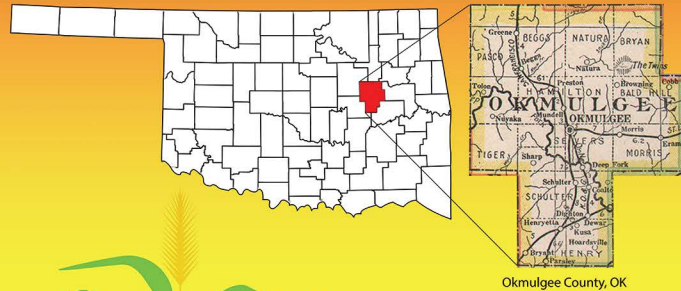




Abstract

Health problems and food insecurity plague members of the Mvskoke Nation. They are also some of the poorest members of society relying on food distribution programs (Fig 1). My research question is how can tribal policy change promote food security through urban gardening within the Mvskoke Nation capitol. Enacting laws to replace decorative plants and utilize public spaces to grow more edible plants will allow for an accessible option to obtain healthier foods. Creating a human-land connection to food provides a benefit to the city as well as its residents. This research is significant because it addresses the food problems that have developed over years of assimilation due to colonization and the industrialization of crops.



Edible Cities

Places like Berlin and Detroit have created policies to make gardening within city limits a possibility. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that 800 million people worldwide grow vegetables or fruits or raise animals in cities, producing an astonishing 15 to 20 percent of the world's food.

Traditional Foods grown by Mvskoke People

- Sassafras
- Corn
- Beans
- Squash
- Persimmons
- Hazelnuts
- Blackberries
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Crab Apples
- Plums
- Pecans
- Possum Grapes
- Groundcherries
- Jerusalem Artichokes
- Hickory Nuts
- Mint

Human/Nature: A Connection Between Land, Food, and Spirit

by Britt Herman
College of Muscogee Nation

“Food means more than simply personal responsibilities about food choices and includes a more complex understanding of how food invokes community, well-being, and connectedness.”
-Vernon 2015

Background

It is important to converse with the people affected by food issues to accurately address the problems. Using outside conclusions on how to fix food anxieties within a community are counter-productive and do not take into account relationships to food. The need for control and management over access to food, taking part in decision-making, and how choices tie to identities and social relationships is essential (Poe et al. 2013, 420). Food cannot be disentangled from people and relationships; consuming, producing, and foraging for food all have meaning by working to facilitate the strengthening of community bonds (Vernon 2015).

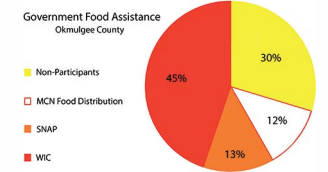


Figure 1: Data established from epwsc.org (2015), MCN Human Services, US Laborers/Statistics, and US Census (2018)

Analysis

Obesity, depression, and poor socioeconomic issues contribute to a low quality of life for the Mvskoke people within the Mvskoke Nation Capitol (Fig 2). Policies set up by the United States government were an attempt to disrupt Native American support systems, ties to land, and the ability to sustain themselves. “Enhancing food production and biodiversity by cultivating indigenous species will provide a benefit for the city and its residents” (Hajzeri and Kwadwo 2019). By following early examples of how our ancestors interacted with the land, Mvskoke people and other communities can achieve greater harmony in their daily lives. Mixing traditional farming techniques with modern urban agriculture can provide a bridge to connect culture and food.

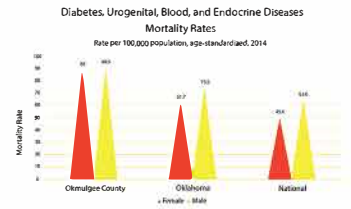


Figure 2: Data from the Health, Medicine, and Education (HME) by County Public Use Data File, Oklahoma, Seattle, WA, CDC, 2016.



College of Muscogee Nation Health instructor Bobbie Coon tending to edamame beans being grown in the CMN campus greenhouse in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. (DeLaune/MJN)

Conclusions

Scholars stress the necessity of political change to promote food security through urban gardening as important to a holistic human-land connection. Engaging community members to collect provisions forces a direct link to the natural world around them and promotes Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Enacting policies to make consumable flora more accessible in cities allows for the opportunity to provide food security to residents and incorporate traditional foods within their diets. The concept of integrating native edible plants urges us to rethink the use of urban open spaces (Hajzeri and Kwadwo 2019). Future work includes conducting interviews in my own tribe regarding food security issues facing Mvskoke people.

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the Haskell Environmental Research Studies Institute (HERS), EPSCoR, the National Science Foundation (NSF), Haskell Indian Nations University, and the University of Kansas. I would also like to acknowledge Josh Meisel, and Drs. Jay T. Johnson, and Daniel Wildcat. Mvto to the Mvskoke Nation and my ancestors. This project was supported by KS NSF EPSCoR Award 1656006.

Special thanks to Katie Grote.

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