# 02: Elevating Indigenous Food Systems



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*We are a global community of Indigenous peoples and allies using connected localized solutions labs and toolkits to bring people together to decolonize and transform food systems. Our aim is to make culturally appropriate nutritious food accessible and affordable for everyone and achieve nutritional security within planetary boundaries.*

## The Need

Our solution is based on the understanding that it is no longer possible to look at food, livelihoods, health and the management of natural resources separately.

***Embracing systems–thinking through holistic, Indigenous approaches is needed to address these complex and interdependent challenges.***

Agroecology, then, is not just a set of agricultural practices. It focuses on changing social relationships, empowering farmers, adding value locally and privileging short value chains. It allows farmers to adapt to climate change and to sustainably use and conserve natural resources and biodiversity.

## The Solution

We are a global community of Indigenous peoples and allies transforming food systems, using connective localized solutions labs and toolkits that bring people together with the overall aim of making nutritious food available, accessible and affordable for everyone and positively influencing mindsets to achieve food and nutritional security and the responsible use of natural resources.

We aim to pilot four solutions labs in geographically and culturally diverse locations within our global network. Along with the pilot solutions labs, we are also building a platform with various toolkits, including case studies relevant to Indigenous communities that are piloting the solutions lab. This platform will be designed so it is easily accessible and can be leveraged by the participants in the solutions labs to tackle local problems.

The network of solutions labs promote and enhance Indigenous food systems for equality and inclusivity, strengthen Indigenous voices at a key corporate and policy level, and ensure that Indigenous food systems are not engulfed by the global anthropogenic factors that affect our world today, such as climate change, but rather break into the future as a stronger force of environmental, social, economic and mindset change.

# The Impact

**Our solution promotes Indigenous knowledge, agroecology and regenerative natural resource management practices. The global network of solutions labs supports and acts as an ally in voicing the rights of Indigenous peoples and the importance of Indigenous food and ecological knowledge. Together, we will pave a path to an equitable, sustainable food systems future.**



**SHORT TERM IMPACT:**

Indigenous communities and allies are supported to identify and test local solutions

**MEDIUM TERM IMPACT:**

Equitable food and nutrition security solutions are shared among Indigenous communities globally

**LONG TERM IMPACT:**

Parity between Indigenous and non Indigenous knowledge systems in contributing solutions to transform our food systems

Localised solution labs and toolkits are an opportunity to promote and celebrate local food solution development. It is envisioned that the solution lab journey for communities and individuals alike will result in  knowledge sharing and empowerment, promote confidence, and provide individual and collective self worth, providing a sense of well being and connectedness through the exchange of ideas at both the local and global scale.



# Turning Barriers into Opportunities

**Systemic Barriers**
**Systemic Change Opportunities**

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| *Existing colonial structures and mindsets often devalue, dismiss, or exclude non scientific, traditional or alternate knowledge sources and practices. Power dynamics favour conformity to institutionalised colonial governance, education, and trading structures and systems, at the exclusion of alternate and more diverse approaches. This has often resulted in lack of access to land, natural resources, and infrastructure to engage in regenerative agriculture, agroecology, and nature positive production that would protect and restore people, planet and climate by connecting Indigenous communities to the resources they own.* | *Create an enabling environment, platform, or space which promotes a common approach to sharing of knowledge and ideas and challenges the existing power dynamics (colonial and traditional). This inclusive space fosters connectedness through shared language, experiences and resources. Story telling—common across all cultural settings—creates a shared vision inclusive of Indigenous people and encourages ownership of collective solutions. Stories of local solutions can then be shared on a common digital platform. Power dynamics can be shifted though inclusivity, cultural context, language, shared expertise and resources,* |
| *Biodiversity is undervalued and poorly protected. Monoculture practices focus on the promotion of financial return, often to the detriment of natural resources (forests, soils, water, insects, species loss) and the exclusion of alternate Indigenous and traditional approaches. Monoculture practices are promoted by big industry whose financial interests are at often odds with smaller and diverse approaches.* | *The solution lab environment and the accompanying toolkits provide communities with opportunities and resources to identify local biodiversity concerns and set a course of action to build diversity, through the adoption of conservation measures and agroecology, informed by Indigenous knowledge. Actions at the local level, such as the creation of seed banks to prevent the loss of Indigenous crops, can be accompanied by participation in campaigns to, for example, challenge biopiracy and influence global trade issues.* |
| *The lack of effective connections and communications within and between Indigenous communities and members results in an increasing sense of disconnection between communities, the environment, and food systems whereby communities, and individuals are less able to address or identify with others facing similar issues and threats (changing climate, uncertain futures, poverty divide) resulting in a learned helplessness at the individual and collective scale .* | *The solution lab approach is designed and implemented at appropriate scales (village, district and region), promoting connection to and between communities with common language, governance structures, and environments, helping to build unity of vision and purpose. This captures a critical mass of people in an environment broad enough to be relevant, with similar challenges (e.g. climate, atolls.) Solutions can be shared and scaled to better connect with similar groups globally.* |

# Navigating Unknowns

## Potential Unintended Consequences

- *Being hijacked by self-interested individuals or groups or lack of community participation;*
- *Triggering an increase in conflict over land ownership and control;*
- *Exacerbate the digital divide between communities that have access to online fora and those that do not.*

## Thinking Ahead - *strategies to avoid these consequences*

- *Support the development of facilitation skills by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples,*
- *Use supportive, empowering structures and processes.*
- *Allocate resources to develop and support local facilitators to allow local communities to contribute from across the digital divide.*
- *Connected communities will support each other in understanding and resolving conflicts.*
- *Non-Indigenous allies and supporters will be vetted and undertake critical self-reflection before engaging with Indigenous communities.*

### We invite development partners to resource:

- A network of solutions labs and toolkits to connect communities
- Local solutions for local food system challenges incorporating Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems
- Local resource management solutions that play a key role in building resilience and responding to the climate and biodiversity emergency

### Your investment has the potential to

- Elevate Indigenous food systems, unlocking their potential to play a stronger role in food system transformation contributing to environmental, social, and economic resilience
- Support inclusivity and equitable benefits throughout the global food system

Our solution hinges upon engaging development partners to promote Indigenous knowledge and food systems' powerful and natural resource management practices, and to support and act as an ally in voicing the rights of Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous food knowledge.

Together, we will pave a path to an equitable, sustainable food systems future.

### What we need:

IT, training, resources, and locations to host the solutions labs, facilitators, project management team and tools, technical experts available for consultation, research and knowledge that is easily accessible.

### For each of the four pilot solutions lab, we are seeking:

- $400-$600K to support the development and implementation for each local solutions lab over a 4 year period
- $75K - $100K (annually per pilot) for seed funding for prototype solutions developed to incentivise participation, demonstrate shorter term impact and provide feedback and lessons learned into the lab network.

# Similar Solution in Action



## NIGERIA

The Village Farmers Initiative in the Anam riverine communities of Nigeria initiated the production, processing and consumption of indigenous/ native food varieties. This is to contribute to food security, bridge the demand and supply gap with digital financial inclusion, promote women and youth smallholder farmers and fishers and also promote enterprise and infrastructural development of the socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

## HAWAII

The Molokai community created Sustainable Molokai to address various issues, especially food security. Its programs include establishing a mobile market to support small farmers in marketing their products, so farmers have more time to focus on the sustainable production-side while increasing market access. The mobile market gives the community access to nutrient dense foods, including traditional crops.





## CANADA

Through a community consultative process, Muskoday First Nation in Canada improved its food security by building a bison herd, a traditional source of high quality protein, and by encouraging vegetable and fruit production at the household, school and community levels. The program is scaling up to use more of its farmlands, which it currently rents to non-Indigenous members, for local use, and to create employment opportunities.




# LINKING COMMUNITIES BY SHARING TRADITIONAL & LOCALIZED KNOWLEDGE

meli

Prairie Food System Vision

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