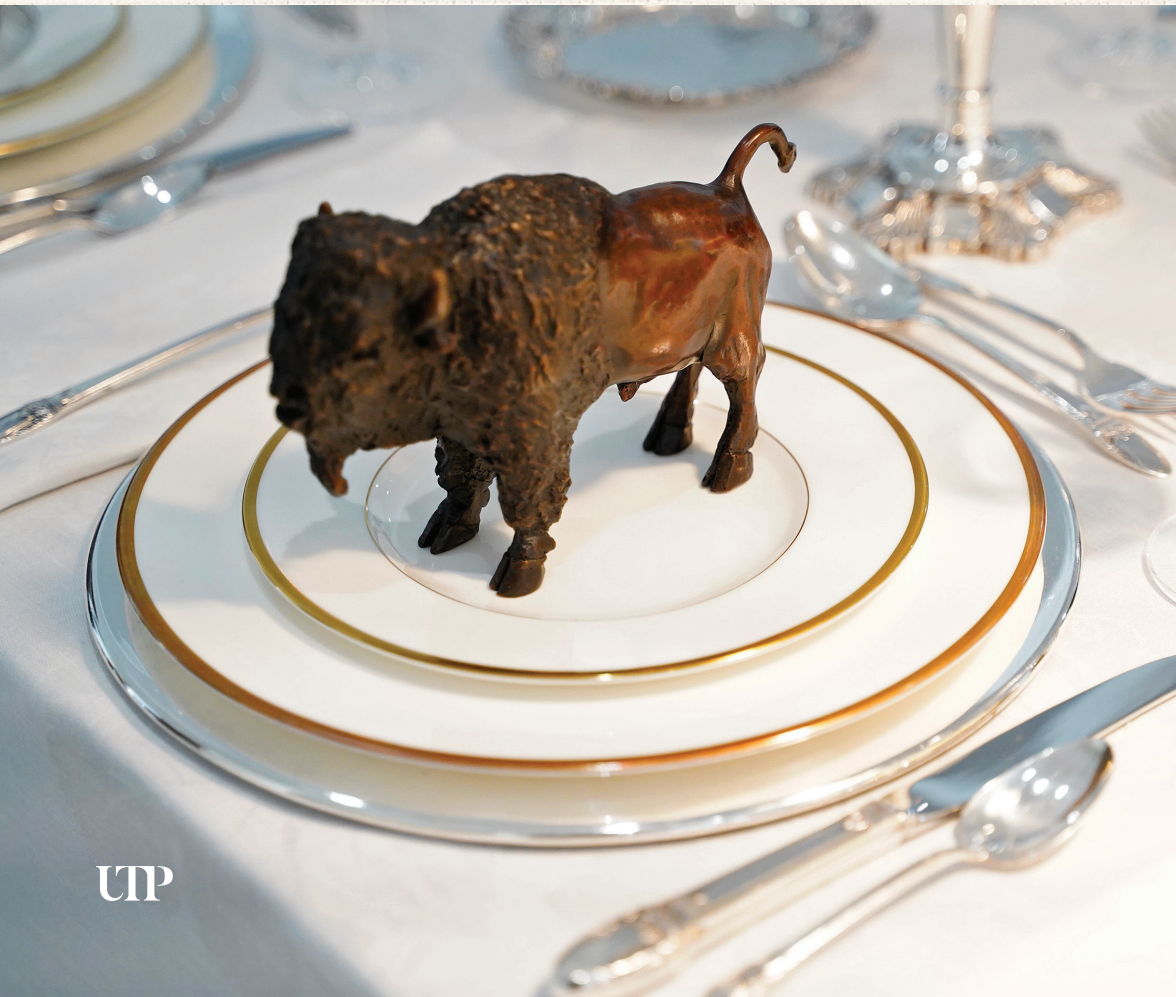
CULINARY CLAIMS

Indigenous Restaurant Politics in Canada

L. SASHA GORA



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CULINARIA

Food for Thought
Food for Pleasure
Food for Change

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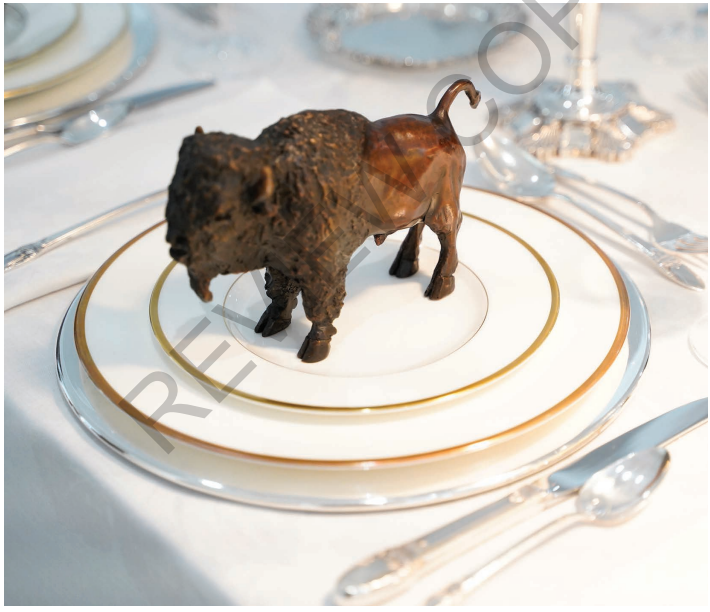

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To the best-looking Blake

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Preface

The meal began with "Mejillons con Fresas Y Pipa": a soup of mussels and green strawberries strained to be as fluid as water and crowned with coconut foam. Local ingredients, tropical ingredients. I was embarking on a twelve-course tasting menu at Intimo in Panama City, the capital of a slender country that couples two continents (although one local told me she grew up believing they are one). Having been born and raised in the lands now called Canada, in Panama I felt as if I was on the continent's furthest edge. I was somewhere I considered south and yet this soup with coconut made me think of the north.

What is north and what is south depends on both geography and culture, but while dining at Intimo I was surprised to be confronted by the north. It was not the aggressive air conditioning; rather, it was the restaurant's cookbook collection, fanned behind the bar like décor. My stool granted a view of the open kitchen, of its shelves of books and booze: *Fäviken* by Magnus Nilsson (named after the restaurant he ran in northern Sweden for over a decade), Copenhagen-based René Redzepi's famed *NOMA: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine*, and another tome from the Danish capital: *Relæ: A Book of Ideas* by Christian F. Puglisi. Why look north? What can a chef working with tropical ingredients glean from a Nordic cookbook? I may give the impression that I can give a tidy definition of what or where the north is, but my concern here is something else. It is about how place is imagined through food. And unlike the "empty" landscapes that Lawren Harris and other settler

Canadian artists, including the Group of Seven, famously painted – razor-sharp glaciers and wind-swept trees – my understanding of place is one inhabited by people. So, to revise my question: how are place and the peoples of a particular place imagined through food?

Culinary Claims: Indigenous Restaurant Politics in Canada looks north to chronicle a cultural shift in representations of Indigenous foodways, the changing relationship between cuisine and place, and the textures of this – the tastes – in a settler colonial state. More specifically, it stories the emergence of Indigenous cuisines in urban restaurants across Canada. Plants and animals trespass borders. Cuisines do too. And so to study such culinary changes, to consider how the local is knotted with the global, I cross the Atlantic to weigh what is Nordic fare and its international influence. That said, the Nordic is less of a subject and more of a context, a distant backdrop. This book also travels to Canada's southern neighbour, the United States, to better chart the role that restaurants play in Indigenous resurgence beyond colonial lines. It wends south to understand the north, venturing to California, and via this mussel and green strawberry soup, to Panama. The lands it depicts are urban, have ripe appetites, and are hungry for stories that better represent their histories, peoples, and foods.

CULINARY CLAIMS

Indigenous Restaurant Politics in Canada

Introduction: You Are Welcome

In July 2015 Toronto hosted the XVII Pan American Games. A year before, the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's national newspaper, published an opinion piece by the Games' chairman and former Ontario premier, David Peterson. With the tone and volume of a pep rally, Peterson wanted Toronto to feel excited, really excited, because "Never before has Canada hosted a multi-sport event of this size."[1] His promises were as large as the competition itself. "These games will change lives for the better," Peterson vowed.[2] The stakes soared equally high: "the world will be watching as we showcase this region and its incredible diversity and talents."[3] The article mentioned spectators, from the United States to Brazil, and the excitement that Peterson was confident "all Canadians" would feel. However, it did not note any First Nations.

Now based southwest of Toronto, near Brantford, Ontario, the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit embraces Canada's largest city. The land was signed over to the British Crown in the 1787 Toronto Purchase and then clarified in 1805 in Treaty No. 13.[4] Terrain stretching from Ashbridges Bay to Etobicoke Creek – the 250,808 acres that encompass the city's core – went for ten shillings, the equivalent of $60 Canadian in 2010, plus 2,000 gun flints, 120 mirrors, 96 gallons of rum, 24 laced hats, 24 brass kettles, and a bale of flowered flannel.[5] In 1986 then-Chief Maurice LaForme filed a land claim, which, finally, in 2010, the Government of Canada settled for $145 million, a fairer estimate of the tract's worth.[6]

Like Peterson, this Ojibwa First Nation saw the Pan Am Games as an opportunity. But instead of imagining the sporting event as a chance to market the city, province, and country, it was a chance to raise awareness of Toronto's original inhabitants. And they did so with food. The Mississaugas of the Credit collaborated with Toronto-based chef David Wolfman – a member of the Xaxli'p First Nation – on the You Are Welcome Food Truck: *Gii Daa Namegoon*. "Food is universal and it brings people together from all different cultural backgrounds," explained then-Chief Bryan LaForme. "We are honoured to officially welcome people to our traditional territory this summer and invite everyone to taste delicious Aboriginal dishes."[7] You are welcome, however, carries a double meaning. On the one hand, it welcomes athletes, their entourages, and other visitors. "Welcome to Toronto," it conveys. On the other, it speaks directly to Torontonians. It says "You are welcome" in the sense of accepting the gratitude of those who, and those who do not, acknowledge the Mississaugas of the Credit as the city's traditional residents. The truck, in short, was equally concerned with laying claim to land as it was with welcoming people. It leveraged food as a way of narrating Toronto's Indigenous past alongside its present and future.

Enthusiastic with their praise, journalists described the food truck as "a First Nations welcome to Toronto" and "a good cause."[8] Curious appetites ran through these articles, but the attendant politics were missing.[9] Instead of detailing reasons for the limited opportunities to eat Indigenous fare, they present such cuisines as novel, as something new to try. But absence always shadows presence. By aiming to create awareness of Toronto's ongoing Indigenous present, the truck also exposed the extent to which the city has attempted to erase its history. Wolfman and the Mississaugas of the Credit's 2015 food truck thus staged a culinary counternarrative to settler accounts of Toronto, exemplifying the range of something as everyday as food and its power to both claim and reclaim cultural and political ties to land. How what we eat stories where we eat.

There are over eight thousand restaurants in Toronto.[10] If you count all food-serving establishments – the likes of bakeries and

bars, take-out counters and food courts – that number is even higher.[11] But the year Toronto hosted the Pan Am games, only one offered Indigenous fare: Tea-n-Bannock. Then in 2016 the Pow Wow Cafe opened, and in 2017 two more: NishDish Marketeria and Kūkŭm Kitchen. Why are there so few Indigenous eateries in Toronto, as well as the rest of Canada? And how does this Toronto tale relate to changes in global restaurant culture? Beyond places to grab a bite, restaurants are venues for exchange. *Culinary Claims* is, therefore, a cultural history of representations of Indigenous foodways in restaurants across Canada and how these depictions have transformed in relation to the ebb and flow of political and global culinary shifts.

To study food is to study how it is rooted in, or transcends, place. It is to study land, and how land is worked and transformed, imagined and represented, bought, sold, won and lost, whom it belongs to, and who belongs to it. "Food is land."[12] It enacts relationships, a point the Anishinaabekwe activist Winona LaDuke animates. "Food for us comes from our relatives whether they have wings or fins or roots," she says. "That is how we consider food. Food has a culture. It has a history. It has a story. It has relationships."[13] Culinary encounters are intimate; they dissolve boundaries between food and feed, between bodies and environments. To study food, then, is also to study relations. And it is to study power: who has the power to define what is food, where it comes from, and how it gets to the table. Literary scholar Margery Fee poses the question: "How does literature claim land?"[14] I ask: how does food claim land? At its most abstract level, *Culinary Claims* is about the relationship between food and land in a settler colonial state; at its most concrete, it's about how Indigenous restaurants resist, revise, and represent that relationship.

Eating is one of the most direct ways we interact with environments – both near and far – by literally digesting them. Food, thus, bridges self-identity with place-identity to the point that, as geographers David Bell and Gill Valentine synthesize, "what we eat (and where, and why) signals, as the aphorism says, who we are."[15] Departing from this claim, historian Nicolas P. Maffei

summarizes that global food studies typically focus on two processes: "the blending of local food cultures, and resistance through reassertion of the local."[16] This book turns its attention to the latter and unpacks the politics of the "local" in a settler society.[17] Fashions in food evolve to reflect changing relationships to nature and place. Sociologist Jean-Pierre Poulain diagnoses modern food as delocalized – separated from climate constraints and geographical origins.[18] The response to this is relocalization.[19] The return to place-based eating practices echoes historians Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann's description of "globalization as a dialectical process of de- and re-territorialization."[20] What qualifies as local is not straightforward, nor is it static. Local foods shift based on the migration of people, plants, and animals, as well as fluctuations in climate, oscillations in environments. It is also a matter of who can define what is local, and thus a question of power.

But place is as much about imagination as it is about geography. Place taught cultural critic Rebecca Solnit how to write. It also taught her that "*place* is problematic, implying a discrete entity, something you could put a fence around."[21] Sometimes this is true, other times not. "What we mean by *place*," she says, "is a crossroads, a particular point of intersection of forces coming from many directions and distances."[22] As much as food nurtures a sense of connection, it also incites disconnect and erects fences. Food divides as much as it unites. Historian Donna Gabaccia makes clear that "Eating habits both symbolize and mark the boundaries of cultures."[23] Food builds borders, constructs difference, and polices value. It is central for making and negotiating identity, for claiming and reclaiming. In Canada food has been a tool of colonial control and cultural assimilation. The limited presence of Indigenous restaurants reflects this. The Canada I write about, the one that is imagined through celebrated and forbidden foods, shared meals and exclusive entry-by-invitation-only affairs, is this intersection of forces – a chaotic conjunction of ideas and a competition of definitions. Names in English and French, in Ojibway and Cree, in Franglais and Chinook Jargon all at once.

A medium for sharing and for exchange, food builds relationships – with what you eat and whom you eat it with. It, thus, plays a central role in efforts made by Indigenous communities across the country, continent, and world to reclaim languages and traditions, and to practise sovereignty. Indigenous governance scholars Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, for example, include "Decolonize Your Diet" as one of five "Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom."[24] Whether at a pop event or at a brick and mortar restaurant, Indigenous chefs, like David Wolfman, are leveraging food to reclaim a contemporary presence. Food is fuel. It fires cultural revitalization and political resurgence.

Culinary Claims is about Canada, but one could tell a similar story in Aotearoa New Zealand, Mexico, or even Panama. Each of these histories is, of course, distinct. The Indigenous food movement in Canada frames itself around reconciliation, whereas the one in the United States rallies around revitalization. It confronts different regulations and political structures. But both movements aim to reclaim Indigenous cultures through food, restore relations, and defend the rights to self-determination. "Indigenous food sovereignty represents a movement," writes Swampy Cree scholar Tabitha Robin, "one where we are re-defining our food systems and revitalizing our culture, one that is political and dynamic and hard."[25] *Culinary Claims* asks: What role do restaurants play in this movement?

A New Nordic

The rise of Indigenous restaurants overlaps and intersects with broader shifts. Although no longer new, the new Nordic food movement tapped into an increasing curiosity about the genealogy of ingredients and a refreshed appetite for local foods. Taste is ever changing, as are the values that mandate taste. There is a continual evolution of which foods are valued and why. Early Canadian settlers were dependent on Indigenous foodways but, then, imported animals – cows and chickens, pigs and sheep – and transplanted

Europe's reverence of wheat to North America. But as more people have become aware of the ills of global food systems – which make people, plants, and animals sick, soil and water too – the appeal of local and wild foods has grown.

Because of its focus on foraged flora in northern climates, I argue that the new Nordic food movement has been particularly influential in Canada and indicative of a revival of Indigenous ingredients. In 2003 chef René Redzepi, together with Claus Meyer, opened Noma in Copenhagen. A portmanteau of the Danish words *nordisk* (Nordic) and *mad* (food), it won first place in *Restaurant Magazine*'s Best Restaurant in the World competition in 2010. Previously, restaurants that stuck to the rules of classic French cuisine or experimented with molecular gastronomy dominated the list. Never before had a Nordic restaurant attracted such attention, and Noma's ascent revamped Copenhagen into a high-end culinary destination overnight.

I turn to the new Nordic food movement in Chapter 3 and its global significance for international dining and, therefore, perceptions of local cuisines. What matters here is that Noma built its reputation by cooking ingredients that are "native" to the region. For example, journalist Frank Bruni writes that Redzepi is "omnivorous in his exoticism, but restrictive in his geography. If the Nordic region doesn't yield it, Mr. Redzepi doesn't serve it, with rare exceptions [coffee, say, or chocolate]."[26] His headline says it all: "Nordic Chef Explores Backyard."[27] Although tomatoes are banned, potatoes are embraced, despite both originating in the Americas. How and why has the potato "gone Native" in a Nordic context?[28] This question is not my concern; however, raising it reveals the fluctuating categories of food and how cuisines are continually evolving. Noma makes it clear that it does not serve traditional Nordic fare; rather, it serves an interpretation. Nordic restaurant cuisine may not overlap with historic regional diets; rather, it provides insight into how chefs like Redzepi construct Nordic gastronomic heritage, which ingredients are allowed to take part, and how such culinary formulas spill out to the rest of the world, as the cookbooks in Panama City's Intimo reveal. Food, after all, expresses how a region imagines its geography and how it defines its history and heritage, its present and future.

Cuisines are entangled with cultural hierarchies and, traditionally, French cuisine has claimed the throne. France has long been associated with abundance, whereas Nordic countries have been imagined as lands of scarcity. However, Noma challenged this narrative and tilted the apex of fine dining by promoting ingredients that were previously not thought of as restaurant fare, the likes of beach grasses and bugs. Noma further localized fine dining, a tendency that was already simmering thanks to nouvelle cuisine in the 1970s. This influence bursts beyond the Nordic region. Hardie Grant Books, an Australian publisher, has released titles like *The New Nordic: Scandinavian Cuisine through the Seasons* and *Nordic Light: Lighter, Everyday Eating from a Scandinavian Kitchen*. What appeal does a Nordic cookbook have for an Australian audience or, say, a Panamanian one? What principles behind the movement apply to other climates and ingredients? And how have representations of Indigenous food cultures changed in light of global culinary changes that celebrate local and seasonal eating? To study how restaurants in Canada stage Indigenous cuisines, I frame my research in the context of major shifts in international dining culture, which the new Nordic food movement exemplifies. Doing so addresses the local, national, and international forces shaping what people eat. This connects with issues that stretch beyond national borders, the likes of food security and sovereignty, Indigenous rights and resurgence.

Central to the arguments in *Culinary Claims* is that more Indigenous restaurants continue to open. Recent examples include Mi'kmaw chef Norma Condo's Miqmak Catering Indigenous Kitchen in Montreal, Quebec, and Anishinaabe chef Gerry Brandon's L'Autochtone Taverne Américaine in Haileybury, Ontario – both of which opened in 2019.[29] In 2020 Mohawk chef Tawnya Brant launched Yawékon, a lunch restaurant and catering business, in Ohswé:ken, Ontario, on Six Nations of the Grand River.[30] That same year, Dean Herkert, a Manitoba Métis Federation member, opened Bistro on Notre Dame in Winnipeg. Curtis Red-Rokk Cardinal, a member of Whitefish Lake First Nations in Alberta, started selling bannock out of his backpack at pow wows around Edmonton in 2010, which sparked his catering business Tee Pee Treats. In 2021, it expanded to offer take-out and delivery and,

now, seasonal seating. In 2022 Ojibwa chef Zach Keeshig debuted the weekend-only, reservations-essential Naagan in Owen Sound, Ontario, which presents a nine-course tasting menu, and, in Winnipeg, Manoomin opened in the Wyndham Garden Airport Hotel with Jennifer Ballantyne, of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, as its chef. In 2023 Suzette Foucault opened Manitou Bistro in Renfrew, Ontario, on National Indigenous Peoples Day.[31] This book – a cultural history of the representation of Indigenous cuisines in restaurants in Canada – contextualizes the increase in Indigenous restaurants and adds texture to this history. Studying early examples adds to the movement's historiography and combats the erasure of the contributions made by early Indigenous restaurateurs.

In order for me to avoid being the one who determines which restaurants may call themselves Indigenous, an eatery must actively identify as Indigenous in its name, advertisements, or motto.[32] Contemporary accounts often collapse Indigenous foods into either a singular image of bannock, a quick flatbread, or a romanticized imagined past of hunting and gathering. Perhaps, this is why it is still relevant to ask what an Indigenous restaurant is and what makes it Indigenous. I focus on what restaurants serve (and are allowed to), but also consider the environments from which these foods come. And I steer clear of stereotypes like this bannock versus hunter-gatherer binary. These extremes are examples of what novelist Chimamanda Adichie calls "the single story." As Americanist Psyche Williams-Forson summarizes, "the single story is the one that popular culture has delivered time and time again. It is the story that places people – particularly those considered 'other' – in a box that is manageable and relatively comprehensible. It is the default place in which the speaker, writer, performer, and activist must remain so that sense can be made of them."[33] *Culinary Claims* avoids telling a single story. It avoids a single voice and embraces the messiness of defining any cuisine, especially those that have been actively suppressed by colonialism. An Indigenous restaurant is not just one thing, and *Culinary Claims* maps the many stories that Indigenous eateries across Canada have told over time. But despite its focus on restaurants, this book is more than just the

study of lunch and dinner (and sometimes breakfast). It explores the politics of urban restaurantscapes across Canada and situates these examples within a transnational context.

Conceptually, *Culinary Claims* is about interchanges between wild plants and introduced animals, the domesticated and the rogue, Indigenous foodways and Canadian regulations, chefs and customers. It employs restaurants to write about the history of social and political issues regarding cultural representation. It looks at Indigenous influences on Canadian foodways and the rise of Indigenous restaurants and narrates this entangled history to engage with questions about how changes in food preferences reflect larger social, cultural, and environmental shifts. I discuss historical and contemporary representations of Indigenous cuisines and how they have been changing in light of the relocalization of foodways. Noma exemplifies fine dining's relocalization and has set a new international standard. Although the new Nordic food movement has been globally influential, it is especially relevant in a northern country like Canada that shares similarities in climate. But in Canada to talk about local food is to talk about land, power, and settler colonialism. In response, *Culinary Claims* traces the presence and the absence of Indigenous restaurants in Canada's cultural landscape.

A Home on Native Land

Toronto's identity as a multicultural city is recent, but the city is now a transnational buffet of dim-sum, Jamaican beef patties, and roti. The St. Lawrence Market doubles as an encyclopaedia of Eastern European mustards and Italian-American sandwiches. Downtown Toronto has two Chinatowns, and I lived on the outskirts of Chinatown East, a few blocks from Greektown and a short streetcar ride west of Little India. I grew up snacking on *dou sha bao*, Greek fries, and fresh sugarcane juice. Like many settler Canadians, I learned about my family's history through food – from Polish *pączki* and Icelandic *vínarterta* to my granddad's beef and barley stew his Gaelic-speaking mother taught him to make.

I understood the world's geography because of what I ate, but it took me much longer to learn about Turtle Island. I ate *puposas* years before I learned about pemmican, not to mention fiddleheads or sweetgrass, oolichan or seal (as meat and not a cute plush toy).

I am a fourth-generation settler. Every morning in school I had to sing the national anthem, and by the time I started high school, classmates had changed the words: "Our home *on* Native land," they sang. A "Native Studies" class introduced me to Victoria Freeman's *Distant Relations: How My Ancestors Colonized North America*, which encouraged me to ask the same. This class was in Toronto – from the Mohawk word *Tkaronto* – the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. *Culinary Claims* is part of a growing body of scholarship that is committed to rethinking Canada, to telling different stories, and it uses food to do so. It is also about reconciling the foods I grew up eating with ones that tell the country's history more critically and inclusively. Foods that reveal rather than erase Indigenous histories.

Why does this past matter? Personal history frames the researcher, the storyteller. It frames why someone is telling a story and their ability to do so. In order to apply an "Indigenous research paradigm," the scholars Tabitha Robin, Jaime Cidro, Michael Anthony Hart, and Stéphane McLachlan underline the importance of "situating yourself in your research – describing who you are and how you came to be."[34] They cite Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett's fittingly titled paper, "Aboriginal Research: Berry Picking and Hunting in the 21st Century," which posits: "Location of self in writing and research is integral to issues of accountability."[35]

Cree-Métis scholar Deanne Reder agrees. Positionality, she writes, emphasizes "that all knowledge is generated from particular positions, that there is no unbiased, neutral position possible."[36] It is, thus, an ethical decision to frame this project personally. To tell my story as opposed to seeking to speak for others. Here I take my cue from postcolonial theorist Trịnh Thị Minh Hà's notion of "speaking nearby" rather than "speaking about." She describes this as "A speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it."[37] This follows

the same beat as the "personal turn" in food studies.[38] By locating myself, I recognize the "place-based responsibilities" I have inherited as a guest on the lands where I was born and raised.[39]

In Winnipeg, Audrey Logan, who appears in Chapter 1, showed me around a permaculture garden she planted to secure her own food. Before we toured the community of plants, we sat down, shared coffee from a thermos, and chatted about my research. "What are you going to do with this knowledge?" she asked, her eyes locked with mine. Her question reminded me of the writer Thomas King. "Stories are wondrous things," he says.[40] He also warns that they are dangerous. "For once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell," he cautions, "And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told."[41] Stories are powerful. And sharing them comes with great responsibility. "Humans cannot live without stories," argues the literary scholar Stephen Greenblatt. "We surround ourselves with them; we make them up in our sleep; we tell them to our children; we pay to have them told to us."[42] Because stories are necessary and because they are powerful, they require prudence. And as I have learned from the environmental historian Dolly Jørgensen, "narratives are always time-dependent," which is to say that it matters where our stories start and where they end.[43]

Culinary Claims presents a story. "It is," to quote the environmental historian Bathsheba Demuth, "like any history, not the story but a story."[44] Stories speak of the specific, as well as the general. In her comparison of Sky Woman to Eve, Potawatomi ethnobotanist Robin Wall Kimmerer sums up: "Same species, same earth, different stories. Like Creation stories everywhere, cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world. They tell us who we are."[45] Reflecting on Eve's exile from Eden, Kimmerer recites ethnobiologist Gary Nabhan's call for "res-story-ation," or as Kimmerer writes, "our relationship with land cannot heal until we hear it in stories."[46] Following this advice, *Culinary Claims* is not only an act of storytelling but also an act of storymaking. When I requested an interview with the Anishinaabe and Algonquin chef Johl Whiteduck Ringuette, he said yes, with a catch. "I would be interested in a trade of information

with you," he replied.[47] He reminded me of the importance of sharing stories, of circulating research, and what we learn from both. Stories illuminate connections and transmit culture.[48]

The history of restaurants in Canada is a history of migration.[49] It tells stories of sailing settlers – and the plants and animals they brought with them – of displaced Indigenous communities and their fight to maintain relationships to their ancestral lands, and the culinary knowledge and traditions of generations of migrants. Stories of people from around the world eating for a sense of place, a sense of home. And the history of North America as a whole is a history of migration and displacement – stories that range from voluntary travel to forced relocation and exiled flight.[50] But stories also add up to much more than the sum of their parts. They harden, shift shape, acquire power, and write laws. They amplify some voices and erase others. This is what the Cree literary and Indigenous studies scholar Dallas Hunt and the Cree and Saulteuax political science scholar Gina Starblanket call "storying." The term sketches "the ways in which narratives, or spoken and written accounts, come alive and function as important political tools."[51] I return to their work in Chapter 1, but here I wish to illuminate how storying underlines King's observations that stories are as dangerous as they are wondrous. Echoing this, Hunt and Starblanket reveal "how settler colonialism narrates itself into being through processes of storytelling."[52] Their collaborative scholarship offers an invitation to become aware of these histories, these stories, and how they structure imaginaries, institutions, and interactions, which is shorthand for life and death.

Although *Culinary Claims* unfolds across the lands that are now called Canada, it tells stories that expand and defy national borders. It also problematizes and unsettles the border between Canada and the United States, which King addresses in *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in Canada*. "While the line that divides the two countries is a political reality, and while the border affects bands and tribes in a variety of ways," he says, "I would have found it impossible to talk about the one without talking about the other. For most Aboriginal people, that line doesn't exist. It is a figment of someone else's imagination."[53]

Culinary Claims questions and crosses this settler border. The Conclusion turns to the United States, and throughout my focus on Canada I keep King's words in mind.

Table Manners

A dish is an assemblage of ingredients that reflects and constructs time and space, seasons and place, cultures and traditions. Food materializes debates about what is fit to eat. It is embodied – political, discursive, economic. Culture codes materials into ingredients. It is, thus, culture that turns edibles into food, not edibility alone. A cuisine is a particular cooking style, a term that comes from Latin. Tellingly, French, Italian, and German have one word for both kitchen and cuisine (*la cuisine*, *la cucina*, and *die Küche*). Gastronomy comes from Greek, *gastro* meaning stomach and *onomy* the body of knowledge that governs the stomach. Gastronomy focuses on eating food and cuisine on preparing it. I follow sociologist Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson's lead that cuisine is "the code that brings food into the social order. As dining socializes eating, so cuisine formalizes cooking."[54] Gastronomy, in contrast, favours taste, erudite eaters, and the perspective of those at the table as opposed to those in the kitchen.[55] I prioritize cuisine because it includes the labour – symbolic and physical – of turning animals and plants into food.

Cuisine encompasses how people cook and eat, when, where, with whom, and how. Zona Spray, an Arctic cuisine specialist, recounts food writer Giuliano Bugialli's five criteria for defining a cuisine: "1) indigenous food stuffs 2) a specific heat source 3) unique cooking methods and preserving techniques 4) specialized cooking implements and preserving equipment or tools 5) a distinctive flavoring or seasoning base giving all foods a unified taste."[56] That said, I do not discuss food as food, meaning how it tastes or what it does nutritionally; instead, I approach food as a site of cultural negotiation. As a cultural symbol. I consider what food does emotionally, how it represents land and territory, traditions and social tensions. How food enacts power.

Culinary Claims does not study what people in Canada eat per se. Nor does it study health and nutrition. Instead, it focuses on restaurant culture. It studies menus as cultural texts to reflect on how eateries represent culinary cultures. Restaurant menus tell stories. They stage narratives and are culinary ambassadors of social orders that require particular forms of literacy.[57] A menu holds things in relation with other things, and by things I mean flora and fauna.[58] *Culinary Claims* details how restaurants interact with larger political and social forces – what I call restaurant politics – and their role as venues for cultural representation. The history of Indigenous restaurants in Canada narrates a broader story about how food mediates relationships between peoples and places.

To track the evolution of the representation of Indigenous foodways in Canada, *Culinary Claims* focuses on the period from 1967 to 2017. But it also jumps back to the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth. It concentrates on urban Canada, but does not cover all provinces. Nor does it venture to the three territories, all gaps that deserve further attention. Although important, I do not discuss restaurants on reserves, another point for future scholarship. This book is an urban food cultural history. Despite employing these divisionary terms, I recognize their flaws and agree with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, who contests this separation. Recognizing how the settler colonial distinction reinforces division between reserve and urban communities, she writes, "Reserves are colonial constructs, as are urban communities."[59] Simpson emphasizes that "Cities have become sites of tremendous activism and resistance and of artistic, cultural, and linguistic revival and regeneration, and this comes from the land."[60] My focus on the urban understands cities as an integrated part of these relationships with land.

Culinary Claims is not exhaustive, nor is it encyclopaedic. It does not name every Indigenous restaurant, past and present. It is not a list, but a story. It is not a detailed description of Indigenous foods and food practices, nor is it a restaurant or food reference guide. It is, rather, a critical contemplation about food's meanings and the role restaurants play in staging cultural experiences. It is about

restaurant politics. Its aim is not to study Indigenous cuisines and foodways. It is a work of food cultural history that demonstrates how both settler and Indigenous communities use foods – and restaurants as venues for their representation – to claim land, culture, and history. In other words, *Culinary Claims* does not represent a definitive history. Just as an ingredient is never the same – some apples, for example, scream sour, while others stay sweet, some succumb to the touch of a finger and others hold onto their crispness – a restaurant's dishes are always in flux. I thus embrace this variability and adaptability, this complexity, in the historical narratives I craft.

Culinary Claims depicts the power dynamics of cross-cultural encounters of eating in restaurants. It weaves individual restaurant histories together with themes such as culinary exchange, Indigenous sovereignty, and the politics of "authenticity." Furthermore, it examines the history of Indigenous restaurants in Canada from an interdisciplinary perspective. I employ a narrative voice that fuses the scholarly and the popular, the empirical and the subjective. I aspire to bring more awareness to earlier restaurant examples and to contextualize their role in the representation of Indigenous foodways. Likewise, instead of focusing on what Indigenous foods are, I attend to how contemporary renditions of Canadian cuisine imagine the history of Indigenous food cultures and, thus, the country's culinary heritage, especially now that local ingredients are in vogue.

Indigenous restaurants have come and gone since the 1970s, and yet there is little cultural memory of them. By revisiting these restaurants, I uncover stories about how land is imagined and who is part of this storytelling. I also track how these stories have shifted shape. The quality of a restaurant's food obviously affects its ability to survive, but what matters more for this book are its stories. To think about where food comes from and how it links people and places. *Culinary Claims*, in part, is about restaurants, but it is also about the narratives surrounding these restaurants – culinary discourse and restaurant politics. It, therefore, takes up how mainstream Canadian media has reported, which is to say has storied, Indigenous eateries.

Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 report on Indian residential schools, the Canadian government is confronting the ongoing legacies of what the report calls cultural genocide. The year 2017 marked 150 years since Canadian Confederation, for which the federal and provincial governments threw celebratory parties. Another two years later, in 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released *Reclaiming Power and Place*, which further pressed the urgency of reconciliation. And then on 28 May 2021, a headline announced: "Canada: remains of 215 children found at Indigenous residential school site" – 215 unmarked graves at Kamloops Indian School in British Columbia.[61] This headline confirmed what survivors had been saying for decades, and the discovery of these unmarked graves "is a condemning reminder of the horrific consequences of an ongoing genocide."[62] The residential school system enacted terrible abuse. Food, too, played a part. *Culinary Claims* contemplates food's role in residential schools, as well as cultural imperialism at large.

Political scientist Sam Grey and geographer Lenore Newman describe cuisine as "an important, overlooked lens" in food sovereignty scholarship.[63] They discuss the Andes and the Pacific Northwest, yet do not mention restaurants, a notable gap, considering that restaurants are where cuisines largely live today. Turning to another settler colonial Commonwealth country, anthropologist Carolyn Morris has studied the representation of Māori foodways in cookbooks, as well as the absence of Māori restaurants in Aotearoa New Zealand.[64] She attributes this absence to "the lack of a Māori clientele on account of economic status and the availability of culturally marked food in other venues, and the lack of a Pākehā clientele because of the perceived unpalatability of Māori food."[65] There are similarities between Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada. For example, Morris identifies ingredients – such as crayfish and sweet potatoes – that Pākehā (non-Māori) settlers have embraced, ingredients that are classified as either Māori or Pākehā, which is akin to Canada. Maple syrup, for instance, can be Indigenous and/or Canadian. Where my study parts ways from Morris's, however, is in its historiography. Morris reviews three Māori

restaurants, one that opened in 1999, one in the mid-1980s, and one in 2003, arguing that the reasons they closed are representative of the Māoris' refusal to be assimilated. In contrast, *Culinary Claims* establishes a larger history of Indigenous restaurants in Canada to map how they represent political and social changes and how chefs use food to reclaim a contemporary cultural presence.

Drawing from discussions with colleagues, Morris's understanding is that the situation of "Native Americans and Australian Aborigines is similar to that of Māori, in that few if any restaurants sell their cuisine."[66] Instead, national cuisines adopt and appropriate what they like – claiming their preferred ingredients as their culinary building blocks and discarding the rest.[67] But this does not account for change. The restaurant that a Māori political activist ran created "the potentially disturbing confrontation with an uneasy colonial history."[68] This may have been true of earlier Indigenous restaurants, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, but I believe contemporary eateries, particularly ones that have opened since 2015, are spaces in which settler diners are becoming more comfortable with the discomfort required in confronting Canadian colonialism. This demonstrates how Indigenous restaurants – and the stories they serve – have evolved over nearly five decades and further illustrates what I mean by restaurant politics.

To piece together the history of how Canada's restaurant landscape has represented Indigenous foodways, I have consulted historical and contemporary menus, cookbooks, and recipes, conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews and oral histories with restaurateurs and chefs, and practised participant-observation, mostly front-of-house, but occasionally in the kitchen too. No matter how long the meal, restaurant experiences are ephemeral. Recipes, and therefore cookbooks, are more durable. Some restaurants leave a paper trail and others almost no traces at all. Sometimes menus survive, doubling as archives, but other times they're lost to appetites past. Primary sources about restaurants, especially Indigenous ones, are typically scarce. To compensate, I have combed through newspaper, magazine, and online reviews. In the absence of detailed histories about restaurants in Canada, print media take up the slack. That said, newspapers, for example,

are colonial archives.[69] Critics judge Indigenous restaurants from a settler colonial point of view – a limitation I keep in mind. I parse menus from contemporary restaurants, as well as menus from ones that closed decades ago. But menus change – chefs grow bored and customers, too. Ingredient prices rise and fall. Tastes change. Or a global health pandemic crashes into the industry, closing many eateries and transforming others into take-out joints. This means that the contemporary restaurant menus I write about might already be, in some ways, historic. This book is, thus, a dizzying chronicle of restaurant openings and closings, of beginnings and endings. To date, there has been little discussion of restaurants in Canada, let alone Indigenous ones. *Culinary Claims* is a beginning, and I aim for it to encourage more scholars to give restaurants the attention they deserve.

One part narrative analysis and one part visual study, *Culinary Claims* brings together food studies and cultural history and uses archival, oral history, and visual methodologies to illuminate the politics that restaurants represent and enact. It is an interdisciplinary study of the emergence of Indigenous cuisine as a distinct style of dining in tandem with the negotiations restaurants make with pre-existing imaginations of Indigenous fare while defying those imaginations. By focusing on representations of Indigenous foodways and contemporary urban food culture, it seeks to contribute to understandings of Canadian colonialism. *Culinary Claims* reflects seven years of research, spread across archives, art collections, and conversations with chefs and restaurateurs. Using open-ended interview techniques, I attuned my listening to the ways in which restaurant spaces negotiate and amplify practices of sharing memories and stories. My strategy for seeking interviews was to identify restaurateurs based on historical and contemporary media coverage. As anyone who has traced Joni Mitchell's lyrics by drawing a map of Canada knows, the country is big. And travel is expensive. These limitations meant I focused on a handful of cities based on their archive collections, Indigenous restaurant histories, and contemporary food scenes: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. I acknowledge the shortcomings in this geography and its inability to speak on behalf of all regions.

For places I could not travel to, I further relied on archival material, ranging from newspaper accounts to government reports and from cookbooks and recipes to online reviews and photographs.

To complement these sources, I have pulled together literature from food studies, history, Indigenous studies, settler colonial studies, and the environmental humanities. *Culinary Claims* joins a body of scholarship that reads food socially, politically, and culturally.[70] Following *Northern Bounty: A Celebration of Canadian Cuisine* and *What's to Eat? Entrées in Canadian Food History*, the edited volume *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History* is the most thorough attempt to compile a national food history that includes some mention of Indigenous foodways.[71] I, however, aim to bring a discussion of representations of Indigenous and Canadian foodways into dialogue with international culinary changes. Lenore Newman's *Speaking in Cod Tongues: A Canadian Culinary Journey* acknowledges Indigenous restaurants but is a survey rather than a study.[72] *Culinary Claims*, in contrast, contributes to widening the scholarly discussion of restaurants in Canada, how they represent Indigenous cuisines, and the knots and tangles of the negotiations and politics of such representations. My goal is not to provide a comprehensive history of Indigenous restaurants, but instead to offer a starting point for understanding how stories about food – as staged by restaurants – have played a critical role in cultural representations. Furthermore, the ten chapters do not intend to tell these stories comprehensively but instead to develop a critical historical approach toward decoding restaurants and the politics they represent and enact.

Reading Restaurants

Restaurants are so naturalized that their histories often go unnoticed. In the history of eating out, the restaurant, however, is just one model. Others are taverns and inns, guesthouses and cafés, teahouses and cookshops. What differentiates one from another includes fixed or unfixed mealtimes, individual versus group tables, set prices, the range of foods – from no options to many – and who

may request a table. "Although restaurants might seem an inevitable part of urban civilization," historian Paul Freedman makes clear, "most prosperous, commercial societies in the past managed quite well without them."[73] A restaurant is not a given.

Restaurants go back to the eighteenth century, but eating out has a much longer and wide-reaching history.[74] Pompeii hosted a lively "street food" scene and there are records from as early as 1000 CE of dining options in imperial China.[75] But the word restaurant emerged in eighteenth-century Paris. Historian Rebecca Spang traces the first restaurants to places peddling consommé, a healthful soup. "In the last twenty years of the Old Regime," writes Spang, "one went to a restaurant (or, as they were more commonly called, a 'restaurateur's room') to drink restorative bouillons, as one went to a café to drink coffee."[76] By the 1820s, "restaurateur's rooms" had evolved into what we recognize as restaurants today.[77] But until the mid- to late nineteenth century, restaurants were a Parisian phenomenon.

Over time, restaurants have served diverse people with distinct needs: hungry travellers with nowhere else to eat; elite socialites keen to entertain; workers in need of lunch; bachelors without kitchens; and families on the road. Restaurants are sites of business and of leisure. Somewhere between public and private, restaurants are places to eat – often intimate ones – as well as places to be seen eating. This makes them venues for distinction and social performance. Some eateries maintain the status quo, having upheld, for example, racial, gender, and socioeconomic segregation, policing who can dine where and with whom. Others have challenged such divisions, pushing to expand who can claim a seat at the table.[78]

Before there were restaurants in North America, there were taverns, inns, and boarding houses where (mostly) men could drink and travellers could fuel on food, and even spend the night. When Upper Canada was only ten years old, in 1809, it already had 108 taverns.[79] Writing about this period, historian Julia Roberts defines a tavern as "a building that was open to the public (and, for travellers, open at all hours), licensed to sell spirituous and fermented liquor by small measure (by the glass, gill, half-pint, or pint), and had the facilities to provide food, lodging, and stabling."[80] In

the nineteenth century, alcohol first and foremost defined a tavern. Drink came before food, thirst before hunger. But the genre of drinking establishments spilled beyond the tavern; there were also beer-houses, shops, and illegal drinking houses. At taverns, food played a supporting rather than a starring role. Options were limited and meals hearty, often of the bread, butter, and salt pork trinity. Mostly settler-travellers took their meals in inns and taverns.[81] Restaurants introduced greater choice than what an inn's or tavern's kitchen could provision.

Richard Dulong opened Auberge Saint-Gabriel in Montreal in 1754, and in 1769 it received the first liquor licence in North America.[82] But as its name makes clear, its main occupation was that of an inn. Toronto's oldest tavern is the Wheatsheaf, which opened in 1849 on King Street at the corner of Bathurst.[83] The history of restaurants in Canada dates to around the end of the nineteenth century.[84] The 1891 census clocked 891 restaurant keepers, which was the first year that restaurant was a separate category of employment and not partnered with hotels and boarding houses.[85] There were 228 restaurants in Quebec, 203 in Ontario, and 173 in Nova Scotia, largely in urban areas.[86] The 1911 census listed 2,720 restaurant keepers who employed 7,283 workers, the majority of them male and foreign born.[87] In 1928, the Canadian Restaurant Association was founded, and since then, the industry has continued to grow.

In her study about fast food in Canada, sociologist Ester Reiter discusses restaurants up to the First World War, the industry's expansion around the Second World War, and then rapid growth in the 1950s and 1960s. She outlines how eating – an activity that once took place in the home – migrated to the public sphere and became an industry of its own. "There were two major phases to this process," she writes; "the first was the development of restaurants as separate eating establishments, and their growing patronage by people away from home at mealtimes."[88] The development of the fast food industry marks the second phase. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, Canada lacked the population density that a restaurant market requires.[89] As immigration grew, so did urbanization, and by the 1930s Canadian cities had sufficient

populations to fuel an industry. That said, demand and the number of people who could afford to eat out remained limited.[90] This changed after the Second World War. Previously, restaurants met the needs of those on the road in search for a meal. But now they provided an alternative for families who usually cooked and ate at home.[91] Eating out became more and more popular, especially around the late 1960s and early 1970s.[92]

As of 2018, Canada had nearly 97,000 restaurants, caterers, and bars, with more than 37,700 in Ontario alone.[93] The industry employed 7 per cent of the country's workforce – 1.2 million people – and made up 4 per cent of its GDP. Per day, Canadians made 22 million visits to restaurants, out of which 9.1 million were in Ontario.[94] In the past two hundred years, restaurants in North America have ranged from exclusive and expensive to democratic and cheap, and from venues to celebrate special occasions to a spot close to work to grab a quick lunch. Just as restaurant fashions have changed over time, so too has the word's meaning.

Words, Worlds, and Maps

Originating in the nineteenth century, the children's rhyme "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never break me" changes now and then, and in 1981 the rock band The Who sang "But names can never down you." Donna Haraway, however, suggests otherwise. Names matter. Words matter. Names can down you and words can break you. To borrow Haraway's, "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories."[95] And it matters which worlds make laws. Because words build worlds, it matters which words we use.

I use Indigenous to refer to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people, and purposely capitalize it. Here I take the lead from sociologist Michael Yellow Bird, an enrolled member of the Mandan, Hidatsa,

and Arikara tribes from North Dakota, who writes: "'Indigenous Peoples' and 'First Nations Peoples' are capitalized because they are used as proper nouns (particular persons) and signify the cultural heterogeneity and political sovereignty of these groups."[96] Indigenous is a multivocal term. And it is a relational one that colonialism defines. As Alfred and Corntassel make clear, "Indigenousness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism."[97] Making a similar point, Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson outlines how the term marks when "people left their own spaces of self-definition and *became* 'Indigenous.'"[98] Because of this, as much as possible, I refer to specific nations and communities.[99] But because Indigenous is broad, I also use it to differentiate between First Peoples and Canadian settlers. With settlers, I refer to all non-Indigenous Canadians.

Like words, capitalization matters. So do accents as well as italics, which emphasize foreignness.[100] Despite its canonization, I do not refer to the "new" world. I use Turtle Island interchangeably with North America, a term that originates in the Haudenosaunee creation story – the Tsi Kiontonhwentsison – about Sky Woman.[101] There are many versions with various twists and turns, but each one uses the term Turtle Island to reclaim North America based on traditional Indigenous names. Moreover, the performance artist Guillermo Gómez Peña rightly points out that "America is a continent, not a country."[102] And yet, Michael Twitty uses the word America "because the term 'United States' conveys politics but no dreams."[103] Following convention, I use American to refer to the people, places, and particularities (and dreams) of the United States.

Equally as important as the power of language is gender. Kitchens exaggerate gender performances.[104] Although the professional cooking world is slowly shedding its macho reputation, many restaurants have been designed to keep women out. Analysing the role of gender in Indigenous restaurants, and those who have been marketed to look Indigenous, is beyond this book's scope. Nonetheless, I want to gesture to the fact that the history of cooking has largely been a history of women, but the history of professional

cooking looks different. Although many male chefs wax poetic about their mother's or grandmother's cooking, the professional culinary world is still predominantly a boy's club.

So why have there been so few Indigenous restaurants in Canada? Chapter 1 responds to this question by unpacking colonial culinary narratives. It surveys the role that food has played in the Canadian colonial project in tandem with what drove traditional foods off the menu to lay the groundwork for historicizing the representation of Indigenous foodways in restaurants. Even though government policies actively sought to weaken and break Indigenous foodways, Canada drew on the visualization of such foodways to construct and market its own identity and cuisine. This is exemplified by train menus that visually dress up typical Euro-Canadian fare with romantic paintings and photographs of imagined Indigenous life. Then, in 1967, as the country celebrated its centennial, Indigenous foods were back on the menu, but this time as Canadian, which is the subject of Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 takes up eateries in Canada at large and fleshes out the three time periods of Indigenous restaurants I define: 1971 to 1996, 1997 to 2014, and 2015 to the present. In 1971, the first Indigenous-themed restaurant opened in urban Canada; in 1996, the last residential school closed; and in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its report concluding that Indian residential schools committed cultural genocide. Schools separated Indigenous bodies – children's bodies – from the land, including the traditional foodways that anchor relationships to plants, animals, and places. They violently interrupted how knowledge – including culinary knowledge – passes from one generation to the next in Indigenous families, communities, and nations. This is why 1996 marked a significant breaking point, as did the year the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada concluded.

These restaurant periods are also in dialogue with Kiowa chef Lois Ellen Frank's historicization of Native American foodways. She identifies four periods stateside, which also spill into Canada. The first is ancestral, pre-contact foodways. The second is first-contact foodways, encompassing when Indigenous diets began to incorporate plants and animals that colonists introduced, such

as sheep. The third is the commodity food period, also known as the government-issue period, which represents the introduction of reservations and a growing dependence on rations from the government, the likes of bannock and frybread. The final period she calls "New Native American cuisine." This portrays the present, in which chefs are reinterpreting Indigenous foods, reclaiming ingredients, and revitalizing connections between physical and cultural health.[105] Matching these periods with restaurants, 1971 to 1996 represents first-contact foodways in tandem with the commodity food period; 1997 to 2014 begins to move away from commodity foods toward a period of revitalization, which defines 2015 to the present. That said, my periodization aims to summarize major sociocultural changes – and thus culinary shifts – without overstating the difference from one year to the next.

Starting with Chapter 4, the chapters that follow spotlight specific restaurants. Chapters 4 and 5 map Vancouver's first Indigenous eateries. Moving east, Chapter 6 discusses early Indigenous restaurants in the Rockies and on the Prairies. Chapter 7 turns to Toronto to review its past and present eateries by charting how some claim dishes and others reclaim Indigenous ingredients. This introduces the fact that in many instances Indigenous restaurants may serve similar dishes to those found in farm-to-table Canadian restaurants, but their ingredients narrate different stories.

The last three chapters pair restaurants with issues such as regulations, hunting and aquaculture, what is game to eat and for whom, and sovereignty. Taking direction from Mary Douglas, I argue that eating is a way of ordering a culture's environment, of tabulating plants and animals as edible or not.[106] Chapter 8 stays in Toronto to discuss what happens when seal does – and does not – have a place on the menu. It starts from "Seal tartare" – Kūkŭm Kitchen's signature dish – by reviewing how it represents the continuation of a half-century-long debate over sealing. Chapter 9 serves meat as its main, considering conflicting imaginations of the edible, which is to say what is "game" to eat. It travels from Wakefield, Quebec, to Ottawa, Ontario, and then back to Winnipeg, Manitoba, to ask questions about hunting and edibility, restaurants and regulations. This showcases the tensions – and

politics – in defining restaurant fare. This chapter also asks: why do Indigenous restaurants continue to close? Before moving to the Conclusion, Chapter 10 returns to Vancouver to profile Salmon n' Bannock. It unpacks "Indian candy" and discusses culinary adaptation and how salmon became celebrated as an iconic, pan-Canadian food. It also ponders "the f-word" and whether farmed salmon can hold the same symbolic meaning as wild. All of these chapters couple restaurants with clusters of ideas about Canada's culinary landscape, asking who is able to partake, in what role, and on what terms. Together they compose a history of the representation of Indigenous foodways in Canada and add up to an argument about how old ingredients are telling new stories about the relationship between food and land, people and politics.

Tailgating these restaurant histories, the Conclusion puts the previous chapters in dialogue with culinary changes around the world. It compares Indigenous eateries in the United States and Canada to map differences and similarities in how restaurants represent Indigenous foodways. Returning to the question of why there are so few Indigenous restaurants, I conclude by focusing on human-plant relations, contemporary restaurant politics, and Indigenous revival. Through readings of material and visual culture – from restaurant interiors to their menus, dishes, and reviews – *Culinary Claims* asserts that restaurants not only represent politics and identities but also shape and enact them.