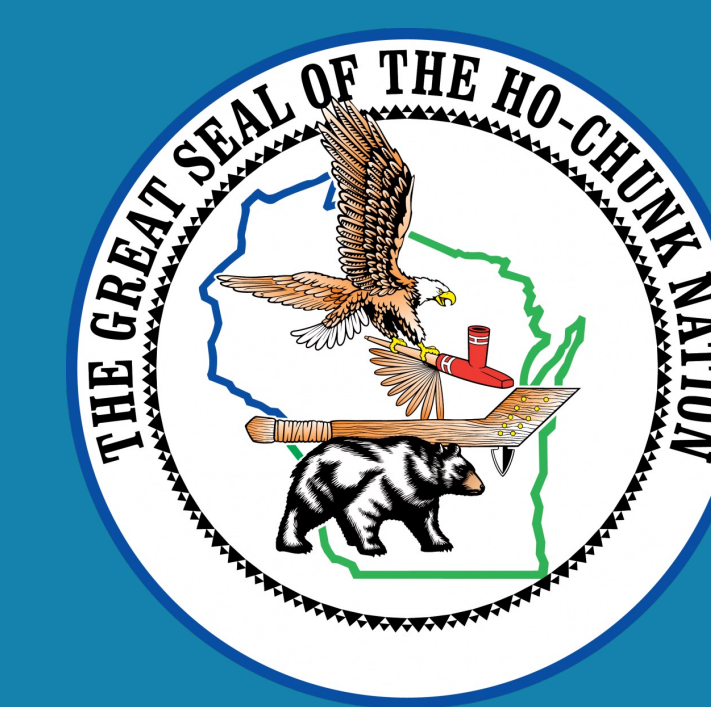




Ho-Chunk Nation Community Gardening: A Conscious Effort at Reclaiming Traditions

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Research Question

How Can Traditional Community Gardens Help Contribute Self Sufficiency to the Ho-Chunk Nation in Today's Economy?



Figure 1. Raised Garden beds in Black River Falls, WI

Indigenous Gardening

The Ho-Chunk people have a green corn dance during harvest season to honor the work, time, good thoughts and feelings that were put into everything we hunted, gathered and grew (Hocak Worak). One of the most important traditional agricultural systems prevalent to many Northeastern tribes is the three sisters' garden (see figure 5). A variety of corn, beans and squashes can be used when planting a three sisters' garden. The corn is planted first, once it is several inches high, the beans get planted near the corn and the squash gets planted along the edge of the corn and beans. (Benjamin 2021)

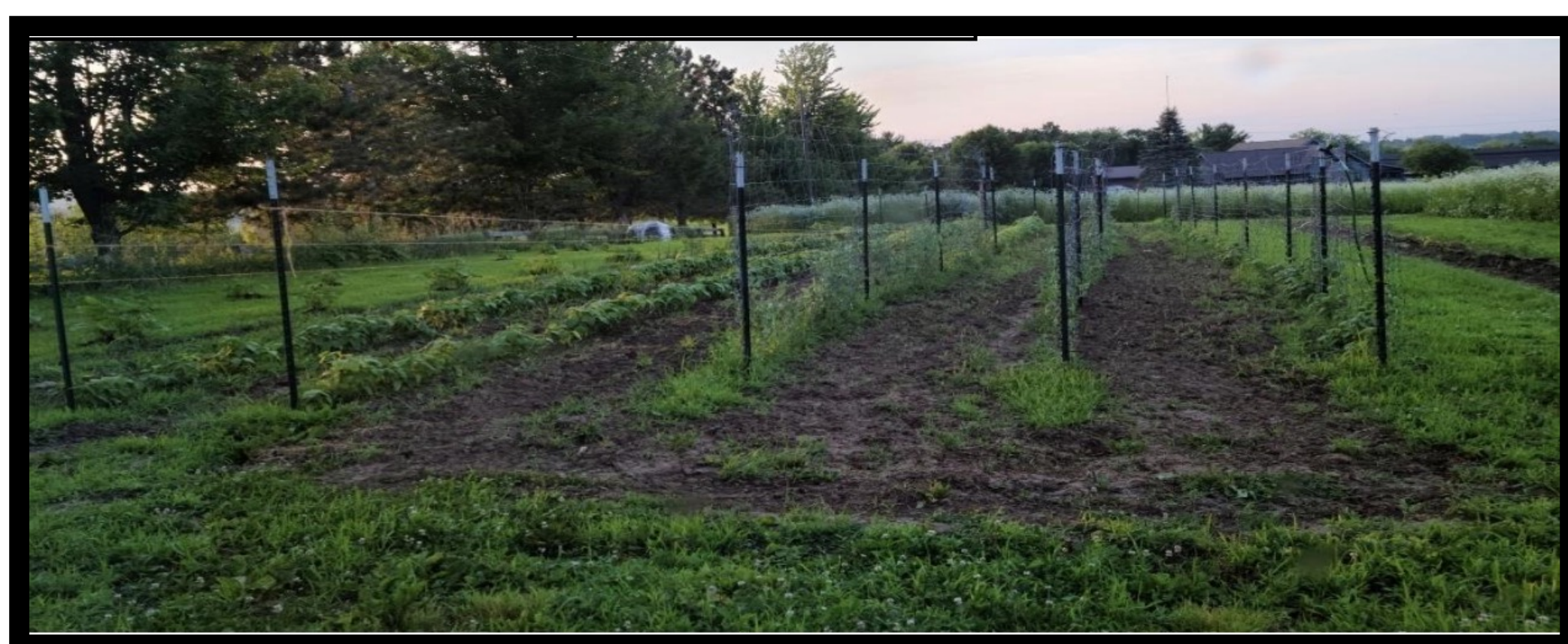


Figure 2. Whirling Thunder Garden Site

Introduction

The Ho-Chunk Nation is a federally recognized tribe that has plots of land throughout the State of Wisconsin. The Ho-Chunk Housing and Community Development Agency (HHCDA) maintains 10 communities, five of those communities include organic community gardens (see figure 4).

Understanding how to attain tribal sovereignty through food must operate on a different scale for the Ho-Chunk Nation. The Ho-Chunk Nation is a unique tribe made up of multiple acres of land held in trust. Tribes with reservations can operate agricultural systems on larger scales while tribes with trust land must operate on smaller scales. With the limitations of land access and land knowledge, some tribal divisions have made efforts to produce organic food locally to community members (see figures 1 and 2). We are currently proactive in small community gardens. I would like to look at the potential benefits of a dispersed community, understanding where community members stand in their relationship with food and the average level of food security.

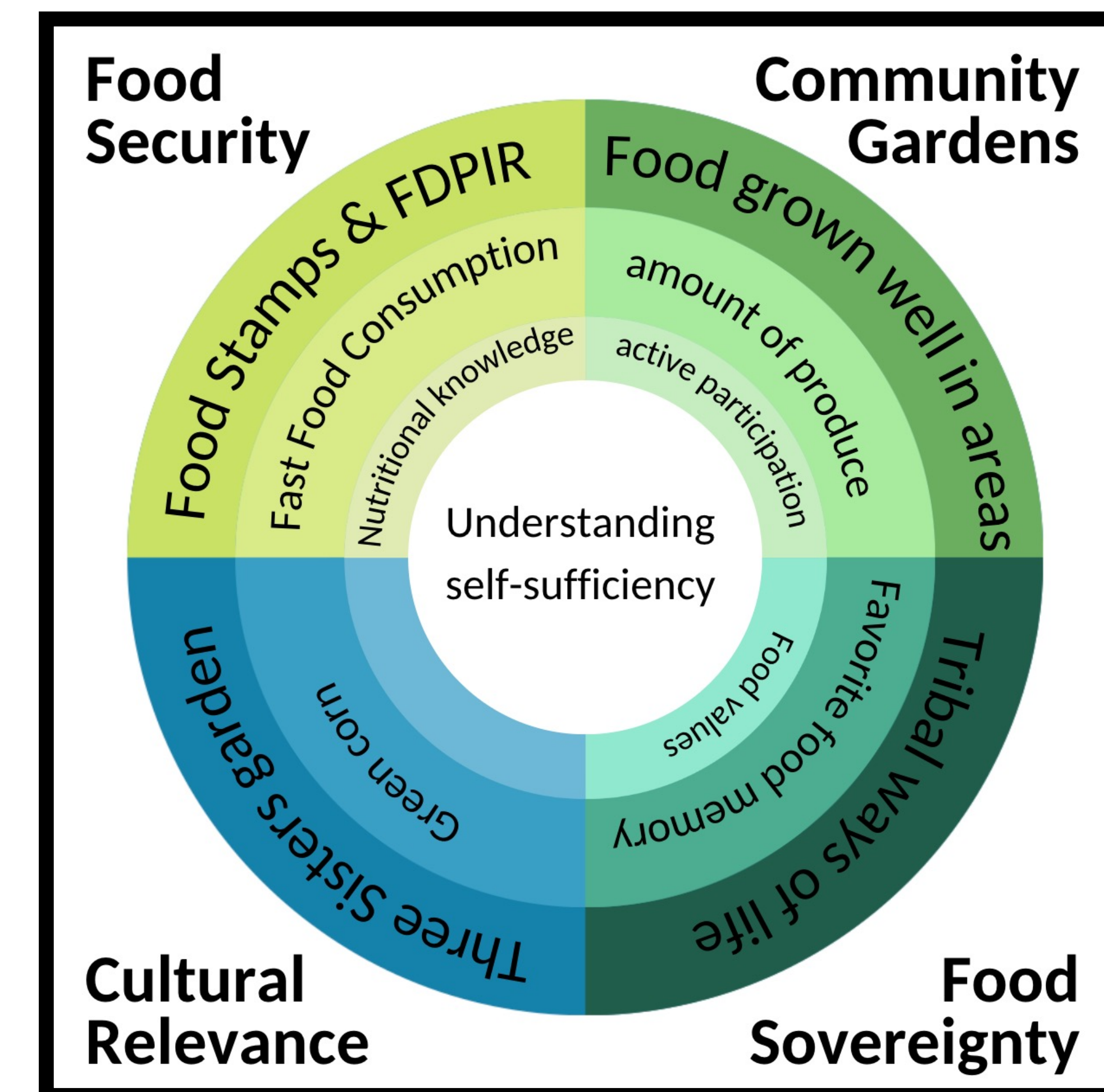


Figure 3. Self-sufficiency can be achieved through these four key components .



Figure 4. Ho-Chunk Tribal Area in Wisconsin

Food Sovereignty

Native American farmers and gardeners understand food sovereignty to be both a concept and method to push community goals; increasing access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods (Hoover 2017). Protection of our traditional food is important to ensure a healthy lifestyle for not only us, but our future generations as well (Stevens 2014).

Food Security

Food security is understood on a national and global level that all people, at all times, have access to safe and nutritious food to meet their needs (Pinstrip-Andersen 2009). Native Americans experience some of the highest rates of poverty. Approximately 25% of Native American's live below the poverty line which is twice as much as the National average (Berryhill et al. 2018). The Ho-Chunk Nation has an unemployment rate of 14.4% while the National average is 3.6% (Census 2016-2020). Because of the connection between unemployment and food insecurity, this puts the Ho-Chunk people at risk of food insecurity.



Figure 5. Three Sisters; Wicawas, Huunjik, Wicawa cozu

Methods

For my design project, I will go to each community that maintains gardens and conduct a multi-question semi-structured interview with three to five people. I acknowledge the difference of the three different communities that I want to interview; I will interview people of all ages who help organize the garden, those who volunteer frequently and those who live within the community (See figure 3). With this data I will obtain a general idea of patterns involving food security, food sovereignty and Indigenous farming.

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