she cannot be there. Sra. Compartida's tamales affirm the importance of women's work in the

¹⁰⁰ Veronica Montes, "The Role of Emotions in the Construction of Masculinity: Guatemalan Migrant Men, Transnational Migration, and Family Relations," *Gender & Society* 27, no. 4 (2013): 16.

¹⁰¹ Brett Williams, "Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales: Foodways as a Basis for a Revisionist View of Tejano Family Life," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 115.

kitchen as it holds outside of it. Williams articulates migrant women's labor in the kitchen as a means to nurture their partner's work and to obligate both men and women to nurture their relations in their respected works. For Indigiqueer and diasporic community members in Portland, Oregon the kitchen and food sharing is a radical act of honing traditional foods and community relationality.

Practices like sharing food and space in a community kitchen were shared amongst the other couple making a salsa. They had arrived first and were cleaning, and so I missed the cloud of chiles asando in the kitchen. While I was relieved that I missed their process, I noticed that both Indigiqueer individuals washed their used dishes side by side. I had met Dennis at an earlier event, but their friend Sage was new. As they cleaned up, they headed out to the patio to rest and wait for others to finish making their dishes. While outside, Dahlia had finished setting up the grill and Rubi took over controlling the heat. I made the *masa* from harina, water, and some salt; Rubi followed my instruction. Since I grew up watching the women in my family make tortillas, and without their presence in the kitchen, this occasion called for me to be the *tortillera*. I mean this both literally and intimately as *tortillera* was once a derogatory term for lesbians, but as Rita Urquijo-Ruiz articulated earlier, and Gaspar de Alba shares below, there is nothing more interconnected.

*What's the connection? I asked, between a tortillera and a lesbian? Something to do with the sound, they said, the kneading of masa and palms rubbing together, the clapping of tongues, the intersection of good taste and the golden touch.*¹⁰²

While no one else in the group felt comfortable making them or did not have the experience, I took the role on. Similar to Rita Urquijo-Ruiz, I do not find the identities of being a lesbian or a

¹⁰² Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "Descarada/No Shame: A[bridged] Politics of Location," in *La Llorona on the Longfellow Bridge: Poetry y Otre Movide* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2003), 89.

woman cooking tortillas conflicting, but rather a way home. My return home to our pueblo in the sierras showed me that there is no space for cultural silence in our kitchens. As I mixed the ingredients, I felt my hands holding a cloud of corn. I tasted the *masa* and added more salt. I had Rubi feel the texture and taste it to recognize that it was ready and let her know that masa can be forgiving as long as we tend to it. We started to roll the balls and place them onto the press. I slowly pulled it off and heard the smack of the tortilla onto my palm. From there, I slowly laid the tortillas on the stove. As small bubbles formed, it was time to flip. Dennis and Sage came over to the grill to warm up and asked if they could help. Rubi remained flipping tortillas and I had them working with the masa to get them comfortable with the process. After watching Rubi for a few minutes, they were ready to place their tortillas on the comal and flip them on their own. However, when Sage first laid hers, it folded. I had to intervene to untangle the tortilla and flip it for her as the comal was too hot. Dennis had me lay their tortilla but was able to support Rubi with flipping them. Throughout the evening and as more people arrived, Rubi and I stayed by the comal laying and flipping tortillas.

In the case of the community kitchen and patio grill, my partner and I did not have to negotiate our identities or intimacy, rather it was on full display. We played our part in the kitchen and supported each other with the heat of the comal. This outwardness existed in our hands because we made it happen and shared it with other Indigiqueers in the space.¹⁰³ For us, the relationship between food and community enabled us to engage my family's Indigenous knowledges and Rubi's Mexican heritage.¹⁰⁴ The community kitchen enables such practices to thrive as people develop practices in cooking, through community building, and sharing stories.

¹⁰³ Anahí Russo Garrido, *Tortilleras Negotiating Intimacy: Love, Friendship, and Sex in Queer Mexico City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 22.

¹⁰⁴ Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel, *Decolonize Your Diet: Plant-Based Mexican-American Recipes for Health and Healing* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 15.

This cycle of creation and maintenance of community and environment are the mainstay of cultural survivance.

During the meal share, I also got to talk with Carina, who was born in Michigan and is a first-generation Chicana of Mexican immigrants and identifies as a community cook. In our conversation, they shared that the community kitchen is the heart of the space. Carina stated, “Tending the space is a love offering and a form of resistance, rooted in reclaiming and sharing ancestral wisdom. It is a community invitation for reconnecting to our bodies, the land, our ancestors, and each other.” In their work, they are committed to growing and cultivating community resilience through love offerings of soups that are inspired to heal and tend the cellular and spiritual nourishment of community. According to Carina, soups are a love offering and an act of resilience powered by collective joy, healing, and liberation. Their work which includes BIPOC meal shares, catering, cooking classes, and managing the kitchen, is rooted in the everyday practice of life as ceremonial. For Carina, spices are shared to weave and heal our relationships with food, the land, ourselves, and each other.

Conclusions

Carina, a community cook uses the produce from various farmers of colors to mobilize food sovereignty. I was connected to them through working with Luz, who knows Herb from farming workshops and spaces. Their relationships expand to those they provide for, and all consist of local communities of color. Food sovereignty and security are realized in community kitchens like Carina’s as farm-to-table concepts become realities. Discussions and practices of love, labor, and land are woven tightly by communities based on practices of relationality and cultural survivance. The Indigiqueer community members I worked with shared the different capacities and functions they provide in their spaces. Their crafts expand on loving relationships

to extend beyond human-to-human relations and into ones that foster land and plant relationality. Sharing Indigiqueer narratives provides stories and possibilities for future generations of Indigiqueer and diasporic communities members in Portland, Oregon.

Like in the work conducted by Meztli Rodríguez Aguilera in Mexico, they share the ways in which Afro-Indigenous women in Mexico define land in their day-to-day by using medicinal plants when caring for their lagoons.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans in my research work every day to satisfy and nurture community members *antojos* and bellies. I have theorized environmental *rasquachismo* in the contexts of a farm and community kitchen. I was able to gather images and stories that affirmed my impression of how such spaces function as queer food landscapes where food sovereignty and relationality are occurring simultaneously. Weaving relationships is an everyday commitment and part of radical coalition work to produce healing relations between land, plant, and human connections.

¹⁰⁵ Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera, “Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters: Life, Death, and Environmental Gendered Racialized Struggles in Mexico,” *Feminist Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2021): 10.

CHAPTER IV

RABBIT FARMING AND COLLECTIVE APOTHECARIES AS AN EXPRESSION OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The act of food sovereignty in a white supremacist state means working against policies that limit how people can access food. For many Native people of the Pacific Northwest, fishing Chinook salmon to harvesting camas bulbs were staples of Indigenous diets and medicines. These practices were established prior to colonization and were presumed to be reserved by treaties signed with the U.S. government nearly 170 years ago. In Portland, Oregon, Indigiqueer farmers craft freedom for themselves, diasporic Mexicans, and other Natives through practices of food sovereignty. While there is no universal solution to food sovereignty, I consider it a pluralistic construction that requires the inclusion of non-human lifeforms. According to La Vía Campesina, an international farmers organization comprised of peasants, landless workers, and indigenous people, among others, food sovereignty is the right of people to define their own agricultural and food policies, including the right of farmers and peasants to decide how to produce food and the right of consumers to decide what they consume, and how and from whom to obtain what is consumed.”¹⁰⁶ To this definition I add the importance of including intergenerational knowledges and relationships by and between Indigenous community members and with plants and other parts of the living world. For my Purépecha relatives and community members in Portland, this includes rabbits, turkeys, corn, and various other plant and animal relationships.¹⁰⁷

In this context, food sovereignty is a form of Indigiqueer survivance. Gerald Vizenor

¹⁰⁶ Vía Campesina, “Qué es la Soberanía Alimentaria,” *Informe Posiciones de Vía Campesina* (2003).

¹⁰⁷ Tania I. González-Rivadeneira, Alejandro Casas, and Arturo Argueta-Villamar, “Food Sovereignty of the P’urhépecha of Michoacán, Mexico: Historical Review and Critical Perspectives from Nature-Culture Relationships,” *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 9, no. 1 (2022): 36.

describes survivance as “more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories are active presence.”¹⁰⁸ Expanding survivance in the context of food landscapes means labeling recipes, stories during meal sharing and farming as a living culture without end. While there is struggle for survivance by community, cultural strategies that promote diversity and sustainability through a process of relationality promote the longevity of human and non-human relationships.

Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican survivance in Portland, Oregon encompasses a range of practices in which community members choose to provide food for each other. In addition to the cultivation of crops – as discussed in next section - community members also raise, tend to, harvest and distribute chicken and rabbit meat. These food production practices provide an avenue for individual and community empowerment, for cultural affirmation and re-generation, and for the transference of knowledge between peers and generations. In the next section, I will elaborate upon the concept of food sovereignty-as-Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican sovereignty. I will share stories of food cultivation – including the cultivation of plant foods, chicken and rabbit.

Luz: Community Building through connections to Land

When I walked into Luz’s (they/he) home, the air was hazy. I thought the smell might have been chile asando since we were going to work in their kitchen space, but as I got closer to the living room, I noticed that they had a *popoxcomitl*¹⁰⁹ to burn medicine. They were smudging the space with a friend, so I greeted them quickly to signal that I would be outside. They nodded, and I walked back into the yard. I sat by a massive stinging nettle plant (*Urtica dioica*) and

¹⁰⁸ Gerald Robert Vizenor, ed., *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 15.

¹⁰⁹ Translation: Copalero or incense burner.

observed it while waiting for Luz. I reached out to the plant – despite its prickly appearance – and felt its leaves tickle my fingertips. I assumed it was the wrong part of the plant since it tends to sting and so I touched it all around. I was fine.



Figure 6. Stinging Nettles from Luz’s urban garden [pictured on left]

During the course of my fieldwork, I spent a great deal of time with Luz. They took care of me by welcoming me into their home, inviting me to sit with their plants and by preparing teas and food for my well-being. Luz’s urban garden in their backyard was filled with all kinds of herbs: valerian, mugwort, ruda, ashwagandha, dandelion, yarrow, stinging nettles and many more. They told me to also greet the plants that appeared to be weeds outside the beds, which I am still working to identify. As I have grown closer to stinging nettles, they have tended to me in the forms of tea for my seasonal allergies, as a tool for urtication to tend to my arthritis, and as a

food source. For several Indigenous Mexican communities and Native Pacific Northwest tribes, stinging nettles are also known as Ortiga or Chichicaztle and are used for arthritis and joint pain by urtication or tincture applied topically. While spending time at Luz's farm, I spent a great deal of time with the stinging nettles. The stinging nettles' sharpness alerted me to my surroundings. They left red and raised patches on my skin to signal their touch, helping me to see the limits of my body in space. I parted ways with the stinging nettle and moved into the rest of the urban garden.¹¹⁰ I could hear chickens clucking, bunnies chirruping, and the sound of the street. I was surrounded by plants and animals that would mark a growing relationship with the people caring for them and the nourishment they would provide for the community. I also saw Luz's dog Kalabasa near the olive tree. Kalabasa usually sits under the cherry tree but lately has taken to settling under the olive tree near the chicken castle. The small green house is across the chicken castle where some are nestled, and others roam freely. The bunnies also have a hutch where they tend to remain.

Community is connected through Luz's Friday apothecary days. The third Fridays are open to all communities and all other Fridays are for Black and Brown relatives only. This became important when Black and Brown community members felt that white community members were taking up too much space during harvesting and in working with medicine. Sara, a volunteer farmer mentioned, "some white people would come in without the right head space. When we work with medicine, we have to have good intention in why we are working with it in the first space. It impacts the medicine and the people we offer it to." The community apothecary is a volunteer led project that uses surplus herbs produced at the farm to create free tinctures, teas, salves, etc. for community *antojos* and needs. Luz shared, "we envision supporting other

¹¹⁰ Urban farming/gardening is the practice of growing plants, fruits, and vegetables in cities. Luz's urban garden is in Portland, Oregon.

herbal projects led by community members by offering collaborative support and community learning opportunities.” Upon entry, community members and volunteers can expect a group meditation, check-in, working closely with a plant or two, making a community herbal offering to be distributed at their Free Booth during the Come Thru Market in Portland, Oregon.¹¹¹

During an apothecary day, a volunteer named Sara (she/her) mentioned an experience they had with stinging nettles that involved them voluntarily hitting their third eye. She had a vision and said, “I was swept into another realm.” As they shared this experience, they were using their bare hands to harvest the stinging plant. While we usually have gloves to do the work, they did it seamlessly. However, it may also be that they are not as allergic to the plant as others, or it was a younger plant, or simply, Sara knows how to hold the plant. Nonetheless, the stinging nettle plant may be sharing with them a distinct medicine. For Rubi (she/her), my partner and another volunteer that day shared, “Growing up in Oregon, I would always get nettle stings running through the woods especially by streams. To remove the sting, I was told to rub the back of a fern with spores on it to relieve the pain.” Rubi grew up with the experience of feeling the plant in a more physical sense. She also found herbal remedies for soothing the red patches brought on by stinging nettles. Growing closer to plants in the Pacific Northwest has provided me with a roadmap to community members who carry knowledge towards such interspecies relationships.

Having grown up in Oregon, Rubi knew that being around other people of color is not the norm in Portland, so she is intentional about spending quality time within community. She has noticed the significance of fostering such relations and attributes the growing prevalence of

¹¹¹ According to their website, Come Thru Market is, “an incubator market centering Black and Indigenous Farmers, Makers, and Friends. We support BIPOC growers in taking their small business dreams to the farmers market environment. It’s a vibe—Come Thru and get what you need. We are an anti-racist market. To help us maintain that environment we ask that you follow the rule of *see something, say something*.”

BIPOC community events in Portland of community members whose families have been in the city for generations. While recent transplants have added to a more diverse city, she attributes the longevity of farm spaces to those who have roots to the land. Rubi shared, “It is important to tend to the life ahead of you.” While Rubi does not identify as a farmer or Indigiqueer, she is part of the Mexican diaspora and her role as a cultural worker opens avenues for new arrivals and farmers to meet.

Tending to the life ahead of you provides strategies of sustainability rooted in understandings of *comunalidad*. being an ancestor and providing space for future generations. Rubi promoted the intimacy of tending to such relations to foster food landscapes that hone food sovereignty and survivance. Plant, animal, and human relationships are firmly rooted in lifeways that show up as instinctual but require patience, learning, and archiving. At the crossroad of multicultural exchange in Portland, Oregon, there is cultural knowledge that refuses to be weeded out of the food landscape. Community members gather and harvest as a means to promote and protect the next generations.

Chicken Harvesting

Chicken harvesting provides food scraps that are made into recipes. These scraps represent intergenerational traditional ecological knowledges. Traditional ecological knowledge is rich with teaching stories that demonstrate material, ethical, and spiritual responsibilities for engaging with human and non-human relationships.¹¹² I met Luz a queer trans disabled Indigiqueer famer¹¹³, at their farm kitchen two years ago during a chicken harvest where they

¹¹² Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Mishkos Kenomagwen, the Lessons of Grass: Restoring Reciprocity with the Good Green Earth,” in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 35.

¹¹³ Claudia Irene Calderón, “Reimagining Our Citational Practices: Centering Indigenous and Campesino Ways of Knowing,” *Teaching Citational Practice: Critical Feminist Approaches* 2 (2022).

showed me and Rubi how to humanely kill and clean chickens. Their farm at the time was on an island near Portland. They were displaced from the land when their white landlords removed their coops and tore down their structures before asking them to leave the space. It was a sudden and startling experience for the community, but one far too common for farmers of color during the time when they lost their land-base and farm. Out of a rooting of sovereignty as land, food sovereignty is also about relationships. In the wake of gentrification and uprooting, Luz now currently tends to three small urban farm locations on the unceded lands of the Kalapuya, Chinook, Willamette, Tillamook, Cowlitz and other bands, today also known as Portland, Oregon.

When I first arrived at Luz's farm, it was to harvest chicken. That day I noticed a large pot boiling and a popoxcomitl next to Luz, who was moving quickly through their space and had short brown hair, knee-high farm boots, and rolled up sleeves. As we entered the space, they asked us to cleanse ourselves with smoke before working with the animals so that we would leave what we brought with us and work with the animals with open minds and spirits. They said that once we started and felt the animals, it would connect us to our relatives, that it was our people's way of connecting to animals and the earth we tend. I was excited to start, but then Luz asked if one of us wanted to hold the chicken as they harvested it. I said no, just wanting to observe, and Rubi stepped forward. I did not feel confident following through with holding the chicken through the process or using the knife on the chicken without removing my fear of something going wrong.

Luz told us that the chickens could feel us and appreciated my honesty. They proceeded with the process with one other chicken. After the chickens were beheaded, we dunked them in boiling water to be scalded. We started to take the feathers off by hand, using loose feathers to

loosen the ones still on and repeating the process until they were bare. We then moved to the cutting board station, where Luz instructed us on how to gut and trim the chicken. We moved through it and the process was smooth. It was just as Luz had described. I felt like I was meant to harvest chickens and found much ease and joy in the work. Rubi also shared throughout the process how timely and generous the experience was. She shared, “The harvesting was done at pace to honor the chickens for their being. We also got to make a prayer and share how we are going to distribute the meat.” We cleaned the stations, and Luz offered us each a chicken to make a meal or distribute with community. Rubi and I split a chicken and offered the other to feed the veterans and community members Luz planned for.

This introduction to harvesting chicken was the first step in getting to know Luz. I would return to Luz’s farm many times over the next three years and work alongside them and dozens of volunteers. Luz moved to Portland twelve years ago. They grew up in Chicago and were there after their service in the army. They moved to Portland and were able to buy a house through a VA loan.¹¹⁴ The house was bought for their dog, Kalabasa, who wanted and needed a bigger space to be in. This home purchase moved Luz into being a dog walker and trainer. As they cared for their dog, they noticed they wanted to provide herbal support for their pet and moved into learning about herbal work and farming.

¹¹⁴ It is a mortgage loan in the United States guaranteed by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.



Figure 7. Luz greets mushroom in their Urban Garden [pictured on left]

Luz makes a conscious effort to help others hone their ancestral practices and move beyond isolation in the city. They adapt their apothecary days and harvesting plants or animals to invite people who are present and practice reciprocity. Luz mentions that just by showing up or talking to the plants that surround their farm helps one connect to the land they are on. The start of their herbal training was strained with tension due to colonial and white supremacist approaches to land tending and led them towards being a farmer.

Practicing Relationality to Community and Self

Some participants at the farm mobilize their jobs and other skills to access material resources to support their communities. Several use their roles to provide funds and resources to community-identified needs. Others draw from their social spheres and relationships with

white community members to facilitate change. Many share that these methods gain them a sense of purpose in their communities.

During the early spring season, Luz shared, “March is the time for working the land and connecting to building relationships with your people. It is the time to build in those relationships and begin working to build something for us to land in when these systems fall.” They take the month literally, and share that March is the time to march with arms linked for a new way of being in relationship with one another. To fiercely love community, the planet, and the sacredness of protecting the sacred, Luz consciously practices relationality, where they dream with community and use their garden to conjure medicine, laughter, and food as stories and resistance. They do this by participating in seed swaps, providing an apothecary space for people to share knowledges and medicine, and share their farm with community members to plant seeds of dreams and community building.



Figure 8. Three jars of Fire Cider [pictured above]

For Luz, plants dominate their everyday life. Plant medicine is collectively shared at the farm. It happens via conversations with the plants themselves, in-between farming tasks, and

during apothecary days known as a place where the “Apothecary Babes” craft medicine. The medicine above is Fire Cider and is made with what you have.¹¹⁵ Fire cider is used as an immune booster. The typical contents include apple cider vinegar, hot peppers, horseradish, ginger, garlic, onion, citrus, herbs, and hot peppers. This particular fire cider was made within a community which consisted of four Native community members who filled their jars with prayers for community. One of the community member’s is Native Hawaiian, another Mexica, one reconnecting Mexica, and a Purépecha sister. They are part of the Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican spheres I am a part of, but always seem to be traveling throughout the U.S. Some had met Luz through *danzas*¹¹⁶ and one other had been familiar with apothecary days since its inception. Prior to filling the jars, they all gathered baskets and went around the urban farm to sit with plants for an hour. They sat with the plants and spoke to them and shared the intentions they had for harvesting and making fire cider. After the time was over, they gathered in a circle to share what they came across and the plants that called to them. One participant included a tiny sprig of rue to their jar and shared that it is consumed in small ways within their community. It is a familiar medicine that provides protection and is medicine for those attempting to build stronger boundaries. Since this was also going to be shared with a farmer who is allergic to citrus, we did not include oranges, grapefruit or lemons, instead we used pomegranates. With these parameters, there was no measurement but filling the jars with medicine like turmeric, serrano chiles, garlic, onion, pomegranates, rue, cempasúchil, horseradish, Oregon grape, elderberry, roses, milky oats, nasturtium, rosemary, marshmallow, cilantro, Italian dandelion, calendula, huacatay, tamarind, and borage. The jars were then filled up to the rim with apple

¹¹⁵ Linda Black Elk, “Fire Cider Recipe,” YouTube, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xxfAUEMHXo>.

¹¹⁶ Translation: Dances – extending from Sundance, Moon Dance, Mexica Dances, etc.

cider vinegar. After four weeks, the jars are strained and bottled for community. Fire cider can be taken by spoonful or as a tea with honey. It is to be used as it feels right with one's body.

There was another apothecary day where the group members shared their experiences with seasonal depression. But, as summer was coming closer, there was also a new conversation about summertime sadness. Prior to the arrival of volunteers, Luz shared that they were greeted by a St. John's wort plant (Klamath weed). At the time, I only knew that the plant had been commonly used for the relief of nerve pain specifically.¹¹⁷ Luz shared that St. John's wort can also be used for support in sadness and depression as well. They said, "While talking with the plant, I felt it hold me. There was a connection to navigating how the grief we hold remains consistent and unrelentless in our lives. I was grateful for the plant showing up in my day. Just the feeling of being near the plant gave them a sigh of relief." They showed us the particular plant and how it grew in the cracks of the sidewalk just outside their front door. Luz's lesson also demonstrates the ways in which the energetics of a plant are just as powerful as the medicine they carry when ingested or topically used. Sometimes you simply have to go sit with plants to learn from them.

Tending to plants and the land Luz is on is important to them as it provides them with lessons of being an earthling. The work satisfies their desires to be and stay connected as plants continue to hold them and shared, "the medicine you seek is in your already." The foods and plants Luz harvest are what Luz eats, attached to clothes they wear, and enable them to dream and weave. The interconnectedness of food is especially important to Luz in the wintertime where their nails remain clean and they long for the days when their hands are covered in dirt. The freed-up time is a privilege to them. They use the time to pray and think of their relations.

¹¹⁷ St. John's wort (Klamath Weed) plant in particular is one to be mindful of taking internally if you are on any Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or on birth control because it can interfere with your medication.

Luz dreams and prays that their part in this universe gets closer to stitching into a tapestry of collective liberation. Luz said, “You stitch your patch, I’ll stitch mine, and together we can cover the world.” Relationality is an Indigenous concept, about which many scholars have written. Scholars like Shawn Wilson, Sandra Littletree, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, and Marisa Duarte define relationality as, “...the acknowledgement that we all exist in relationship to each other, the natural world, ideas, the cosmos, objects, ancestors, and future generations, and furthermore, that we are accountable to those relationships.”¹¹⁸ It is through Luz’s practices and farm that they craft a diverse array of plant medicine to make, grow, and build in community that centers food as medicine and not a novel concept.

The social and activist aspect of Luz’s work is critical for their being and farm. They give to people as they give to the land. Luz exclaims, “Both call on me to farm, compost, and think of regeneration closely. It means putting down prayers in the form of seeds and rethinking how I do the work I do.” During this conversation, their neighbor, an older Black woman came over with coffee and greeted us. Since it was a Friday, I expected people to drop in as I worked with Luz around the garden, and slowly people showed up to greet Luz, the plants, and share stories. The neighbor, Ms. Lucas spoke with us about wanting to grow food to sell at the market. Luz suggested garlic as something that could be a good first harvest and shared how they could help with setting sprinklers and sharing seeds. They sighed, it seemed to be of relief, but they were also worried about not producing enough garlic. Having braided garlic last summer, Luz and I shared how much people at the local markets have paid generously for braids of garlic. Ms.

¹¹⁸ Sandra Littletree, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, and Marisa Duarte, “Centering Relationality: A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices,” *Knowledge Organization* 47, no. 5 (2020): 410–26; Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 414.

Lucas, as well as others who were trying to grow food for the first time worried about the results. The anxiety surrounding production is one many run into, but to start, a first harvest must occur.

More neighbors, community members, and friends would drop by. Several shared their abundance of kale and eggs with us as we tended to Luz's urban farm. Luz and their connections provide lessons for how we work to rebuild in community and tend to chronically ill bodies as an important facet. They pray for growth of seeds, and the destruction of systems of oppression which they insist must come down so that they can, "Tear it up to tiny bits and compost it to feed my chicks." Luz sends their prayers out to bring prayers in. It helps them remember the directions that shape their work. To the North they face their ancestors and Luz listens. To the East, they look for new ways to be. To the West, they release the past to make room. To the South, they face the descendant they do their work for. The South also accounts for their younger self who would have benefited from the garden and seed prayers they set in their work.

While we were at the farm together, they said, "We grow food like we grow community. We grow each other." I smiled and they said, "It is serious. Like how we offer *tabaquito* to plants when we gather from them, we should do the same to ourselves. It is reverence!" Luz makes the motion of spreading tobacco over their head and they breathe in to press their hands into their chest. Luz's eyes are closed and remain closed as they breathe out. I sit in the tomato fields looking up at them throughout the process. I fill my basket with tomatoes and as they look away, I stop to also gift myself with reverence and sprinkle my head with the tobacco to cherish the moment. We grow food like we grow community. We grow each other by taking care of one another and ourselves. The *consejo* (advice) lives with me as I think of the long-term process of carrying for the land and community in interwoven ways.

One of the ways community members deal with feelings of not belonging and disconnection within the larger context of Portland has been by cultivating land and plant sharing spaces. Finding connection to the land and others was a necessity for networking groups for Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans in Portland. Within the intentional landscapes, they remove the overwhelming whiteness and knowledge systems that do not serve them. By sharing stories of plants and relatives, they foster conditions for their own self-defining and being.¹¹⁹ This also facilitates the formation of social ties that mobilize collective forms of survivance. Knowing what and where is a space for collective liberation and preservation of knowledge for future generations also means being aware of what feels stagnant. Community members carve out practices that are living and changing like them.

Native Studies tied into land back movements are about preserving the relationality between human and non-human relationships. In an interview with Priscilla Solis Ybarra, Cherrie Moraga posed the question, “What would it take to just live an equitable life? And by equitable, I mean in relationship to nature and those resources that are not ‘ever bountiful’.”¹²⁰ According to Moraga, environmentalism is about honing a reciprocal relationship and shared that the most valuable lesson they were told was that “the land has memory”.

A large part of Luz’s work is growing food seeds as a prayer of hope for a future closer to our collective liberation and self-sovereignty. Luz, an Indigiqueer farmer hones food sovereignty in their day-to-day operation. Self-sovereignty is an additional practice for Indigiqueer farmers as they prioritize their own sustainability to help support collective action.

¹¹⁹ Jessica Hernandez, *Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes Through Indigenous Science* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2022).

¹²⁰ Priscilla Solis Ybarra, “‘The Body Knows and the Land Has Memory’: An Interview with Cherrie Moraga,” in *Latinx Environmentalisms: Place, Justice, and the Decolonial* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019), 286.

According to Luz, food sovereignty means land back to you and me. This calls for an end to all colonial projects and power to the people. They hold apothecary days for herbalists, new and those with more experience to share plant knowledges and make medicine for community. The days generally occur on Fridays and at times, I may be the only person there with them, or two other people may show up. However, during the summertime, there can be up to four stations of herbal work happening and ten people helping. During those times, there are various plants present and so much tenderness in the apothecary space.



Figure 9. Cases of red and green cherry tomatoes for the Free Booth [pictured above]

Alongside land, animals are the next being to learn from and with. A farmer friend of Luz had some extra tallow. It was 4 pounds of solidified fat, from a cow they had harvested a couple

winters back and so they decided it was the time to make soap. They used the fat to make soap with the apothecary crew. During the making of the soap they said, “Y'all soap is a thousands of years old technology. It's wild to know that our ancestors figured out this shit and we get to make this vital hygiene item from fat and lye. We can make it extra special by adding essential oils, herbs and intentions. Damn. We live in a magical planet.” For Luz, food scraps are a part of culture and means nothing goes to waste. The items made during apothecary Fridays are distributed amongst members, for specific community groups, and also as part their work with the Come Thru Market, Luz holds a free booth sharing community apothecary offerings, fresh eggs, and other community resources.

Nonetheless, Luz shared, “Growing food, farming, is really hard work. Farmers: field working farmers, small farmers, livestock farmers do really important hard work so that we can all eat.” Luz does not just eat what they grow, they rely on farmers for their food, for the feed for their animals, and for the seeds for their crops. They continued to say, “This is intense bodily work, and it is heartbreaking. It is an emotional and physically demanding job.” Luz continues their farm work every season. They have tomatoes, tomatillos, peppers, greens, stinging nettles, celery, parsley, cilantro, and shiso onions. Luz is intentional of the things they grow and the seasons in which they are intended to be part of. The closeness to seasons brings them to practice and follow the guides of the land—which replicate the three sisters: corn, beans, and squash as seasonal fall food ways. These are culturally significant as they reflect spiritual and social roles of connection to land, ancestors, and wisdom. They represent the presence of crafting life by honoring past food and farming practices as ongoing realities.



Figure 10. *Tirineni* garlands from Luz's urban garden [pictured above]

The cycle of plants is similar to the one of rabbits. However, during autumn, the farm does not usually sell flowers because they give them to ceremony every year. The flowers go towards plant medicine like the fire cider mentioned above, they also get returned to the land as seeds are sowed and are also made into garlands or flower crowns for community members to revel in their being. For Luz and others in the community, flowers are relatives and familiar medicine to many which make their presence an everyday ceremony of relationality. Plants surpass notions of life or death as they are woven into our bodies as internal and external medicine. Even then, Luz does not consider flowers a big part of their work as they do not have a lot of land for growing flowers. Some plants grow as company for medicines since insects

dislike the smell of rue or *tirineni*¹²¹. From sowing seeds to raising bunnies, each practice takes time, effort, and commitment.

Rabbit Farming and Harvesting

A few years ago, at a Native community talk, local community members urged audience members to stop eating non-Native farmed salmon and move into eating from the land. Luz took the call and began bunny farming. This movement led them to their current work in rabbit farming and they have been raising rabbits for meat for their home and community for 5 years. According to Luz, “rabbit farming is for food security, food sovereignty, and an act of community care.” Rabbit farming is a necessary change for providing another protein option for community in Portland. This is a protein option for land-based proteins and to steer away from salmon or other endangered species. This departure for Luz, opens up the complex landscape of salmon farming and hatcheries. According to Louie Ungaro, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe member, “You are not really sovereign if you can’t feed your people.”¹²² Many federally recognized tribes in Oregon have salmon hatcheries and farm salmon. They are important for maintaining tribal rights to harvest fish and assist in rehabilitating the loss habitat produced by dams and environmental degradation. Living within one’s culture and foodways is how community exercise sovereignty. By centering Indigenous knowledge, presence, and farming within the food sovereignty movement, rabbit farming and its scraps are made into recipes which present the carving of intergenerational traditional ecological knowledges. For Luz, the relationship of creation requires doing and develops a reciprocal relationship between human and non-human

¹²¹ Translation: *Cempasúchil* or marigold.

¹²² Lynda Mapes, Erika J. Schultz, and Lauren Frohne, “First Foods: How Native People Are Preserving the Natural Nourishment of the Pacific Northwest,” *The Seattle Times*, July 10, 2022, <https://projects.seattletimes.com/2022/first-foods-native-people-pacific-northwest-preserving/>.

relationships. This relationship means showing up and not working with a detrimental model but one of survivance.



Figure 11. Two brown bunnies in their hutch [pictured above]

However, rabbit farming has been challenging on a small scale. Luz has had to learn new growing and harvesting techniques to hold space for the twelve furry beings. The rabbit farming that was intended to provide another protein source has not been an easy task the last five years. While at the farm, the bunny updates look like, “Everyone except for Jack and Bebe have babies!” Which means Cindy Bun, Lily Fur, Fiona, and Alice have litters. Except one was small and the other was a false pregnancy. For some of the rabbits, their false pregnancies also turn out to be that they just gestate a little longer than everyone else. Throughout my work, I have come to learn and work alongside the growing rabbit knowledge shared by Luz. Like, at eight weeks, baby bunnies are separated from moms and separated by sex. And at 12 weeks they go to harvest. The turnaround means they will acquire 2-4 more bunnies to bump up the scale and

possibly announce rabbit meat shares for the next season. This transition takes time, and time is precious. During market season, rabbit meat is brought out in limited quantities so that Luz can have something to bring to the markets they vend at as well as food to eat.

Part of my fieldwork means following through with people, animals, and plants. Follow through is not about completion, but about witnessing. With bunny work, this also means learning about slaughter processes. In Oregon, there has been a movement to spare animals from the stress of transportation. Cervical dislocation methods for slaughtering adds to the stress and is often ineffective as it is harder to break the necks of larger rabbits. The dislocation may only paralyze the animal, and it remains conscious to what is happening. Even if done correctly, rabbits remain conscious for a few seconds after the neck is broken. This difference and change are important as there are some processing spaces that are licensed and use a head bash method, which for obvious reasons is not a method used or accepted by Luz at their farm. On-farm slaughter is preferred because it's more humane than shipping livestock to processing facilities. Harvesting at the farm means animals are sent off in song and ceremony. Without these methods, a stressed rabbit's offering of meat is tough. When animals offer themselves in the process, their meat is tender and a resource to share with community members.

During our first chicken harvest, the chickens were told weeks in advance that they would be harvested with the intention of making meals for veterans in the city. Luz would sing and check in with them about the preparation, and as we harvested them, they appeared to lean into the blade, having accepted their fate and going without tensing their bodies. This made cleaning and butchering them a smooth process. Part of this is about the harvester. When I shared my dissertation topic with José, a Mexican community member from Hermiston, Oregon he asked, "did people mention the emotions of being connected to the animals?" I said yes, and he

proceeded to share his experience, “Good. When I was a kid, my mom would tell me to leave when she would butcher animals. I was not allowing them to die.” According to José, his emotions were prolonging the animals’ deaths since he wanted them to live. This knowledge lives with him today and he remains mindful in how he engages with animals. He currently does not butcher his animals.

In the case of Luz, sometimes people offer up their animals to them. A local farmer’s friend had a rooster that was physically aggressive towards the hen at the farm, and they offered it up. Luz said, “Rapey roosters got to go. There is no space for that.” They consider harvesting to be a responsibility to protect women and non-men who do the unseen work. Luz shared, “Harvesting violent animals is work of community protection, the work of community healing, information gathering and sharing and ultimately dismantling patriarchy.” Luz sets these prayers in their animal harvesting so that silence is not the reality at their farm or community space, but rather shared vocally to solidify bonds and responsibilities within community. They transform difficult situations into regenerative processes. By dispatching the rooster, they show and offer others their labor of harvesting “someone off their farm or out of their flock.” They offer dispatches and just like that a “rapey rooster” is sent off in song and ceremony. And then it is time to make soup.

Like the three sisters and foodways, milpas and such farms share social roles. Corn, beans, and squash are interlinked as an insurance mechanism to meet social and environmental desires for present and future generations. The trio creates benefits for each other and are symbolic of relationality between plant beings. Thus, we engage grounded normativity, wherein, we know that our practices code and reveal knowledge, and our knowledge codes and reveals

practices.”¹²³ These social roles represent the spiritual ways in which sustenance and connections are made between beings. The agricultural practices illustrate Indigenous food sovereignty and community values on mutual support. The education and nurturing of such ways provide lessons on heritage in the way of harvesting and collective food and medicine preparation.

Conclusions

I have traced relationships between people, land, and animals in Portland, Oregon. I conceptualize relationality as an everyday practice for community members as hosted by Luz. This illustrates how foodways takes place on a spectrum of community action and care. By placing relationality into focus, our understanding of survivance incorporates queer relatives and their foodways to the center. I identify how those who work with Luz and Luz themselves, are providing physical and spiritual support to community more broadly. The most common ways of providing relationality were 1) weaving plants and people in herbal practices 2) farming as a means to provide new land-based proteins to protect Native foods, and 3) intentional actions that foster community uplifting with the land. Together these practices provide, “an epistemology where the relationship with something (a person, object or idea) is more important than the thing itself.”¹²⁴ While Luz and their farm practices are at the center of this chapter, their actions and the ongoing processes of relationship building are far greater than any one of us. Thus, Luz reminds us that food sovereignty is not a hegemonic practice, but a contested one where Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexican communities challenge hierarches and assert community relationality and survivance.

¹²³ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 22.

¹²⁴ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2020), 73.

CHAPTER V: INDIGIQUEER AND DIASPORIC MEXICAN SURVIVANCE

In working with Luz, I asked them and other participants: What is the labor and reciprocity of making food like pozole? How does pozole express relationship? More specifically, when I asked community members in Portland, Oregon, about pozole, I asked, “Which one do you make?” My first inquiry came on the heels of over two years of community research at Luz’s farm and six months of simultaneous research at a local grocery market in Portland. While I noted the ingredients selected to make pozole, I also observed the process of making pozole and documented how ingredients were used as well as the stories, values and knowledge associated with sharing and passing on pozole and pozole recipes.

Pozole is a meal that showcases Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican survivance. The meal invites traditional ecological knowledge to be at the center of collaboration and is part of Indigiqueer everyday reality. I draw on the work of Gerald Vizenor. For Vizenor, survivance provides a narrative about Indigenous peoples’ active presence in the world now, which untangles notions of survival as an end goal.¹²⁵ Between sharing recipes and pozole, Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexican community members move beyond resiliency and towards feeding future generations with recipes from past and present community knowledges.¹²⁶ The concept of resiliency encapsulates abuses of power that create violence towards marginalized communities. Catherine Panter-Brick argues that by focusing on resiliency, ethnographers can reveal, “strengths rather than vulnerabilities, capabilities rather than deficits, resources rather

¹²⁵ Gerald Robert Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

¹²⁶ Blanca Araujo and Maria Teresa de la Piedra, “Violence on the U.S.-México Border and the Capital Students Use in Response,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26, no. 3 (2013): 263–78.

than exposures, and transformation rather than stasis.”¹²⁷ As a result, the literature centering on resiliency has been viewed as necessary and central to migrant and refugee possibilities but falls short in disguising suffering and survival.¹²⁸ Roberto Barrios maps some of the merits and shortcomings of resiliency and shares how the concept describes a subject’s ability to “carry on” which can depoliticize a subject while also noting how systematic structural violence could affect one’s ability to survive.¹²⁹ While there is movement happening in this research, I look towards Eve Tuck’s for us to, “consider the long-term repercussions of *thinking of ourselves as broken*.”¹³⁰ This is necessary for researchers engaged in community-led research and in Native survivance.

The pozole recipes that follow work with scraps, and this is a practice of relationality. Relationality expands on survivance, as community members harvest their own animals and plants. This is not new, but part of the tradition passed down by generations. Pozole recipes as traditional ecological knowledge is a reclamation of scraps and changes to recipes without shame – it is a form of environmental *rasquachismo*. Environmental *rasquachismo* does the most with everything, it includes scraps, and is mobilized not as a last resort, but as a desire for working with all parts of everything that surrounds one. In my research, there were generous debates about what kind of pozole is traditional, what it is supposed to be composed of, and who gets to make it. I played with the heat of the debate and asked community members to think through questions of identity, place making, access to ingredients, etc. At several points for participants, we realized how our resources marked the differences. While we had similar importance attached

¹²⁷ Catherine Panter-Brick, “Health, Risk, and Resilience: Interdisciplinary Concepts and Applications,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43, no. 1 (2014): 438.

¹²⁸ Silvia Rodriguez Vega, “Praxis of Resilience & Resistance: ‘We Can STOP Donald Trump’ and Other Messages from Immigrant Children,” *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal* 12, no. 3 (2018): 122–47.

¹²⁹ Roberto E. Barrios, “Resilience: A Commentary from the Vantage Point of Anthropology,” *Annals of Anthropological Practice* 40, no. 1 (2016): 31.

¹³⁰ Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 409.

to red, white, and green pozole, the pozoles shared present a series of new ways of naming and feeding for community. Pozole powered anthropology reinforces cultural identity and power, celebrating traditional foodways and knowledge. It is empowered by collaboration with community to hone foodways and identities, asserting sovereignty and kinship. Pozole promotes the caring of all beings and systems that aligns with people across communities.

As We Have Always Done

Indigiqueer kitchens reflect and complicate community notions of traditional foods. As Ruda, Rosa, and I shared our stories on shucking corn and cleaning beans, we ended up talking about pozole. While Ruda shared their most recent experience making a red elk pozole, with meat they had hunted a few months ago with their father, they casually mentioned having beans alongside their hominy. I asked them to repeat their last ingredient, and they fiercely said, “you don’t put beans in your pozole?” I was stunned but also interested in how this came to be for them. They rushed to their dad, and I followed. Ruda said, “Pop, they don’t put beans in their pozole.” Their father who was watering plants near us shrugged and said that in Tucson they have an abundance of beans that will not go to waste and so they started putting handfuls of beans in their pozole. Herb advised me to do the same and that whenever there is abundance to explore and expand my meals.

The suggestion by their father demonstrated the ways in which the kitchen is not isolated but is a transformational space where culinary possibilities can unfold.¹³¹ Herb later shared that in his recipe, it has always been changing. His ex-wife does not tolerate spicy food so their pozole was crafted for her *antojos* and does not have too many chiles in it. He expressed nostalgia in crafting his pozole, saying pozole is food for his loved ones and works with what

¹³¹ Emily Yates-Doerr and Megan A. Carney, “Demedicalizing Health: The Kitchen as a Site of Care,” *Medical Anthropology* 35, no. 4 (2016): 308.

surrounds him. Crafting with love and the land is intricately woven for their family. Informed by Herb's pozole, recipes have the following features: (1) hominy, chiles, beans, elk meat; (2) is made for loved one's *antojos* and (3) a site for sharing stories of how recipes are adapted and marks pozole an everchanging meal. Pozole is dish of possibilities.



Figure 12. Elk brisket leftovers (2023)

After wrapping up farm work, the photo shoot, and snacking on leftovers, they sent me away with heaps of kale, basil, two smoked fishes and a 32oz container of pozole. Ruda asked for an immediate review of the pozole, and I warmed it up as soon as I got home. The pozole tasted just like home. The broth was rich and packed with guajillo chiles and garlic. They added just enough oregano to remind me of the smell of my grandmother's kitchen and the beans were perfectly cooked. The inclusion of beans made me interested in learning more of how pozole is made and passed between generations. It also inspired Ruda to call their nana and follow their pozole lineage. They were able to trace the inclusion of beans in both sides of their family lines.

This was incredibly unique as I have yet to meet another family or individual who adds beans to their pozole.

Food Sovereignty in crafting a plato fuerte

Pozole is a traditional Mexican stew with hominy.¹³² There are three common variations of pozole: red pork pozole with a rich heat from chiles de arbol, ancho, and guajillo, white pork pozole that does not involve a heated spice but layers its broth with oregano, thyme, and pork, and green chicken pozole with a generous heat from the combination of tomatillos and serrano peppers. Pozole can be topped with cabbage, radish, onions, cilantro, avocado, lime juice, and more. In working with Luz, I have learned that pozole signifies the deep ties communities hold with nature and that are woven into embodying generations of knowledge that are constantly growing.

In my research, there have been heated debates about what kind of pozole is traditional, what it is supposed to be composed of, and who gets to make it. However, in working with Ruda, Rosa, and Luz, they have not engaged with the notion of hierarchy or how things should be. Rather they rejected order or ideas of what kind of pozole is better. They only appeared to care about the fact that pozole is pozole, that diverse recipes should be preserved for future generations to hold this memory.

Food sovereignty comes in the form of crafting pozole from what surrounds the farm. It was through that process of coming back and forth that one-day Luz shared their pozole with me. When I asked them what they had made, they were quick to share their pozole as being red with a rabbit protein. I asked them if their relatives passed this down,

¹³² Hominy is dried kernels that have been cooked and steeped in limewater. Like beans, hominy must be washed and soaked overnight. After boiling, the consistency should be smooth but chewy. There are precooked canned hominy in stores.

and they said no, it is what they have in a season when it is pozole season, which they described as late fall and early winter. Luz said that this is the season that they most need pozole as it brings their spirit and vessel much needed support. For Luz, pozole is not necessarily about recreating their family's traditional *plato fuerte*¹³³, but of crafting with what they have at hand and removing expectations of authenticity that do not serve them.

Luz's pozole is pozole because they grew the chiles and harvested the rabbits that would provide future generations with the tools to grow their own foods and harvest meats that offer longevity to native foods. Becoming a rabbit farmer and plant keeper are intricate modalities for Luz. By moving away from stagnant definitions of being, growing, and cooking, Luz carves out opportunities for community to support each other and their relatives. These relational practices allowed many to grow their spiritual, herbal, and farming practices.

Crafting Pozole at a local grocery store

For farmers like Luz, crafting a sovereign meal is a relational and everyday possibility. Along with following their practice, for over six months and at the start of my fieldwork, I worked part time at New Seasons Market – Concordia, in NE Portland. The store is known as an alternative to Whole Foods. New Seasons Markets' products are known for being organic and produced locally in the Pacific Northwest. The mission statement includes, "A friendly, inviting place that honors its region's farmers, ranchers, growers and makers—helping them prosper for generations to come. Over the years, our community has grown, but our goal is still the same: to build community through good food." Regardless of it being an alternative to Whole Foods, the store is expensive, but as a worker I got a 30% discount, and I needed the money. I also wanted

¹³³ Translation: Main and/or traditional meal.

hands on experience working with meat. I also got the opportunity to work closer with Latinx co-workers and learn about and craft various cuts of meat. The act of working at a meat counter meant meeting people from various places.

Conducting ethnographic fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic meant following several safety precautions to prevent disease spread. Luz's farm and Carina's community kitchen have masking policies which require that during farm activities and medicine making, all community members must wear masks in and outdoors. At the grocery store, there is not a masking policy, but I remain masked throughout my work hours and when shopping. While working during peak hours, I am able to see regular customers and gather an idea of the racial demographics of customers and workers at the store.

The store has clear windows and is made up of green and brown colors in signages and carpets. There is the sound of people talking, 80s soft rock playing in the store's radio, and carts moving. For six months, I closed the Meat and Fish Department three times a week. My shift began at 2pm and ended around 10pm. The Meat and Fish Department is much different from the store culture, it is much colder and loud metal music plays. Above the fish counter, a section in the Department there is an emphasis on the B corporation with signage that highlights the impact and intention set with the environment. Smaller signs in the show which fish and shellfish are fresh, and which are frozen. I stare at the fish with heads, the fish without heads, cooked shrimps, and salmon cakes that encompass the glass case.

At first glance, the people in the department all look alike. Everyone is wearing white coats to signal the butchers from the meat clerks in black aprons. All my co-workers have beards and are mid-size to burly men, with the exception of Koi, a non-binary mixed race manager (they/them) who has visible tattoos on their face, hands, and arms. Koi and Ken, a white burly

man from the Midwest trained me. We worked closing shifts weekly and had unique encounters with customers. Since the music is loud, I can barely hear the customers and workers at the back of the counter, and they get closer to the counter to be noticed. Customers are also shouting their responses; some are lowering their masks. One lady said, “oh this covers my voice, can you hear me now?” Ken looks over to the influx of customers and shouts, “NEXT!” My coworkers follow and do the same.

Coming into the Meat & Seafood Department’s Counter was a bit intimidating. There is always a rush of customers and a predominately white male staff. On one occasion at the counter there were 8 visible customers waiting and half a dozen people standing behind them or are just taking a moment to look at their options. Behind our counter there are three middle aged white women with bright masks, an unmasked white man in slacks, a masked white man in a jogger suit, an elderly couple with duck shaped masks, and a masked brown woman with short black hair. Three workers are on the counter and shout “NEXT”, customers raise their hands, and they look at each other to see if they were first and/or ready. Another worker steps up to the counter and shouts, “Who needs help?” Customers look at each other to see who is next. There is a pause and the worker shouts, “Who wants my help now?” I noticed that they would look directly at a customer and say, are you ready? As customers said yes, the line of people would shorten as customers paired up with workers.

It was on my first day and after the influx of people that Koi told me it was my turn to make contact with customers. After an hour, I was asked to help a blonde unmasked woman customer, who Koi said was a regular and great. I walked over to greet her, and she ordered a half pound of lamb stew meat and that was it. It was a relief. The code was one I had already memorized and packaging the item was seamless. After seeing customers order half a dozen

items, I was relieved to have an easy order and patient customer. Throughout my time working, I generally followed Koi and Ken, but after a month I followed the checklist of items set by managers, filled trays with arrays of cuts and helped customers.

Each day was similar. With another swarm of people entering at 5pm, it is what my co-workers call “dinner time.” It is around the time people are off work and they create a rush. Workers ask customers if they are ready and over half are “still looking”. After what appears a minute, they are all ready to order. After our boss Chad shouts “Next”, I also say “Next”, and he tells me to put my voice into it. I use the muscles in my belly to shout, “Next,” and a customer stepped up. On one occasion I was wearing my black Selena cap to hide my hair cover and a white presenting customer said she loved my hat. She ordered a pork shoulder and said she was making pozole. I was surprised since most customers did not share what they were making with me. The customer also shared that she likes her pozole to be spicy, but with her kids she avoids chiles. Her openness with me was refreshing, and a reminder to be open to pozole entries regardless of first impressions. I did not expect the Meat and Fish counter or butchering work to be one of much conversation, however, it was the opposite.

My coworkers and I made sense of the time we spent together and found ways to play. While play is not initial thought of a butchery, we made our shared moments count. On her first day, Jaz dropped a tray of over a dozen meatballs. While counting them out and filling out the paperwork for the loss, I noticed that Brandon was washing dishes. I tossed a meatball over to him and he swatted across the department and our Boss Chad caught it from the other end of the dish’s station. He laughed and we were all in amazement of his catch, and how the loss of the meat gave us a chance to mess around. The men and Koi of the department made the kitchen feel like a site of play and care. While the meatballs required the sacrifice of an animal and the time it

took to process and prepare, it was gone in a kitchen setting. Safety in the kitchen also required precision in using phrases like knives walking, corner, and behind so that we always knew when someone was around.

Over the past few months, the work became clearer, and my coworkers opened up to me. At first, I was surprised I had made friends within the department and Ken shared, “You respect us all and not just the people that are attractive.” He chuckled when I had laughed as he knew I was lesbian and noted, “Jaz and other women who float¹³⁴ in the department only talk or listen to the men they find attractive, you don’t.” I realized that in my time in the department, I was 1) trying to make it to payday, 2) enjoying my co-worker’s company, and 3) attempting to identifying where Latinxs shopped and worked in NE Portland. The idea of intimacy or attraction to men was not one I had imagined in my own personal kitchen or my work one, and I learned of friendships in kitchens. I learned how gender functioned when raising voices and ways in which I was a dish cleaner for two months before having the chance to learn how to cut and prepare meat.

Aside from the depths of the department, the worker’s break room with lockers and a dining area upstairs, above the store. There we had a “Blue Slip” (discounted) rack that is filled with foods and items that are overstocked, close to expiring, or have imperfections and are available to workers. Patrick, our Latinx store manager emphasized the fact that because the store is a B corporation, “the store donates 10 percent of our after-tax profits to more than 1000 local organizations supporting hunger relief, education, and protecting the environment in our communities.” I look at him and say, “seriously” and he said “yeah.” Later that day in our Meat and Seafood Department, Patrick had come over and asked me, “Are you from Mexico?” The

¹³⁴ Floaters at the store do not work in one department but rather move around where they are needed.

counter was clear of customers, so my coworkers and I were just hanging out. They waited for my response, and I said, “No, I’m from California.” Patrick said, “No, where are your parent’s from.” While this was not his initial question, I said Mexico. Patrick wanted to invite me to a Latinx potluck our store staff wanted to make and since I was the newest worker, staff were curious if I was part of the community. I was excited to meet everyone and realized Koi was also there next to me and said, “Uhm I am also half Mexican, my Abuela is from Mexico.” Patrick jokingly said, “Oh not you.” He walked away and Koi said, “they always forget about me.” I told them if a party ever ensued they could come with me and they said they were down, after my six months there, a party never made its way out of just being an idea.

I found the break room and dumpster to be the best spots to meet Latinx co-workers. At the dumpster I would find other Latinxs who were also closing and we only nodded at each other. We were always so focused on getting out of work that the dumpster was not the place to connect. It was during my lunch breaks that I met other closers. I first met Lulu, a lead cashier who offered to get me out of the meat department and into the front. I declined as the front seemed to have the worst interactions with customers and she agreed that it could be challenging. Lulu then introduced me to Evelyn. Evelyn is always eating popcorn in the breakroom and during our first conversation she shared a lot. Evelyn is a pale green eyed Mexican, whose accent reminded me a lot from California as she moved from Spanglish to English in our conversations. She said, “most people don’t know where I am from, customers love asking me if I am from Spain and seem disappointed when I say my parents are from Mexico.” Evelyn’s interactions with customers at the front were different from mine. The register makes her more susceptible to customers and I learned the Meat and Fish counter would actually protect me from such questions.

Mari Rosa

From my peers to customers, I met with people who would share recipes as a kind gesture. I took their generosity to heart and asked them about their lives. I met Maria, a Xicana co-worker in another sector and her Black Xicana daughter Mari Rosa. Mari Rosa, a five-year-old, showed me her painting from her PreK class. Earlier, without prompt at school she drew pozole. As I had spoken with her mom about my work, I wondered about how my research was brought up at home. The connections were immediate, and Mari Rosa's short conversations with me suggested that her mother had shared my work with her. It also suggests that Mari Rosa saw herself as contributor to my work and I include Figure 17, the image below to share part of her story and ways in which food gives everyone, regardless of age, the chance to share their *antojos* and experiences as testimony.



Figure 13. Mari Rosa's Pozole drawing (picture above)

It was by chance that Maria and Mari Rosa would cross by the meat counter as I was working. I greeted them and Mari Rosa eagerly showed me her painting. Her mouth was covered with baba and what seemed to be crumbs from a cookie. She sniffled with a light cough that marked flu season in Northeast Portland. As she wiped her nose with her sleeve, she came around the corner of the counter, where there is an entrance for workers to show me her art. She said, "this is pozole." I told her it was wonderful and asked her if her mom made pozole for her. Mari Rosa, scoffed as if I was being silly and declared, "No, only my grandma makes it." I looked at her mother who shrugged her shoulders. Maria shared, "*Ya la conoces. Es muy fuerte y pues sólo mi mamá cocina pozole. El mío no es el mismo.*"¹³⁵ While Maria and I spoke in Spanish, I asked Mari Rosa who primarily speaks English in English, if her mother is able to make pozole. Mari Rosa, rolled her eyes and said, "No, pozole is what my grandma makes." I jokingly agreed with her and began to wonder what pozole may look like in the next few generations.

In collaborating with community members, I have come to understand that pozole offers a powerful opportunity to engage with deeper questions about food, labor, reciprocity, and the experiences of Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans. Across generations, pozole is a reference to a memory. Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans in Portland, Oregon, focus on consuming food native to their ancestral homelands and to the one's on the land they are on. The incorporation of seasonal and locally sourced items aligns with their practices as they support local producers and carve out their own kitchens to sustain practices and kinships.

¹³⁵ Translation: "You already know her. It is very strong and only my mother cooks pozole. Mine is not the same."

Making pozole reveals the intentionality of providing healing for past, present, and future generations of Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexicans. Pozole promotes the transmission of embodied memory, intergenerational knowledges, and identity-making. The labor of pozole shared by participants showed embodied memory, relationships to Mexicanidad, food sharing, and belonging.

Sonya

Sonya (she/her), my co-worker's wife. Sonya is an Afro-Mexicana with roots stemming from El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Sonya shared with me that Ari's retelling of my work brought her much joy and she wanted to speak with me to 1) finally meet, 2) talk about food, and 3) share stories of El Paso, Texas. Our first conversation was an immediate plática that turned into an oral history. While we were first connecting our work, as Sonya is a Ph.D. student focused on developing a curriculum for marginalized communities in Portland, we realized our families had similar dynamics that fueled our work interests. Sonya shared that she felt we would work well together since her husband, Ari, had described my dissertation project with so much care. She said that Ari, who I first described as a friendly monotone dad, was excited to share my work with her. He thought we would get along, and I agreed. I was interested in her work and experiences in the Southwest and Pacific Northwest.

Sonya grew up in El Paso and frequently crossed the border with her grandmother, who was her guide in the kitchen. She described working with her mom in the space as impossible, "She was not nice to me; I felt like a nuisance and avoided learning from her in the kitchen. My Abuela, on the other hand, was patient with me." Similar to Mari Rosa, Sonya had a special kinship bond with her Abuela. Abuelas for many provide a unique hand in caregiving and kitchens. Kristen Yarris articulates this care as, "a moral practice of *caring about* and *caring for*

over generations and across borders.”¹³⁶With patience and recipes, Abuelas provide social *antojos* for their grandchildren and help release the stress some hold from their mothers in their kitchens. Social *antojos* are *remedios* meant to satisfy one’s cravings for attention, like a child who is not receiving care from their primary caregivers.

To this day, Sonya says her mother commands Sonya’s kitchen when she visits and stocks her home with pots and ingredients that she considers necessary staples. This has looked like larger pots, cast irons, and various spices, which Sonya accepts and has now started using more often. A new opening in their relationship has been that Sonya’s mother has begun to eat Sonya’s food, which she had previously refused, as she did with everyone’s food offerings. Her mom has been particular about food as a mother of six and community cook. She was used to being the one in charge of the kitchen.

The role of labor and power in the kitchen has transformed over time for Sonya and her mother, and it has shaped how she wants her children to interact with her in the kitchen space. Nowadays Sonya has her children cooking alongside her and when there are days she needs space, she has her husband take the kids for an outing. She works within her kitchen space and household to craft a future for her children where they can remember recipes and hold memories that inspire them. Being in the kitchen with community is an act of love. Being alone in a kitchen is also act of love and it is a lesson that Sonya has shed to preserve her being and her family’s.

As Sonya signaled the new spices and pots, she remembered the time her son had returned from school and was excited to share what he had to eat at school. Sonya said, “he came home from school one day and loved the soup salad he had at school and wanted me to make it for him.” She smiled, and I looked at her confused, and she nodded her head towards me. He was

¹³⁶ Kristin E. Yarris, *Care Across Generations: Solidarity and Sacrifice in Transnational Families* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

talking about pozole, a soup that seemingly holds a salad but was not what I had imagined or would have described. It was, however, his first time having it and now an *antojo*. Sonya mentioned that pozole is time-consuming and was not a food she learned to make from her mom. While she was grateful that her child's school makes an effort to produce food relative to the student population, which is primarily Latinx and Asian she was saddened by the fact that her son did not know the word for pozole.



Figure 14. Sonya's Red Pork Pozole with homemade *pan frances* (pictured above)

Her son's *antojo* for pozole inspired Sonya to make it the next time pork shoulder was on sale at the shop. I even saw the day Ari, an opener, carried the pork shoulder out since I was entering to close the meat counter. I quickly talked to him as we transitioned in and out of work; he was excited because his son was going to make pozole with his wife. The next day he told me that for Sonya's pozole, she works with a red broth, pork bones and shoulder, and canned hominy. Her toppings include cabbage, lime, onions, cilantro, and avocado. It was simple and

infused with the love and labor of Sonya and their children. Sonya's twist to the recipe, was a Texan homemade *pan frances* ¹³⁷ that is a norm for some Texan and Southwest communities.

Carina

I first introduced Carina and their community kitchen in Chapter One: Love, Labor, and Land. Their community kitchen is informed by working and being a part of their family's restaurant and cooking styles. After years of cooking large amounts for weekly household gatherings and working in their family's restaurant, Carina became the vessel of their family's recipes. This was not their first interest in their path, as they wanted to become a medical provider. They saw a huge disconnect in a society that conditions people to look at food as "fuel" or a means to an end versus something that can potentially heal us down to the cellular level.



Figure 15. Ensalada de nopal (pictured above)

¹³⁷ Translation: French roll.

Carina has immersed themselves in engaging with their family recipes that have evolved to represent their whole, authentic diasporic experience and weaving the many hands and hearts of their community. Pozole and kitchens as community spaces, in which communities include each other, our family stories and ancestors. The meals they make are stories, which depend on timing, but prove to share stories of people in their family and have handed it down to them.



Figure 16. Carina's red vegan pozolli (2023)

hey shared their vegan pozole with community, which had a different depth-it included an intimate spiritual layer that connected one's heart and belly-it also included a taste of vinegar which was different than the pozoles I witnessed in my work and had grown up with. As I signaled what I was tasting in the rich broth, they smiled when I asked if it had star anise, clove, and fire cider. Those were striking additions to the warmth of guajillo, ancho, and árbol peppers. They giggled and continued to watch me identify their rich broth. They had prepped my plate, which consisted of a red vegan pozole with cacahuazintle (hominy), purhu (calabaza), oyster, and lion mane mushrooms. They topped it with repollo, limón, cilantro, oregano, kale (to provide

“a little PNW bounty in the mix to satiate the bitter buds that can easily go unfed,”) pepitas, a tostada, and fermented radishes. The meal was hot and reminded me of their mission to fuel their community’s fire to get one to feel and honor creation. Carina works with their ancestral fire through food.

Similarly, when asked how their food is made, they shared, “*con puro corazón, para nuestra sanación.*”¹³⁸ Healing for Carina is the link between feeding one’s body and spirit. Their pozole has been inspired by their love of the kitchen and foods that heal. Each soup they make is stirred with the invocation of cellular and spiritual nourishment. For Carina, their kitchen space and cooking is always rooted in the everyday practice of life as ceremony. Pozole in this case, is shared to weave and heal community relationships to food, the land, and each other.

Since 2017, Carina has offered pozole as a collaboration of the elements that evolves within each generation. In their craft, they intentionally place fire cider in their broth to provide, “a nourishing hug to the belly and heart.” Their recipe is inspired by generations of ancestors and conjured with care and local gifts from the earth. They learned about food and cooking knowledges while at their home kitchen. Carina and their family believe that knowledge is best taught through hands-on learning – person to person. Similar to Luz’s rabbit farming, they believe that communities’ spirits and medicine live within us all. Pozole making and crafting with elements is an opportunity for a deeper understanding of healing and learning from the land that nourishes us.

While in Portland, Carina is away from their immediate family but continues to carve out healing methods for community.¹³⁹ They have extended their work to include postpartum

¹³⁸ Translation: “With full heart for our healing.”

¹³⁹ As of Spring 2024, Carina has moved back to Michigan and lives with their immediate family.

nourishment as a community cook. During la *cuarentena*¹⁴⁰, it is vital for both the parent and the babies for roughly 40 days after childbirth to bond. Traditional Healer Pānquetzani notes that a *cuarentena* is not a privilege but a basic human need.¹⁴¹ In their Appendix 3, Pānquetzani advises one to have a minimalist postpartum kitchen checklist to prepare for baths, steams, *caldos*¹⁴², teas, and *atole*.¹⁴³ In traditional Indigenous Mexican knowledge systems and Foodways, cold foods during quarantine can delay the healing process. My partner Rubi learned some recipes from Carina and is studying *curanderismo*, she shared, “When you are healing you are susceptible to cold, because the body is physically opened, and you want to try everything to stay warm. It’s a big deal for us.” The knowledge from community cooks, Healers, Midwives, and all our relatives provide insights for how food culture intersects with all aspects of our lives.

Carina crafts offerings of nourishment for prenatal care and postpartum care. According to Carina, “These indigenous systems are interconnected and offer so many ways for people to connect to their foods while offering their bodies the nourishment for healing and connection with their newborn.” Carina curates their work to align with each person and provide comfort for community during recovering and in placing a loving focus on providing rich foods. Working with pozole and foodways in community kitchens has provided Carina and community with methods of working with and for future generations. Crafting with pozole is an asset of food sovereignty and relationality, it provides a framework for community survivance in new and changing environments.

¹⁴⁰ Translation: Quarantine and “a forty-day quarantine” practiced by various Indigenous and Latin American communities after labor.

¹⁴¹ Pānquetzani, *Thriving Postpartum: Embracing the Indigenous Wisdom of La Cuarentena* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2024).

¹⁴² Translation: Soups.

¹⁴³ Translation: Hot masa-based beverage used to rebalance electrolytes and increase lactation.

Conclusions

Sharing pozole and recipes has provided communities with strategies for preserving traditional ecological knowledges in the kitchen. In this chapter, I have showcased various recipes and ways in which communities craft with what surrounds them. Notions of who should be making pozole and ideas of tradition have affected community sentiments of pozole, however, this did not stop communities from sharing their various pozole practices. Claiming traditional ecological knowledge as part of day-to-day happenings in food production is necessary for Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican survivance. The stories shared by community members establish kitchens as site of knowledge production, culture, and relationships.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

I examined food sovereignty, *rasquachismo*, and relationality between Indigiqueer farmers, and diasporic Mexican community members in Portland, Oregon. In the context of challenging social, economic, and political conditions, Indigiqueer farmers craft with land, food, human, and non-human relationships. A lot of these practices took place in their gardens and kitchens (autonomous spaces) that showed how *antojos* shaped their roles and involvement in their personal and community kitchens. I asked, how does care between individuals shape the kind of labor and roles people take on in tending to their loved one's *antojitos* (desires)? And how might such cravings shape Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexican community members relationships and family networks in ways that challenge heteronormative paradigms, whiteness, and support queer survivance.

As I finish this dissertation, the COVID-19 pandemic is still looming. The past two years have shaped community discussions of survivance and human-nonhuman relationships in Portland, Oregon. I weave *rasquachismo* and survivance discussions with the inclusion of food landscapes as a necessary inclusion in the lives of Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexican community members. Queering these concepts is necessary to account for the experiences of communities who refuse to live in the outskirts of society, but who openly farm, gather, and harvest for past-present-future generations.

After five years of graduate school and not having returned to my homelands due to the pandemic and being in the closet, I returned to Guanajuato to declare my identity. I also desperately missed my Abuela and corn. The return was bittersweet. Corn was scarce and the morale of our pueblo was low. For the first time in my father's 51 years of life, tortillas were not available. My Abuela was unable to make food with corn because of the lack of rain and my

uncle's health which was degrading – so our milpa (communal fields) had gone fallow. For us, our spirits and milpa are intricately connected. The loss of community members and plants hurt for all. While corn and the health of my relatives was a priority for me in my homecoming, my family just wanted to know more about Rubi, my partner. They found joy in seeing me happy and no longer hiding and wanted to know more details. As I had spent years of unpacking shame, my family's acceptance reminded me that isolation is not how we heal.

The following is then my entry into pozole and sharing my work with my relatives. It also includes my Apá and Amá's pozole. While my father did not cook or prep it, this pozole was crafted for his *antojos*. In my Amá's kitchen, it is generally just her. As a kid, I used to peek into the kitchen when she was cooking. The smell of coffee and bone broth mixed into the air. My Apá's Mexican news station would be blaring through the walls in the house, and I can hear my mom whispering to him to lower it so my siblings and I would not wake up. The two had their own chaos, and I remember just hiding in the corner and watching her cook and clean as she went. She noticed one morning and sat me with my dad on the couch. I got back up to watch her. While she and I did not know it then, she taught me to take up space and work alone. She later told me that she liked dreaming in the kitchen and felt rushed when asked too many questions by my sisters or I in the kitchen. I initially took her avoidance as a sign of rejection, but she taught me to love by observing others.

Recently, I told my Apá about my dissertation during my recent trip to my parent's home in Fresno, California. He smiled and said, "*No importa si eres pocho todos tienen su pozole.*"¹⁴⁴ My Amá joined in and said that is true but that there are things that are too *revuelto*.¹⁴⁵ She

¹⁴⁴, Translation: "It does not matter if you are Mexican American and/or lack fluency in language or culture. Each one of us has a pozole."

¹⁴⁵ Transation: Scrambled/mixed.

shared that when her Amá learned of Taco Bell, she was confused by the mixing of foods, when she placed so much care in her beans and flour tortillas that were described as clouds. Thus, the creation of nachos and fast *revuelto* Mexican food felt unauthentic and lacking pride to my Abuela Luz.



Figure 17. Amá's red bone pork pozole (2023)

My Amá took my abuela's words to heart and replicated her recipes which center bone broths, particularly pig bones, in her red pork pozole. She makes the soup early in the morning before the house is awake to have time to herself in the kitchen; it is the place where she dreams and connects with her Amá. I routinely try to catch her making pozole but run late as she starts cooking around 4 a.m. She told me that as a kid, I used to wake up whenever I would hear pots clanging in the kitchen and rush to see what she was up to. I stopped running after I started

school, and after realizing that my Amá's kitchen was her place to work alone. Now, in my graduate studies, I return to her kitchen, my own kitchen, and study the process of making pozole to decipher Indigiqueer Mexicanidad, food sovereignty, and *rasquachismo* as it functions in our creation of the kitchen.

As a child and even most recently this past winter in 2023, I remember my Apá getting a large bowl of pozole. I remember thinking it was stacked with meat, but after all the broth was sipped, he just had bones to slurp. I used to think he was given all the meat since he was the only man in the house and that the kids got the bones, but it was neither. We all had bones, even Clarissa, my Amá's favorite daughter had a pile of bones. My Amá said her Amá did the same, my Apá's Amá did the same, and that meat is not a requirement for pozole. In the context of climate change and heavy migration, my parents had practiced *rasquachismo* before I was born. Environmental *rasquachismo* occurs in pozole making, it is crafted with what is at hand, and often bones are almost always available, and especially discounted at American markets. The recipe for a red bone pozole, inspired my own pozole for my partner, Rubi.

While my Amá centers bones, I do the same with chicken, emphasizing a thick red broth with blue hominy. The blue hominy is a nod to my Apá's side and is sourced from Three Sisters Nixtamal, a local Portland company. The chicken is for my partner Rubi and relations in Oregon, who do not eat pork and ask for pasture raised and no added hormone birds. I adapt to my surroundings and hold parts of my identity in pozole, emphasizing bones, blue hominy, and care in making food accessible to those I love.

My pozole is a weaving of both of my Abuela's recipes, my mother's, and a recipe with instructions detailed by Esteban Castillo.¹⁴⁶ I follow some of the steps provided by Castillo and

¹⁴⁶ Esteban Castillo, "Pozole Rojo," in *Chicano Eats: Recipes from My Mexican-American Kitchen* (New York: Harper Design, 2020).

then work from my memory of what I have seen, smelled, and heard from the women in my family. In my recipe, I also include more step-by-step instructions as this brings ease to me when cooking and giving direction. I begin my pozole by washing and soaking my hominy overnight. I make my chicken stock. I brown a whole onion, a head of garlic, and two handfuls of cilantro. I add three sprigs of thyme and two bay leaves to cover with eight cups of water, including a palm of salt and oregano. My Amá would say *mano* (hand) instead of a pinch, so I am a bit heavy-handed with salt and oregano in my cooking. I then place my 5 pounds of pasture-raised chicken thighs into a gentle boil and cover them for an hour. I remove the chicken with kitchen tongs and strain the stock. I add the stock back into my large pot and the soaked hominy to cook for the next two hours.

As my chicken cools down, I make the red chile sauce, where I boil ten guajillo chiles, six ancho chiles, and eight chiles de árbol on high heat and simmer until they are softened. I transfer the chiles to the blender to cool and hold one cup of the cooking liquid to also cool. I add a head of garlic, half of a chopped onion, two caps of white vinegar, a palm of salt and oregano, a handful of cilantro, a pinch of ground cumin (as suggested by Esteban's recipe), and the cooled cooking liquid to the blender. I blend the ingredients and season to taste. I add oil to the pan holding the chiles and heat the sauce for 15 minutes until the mixture darkens. Afterward, I check on the hominy to ensure it is cooked and add the chile mixture to the stock. I mix it and let it sit for 30 minutes.



Figure 18. Polet's red chicken pozole (2023)

Rubi helped throughout the cooking process by seeing if I needed help and cleaning dishes. She helped set aside meals for our friends, dinners, and class obligations. I sent my Amá photos and talked with my Apá throughout the process. While Rubi and I have generally split tasks in preparing pozole in our household, my red chicken pozole with hominy was my attempt to connect my love and community care from as far as Mexico, California, and to Oregon, where I am currently located. Rubi gave me the space and support to make pozole as a lead cook and from my family's embodied and intergenerational memory. Making pozole in our kitchen was made possible by the intentional care and support from our relations and our own dreams.

My research and story have revealed the relevance for being present and a part of community in research. In writing "self in relation," I held a big responsibility in what is written

in and out of stories.¹⁴⁷ I share and end with my own story, because I only asked questions that I would feel comfortable asking my own relatives or answering myself. I wrote myself in with community members because I was there. I was asked the same questions by community and want future generations of Indigiqueer farmers and Mexicans in the diaspora to also know my recipes, and vast roles that we can carry as people.

Final Thoughts

Gathering the stories and experiences of community members in Portland, Oregon was necessary for understanding how queering food landscapes can provide cultural preservation. Community members had a hand in shaping the questions that drive my work, as they crafted farms, pozole recipes, and animal harvesting generations before my work had started. As Portland, Oregon continues to grow in its diversity of community, it remains a Native city, as collaboration between new arrivals, immigrants, and Indigenous folks gather.

Discussions about food sovereignty, survivance, and *rasquachismo* are not final. This piece is an offering from community members and me to the academy and its readers. Future food studies regarding Indigiqueer farmers and Mexicans in the diaspora include expanding the relationships between food workers in commercial kitchens and line-cooks. I briefly include the experiences of such members, but only brief vignettes who participated in the lives of the community members centered in my dissertation. Researchers, students, and community members can further analyze and theorize food landscapes by focusing on their surroundings and stories.

I implore those who read this dissertation to play and dance in their kitchens and gardens. In my research, I worked with my family's stories and customs. Through life and death,

¹⁴⁷ Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 56.

everyone has a community and food in our pueblo, which is a collaborative project. My family's harvest, the opening of el solar, and our service to the community is not just about survival but of our mutual respect for people and land. My research is also informed by Black, Native, and Chicana/Latina lesbian theorists. The topic of love and moving beyond discussions of survival have been informed by Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and Gerald Vizenor's *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Thus, the topic of love was informed by a reading course with my advisor, Dr. Ana-Maurine Lara, when we read bell hooks' "All About Love." While food, love, land and the love of traditional food shaped my upbringing and research, I wondered how discussions of love were displayed toward queer people like myself.

My ethnographic approaches were inspired by my observant abuelas, advisor Dr. Ana-Maurine Lara, Lynn Stephen, and various activist anthropologists and community members who emphasize relationality and craft with love in their day to day. It has truly been an honor to share and witness all your kitchen and gardening stories in the present and as memories. While the history and ongoing realities of Indigiqueer farmers and diasporic Mexican community members in Portland are specific to the region, this project is an example of gathering stories and recipes by and for communities of color. The farmers included in my dissertation feed their communities in Portland, Oregon. They reflect some of the nuanced ways in which traditional ecological knowledge is preserved in kitchens and passed forward to future Indigiqueer community members across the city and state. The ultimate desire of weaving *rasquache* food sovereignty, I believe, is to understand how traditional ecological knowledges in the kitchen are necessary for Indigiqueer and diasporic Mexican survivance. This dissertation is an example for constructing kitchens and recipes from what surrounds you.

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