

## **A critical race and class analysis of learning in the organic farming movement**

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*The purpose of this paper is to add to a growing body of literature that critiques the whiteness of the organic farming movement and analyse potential ramifications of this if farmers are to be understood as educators. Given that farmers do not necessarily self-identify as educators, it is important to understand that in raising this critique, this paper is as much a challenge the author is extending to herself and other educators interested in food sovereignty as it is to members of the organic farming movement. This paper draws from the author's personal experiences and interest in the small-scale organic farming movement. It provides a brief overview of this movement, which is followed by a discussion of anti-racist food scholarship that critically assesses the inequities and inconsistencies that have developed as a result of hegemonic whiteness within the movement. It then demonstrates how a movement of Indigenous food sovereignty is emerging parallel to the organic farming movement and how food sovereignty is directly*

*related to empowerment through the reclamation of cultural, spiritual, and linguistic practices. Finally, it discusses the potential benefits of adult educators interested in the organic farming movement linking their efforts to a broader framework of food sovereignty, especially through learning to become better allies with Indigenous populations in different parts of the world.*

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## **Introduction**

Following the completion of my doctoral studies in 2007, I sought out an opportunity to work on a small organic farm. As some readers might understand, at that particular moment in time I felt strongly compelled to be outdoors, away from my computer, getting my hands dirty, and working out the rigidity that had developed in my body through the writing process. I also believed that knowledge of to grow my own food was important to learn in light of multiple, interrelated global tragedies, including the global economic crisis, environmental degradation and climate change, all of which result in concerns for food security.

Through interactions working side by side in the field, over meals, or at farmers' markets, I learned about the daily operations of this particular farm: the technical details of growing food, as well as the importance of local agriculture, permaculture, the organic certification process, crop diversity, soil health, seed saving, irrigation, food security, human working conditions, animal welfare, and more. Together with other employees, apprentices, volunteer visitors on working holidays from around the world, children, and their friends, I gained a range of new perspectives from the planting and harvesting of crops to the politics, philosophy, and aesthetics behind the organic farming movement—not to mention the business of selling organic vegetables. As I reflected elsewhere:

In my experience, conversations [on the farm] were as rich as any graduate level classroom, and, for me, they provided a safe space to ask questions, share my own knowledge and observations from an outside perspective, and get to know previously unexplored elements of my physical strength and identity. The key difference was that these conversations simultaneously engaged my body as well as my heart and mind, allowed me to experience the seasons more fully, and solidified theory into practice through the everyday actions of the farm. (Etmanski, in press, para 19).

Throughout my doctoral work I had explored, among other topics, principles of adult learning, community leadership, and social justice through intersectional analyses of power and privilege. As knowledge is wont to do, these topics informed my experience while I worked on the farm and continue to inform me to this day. Linked to my background in adult education, I have recently begun reflecting on the informal learning that occurs in the context of the small-scale organic farming movement. This kind of learning can be characterized as occurring “informally and incidentally, in people’s everyday lives” (Foley, 1999: 1) by people inside of social movements as well as those observing from the outside (Hall & Clover, 2005). I recently documented these reflections in a chapter examining the learning-centred role of farms and farmers in the organic farming movement (Etmanski, in press).

Yet, as I continue to contemplate this topic, the critical adult educator in me is curious to understand what opportunities exist to more explicitly link a social justice perspective (in particular, an anti-racist and Indigenous Rights perspective) to the small-scale organic farming movement in general and to my home community more specifically. Moreover, as documented in my forthcoming chapter mentioned above, while my experience was that learning certainly happens informally and incidentally through daily interactions, during my time on the farm, I also learned that intentional educational efforts also take place within the organic farming community. These

include organized networks for internship and apprenticeship called Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) and Stewards of Irreplaceable Land (SOIL). While none of the farmers with whom I worked self-identified primarily as educators, the natural corollary of people seeking out learning experiences on farms is that farmers do play an educational role in raising awareness—not only about the techniques used to grow food, but also in the politics of food security.

In light of these recent reflections, the purpose of this paper is to add to a growing body of literature that critiques the whiteness of the organic farming movement and analyse potential ramifications of this if farmers are to be understood as educators. Given that farmers do not necessarily self-identify as educators, it is important to understand that in raising this critique, this paper is as much a challenge I am extending to myself and other educators interested in food sovereignty as it is to members of the organic farming movement. To develop this critique, I open with a brief overview of the organic farming movement, followed by a discussion of anti-racist food scholarship that critically assesses the inequities and inconsistencies that have developed as a result of hegemonic whiteness within the movement. I then demonstrate how a movement of Indigenous food sovereignty is emerging parallel to the organic farming movement and discuss the potential benefits of adult educators within this movement linking their efforts to a broader framework of food sovereignty, especially amongst Indigenous populations in different parts of the world.

### **The organic farming movement**

As I have described elsewhere (Etmanski, in press), the organic farming movement has emerged largely in response to current industrial agriculture practices around the world. The list of social, economic, and environmental problems – indeed some would say crises – associated with the dominant agricultural paradigm

is extensive. To name but a few examples: the extensive use of natural gas and oil in fertilizers, pesticides, farming infrastructure, machinery, and food transportation (particularly in the face of Peak Oil); damages associated with growing mono-crops, cash crops, and agro-fuels; depletion of soils and rainforests, as well as groundwater pollution leading to oceanic 'dead zones'; displacement of Indigenous peoples and other unethical treatment of both humans and animals; subsidies and product dumping, which create an increasingly unequal global marketplace; and finally, the multiple ways in which industrial agriculture contributes to Climate Change. Many challenges stem from the technological and chemical changes to agriculture during the Green Revolution, which ultimately "proved to be unsustainable as it damaged the environment, caused dramatic loss of biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge, [favoured] wealthier farmers, and left many poor farmers deeper in debt" (Altieri, 2009: 102). P. C. Kesavan and S. Malarvannan (2010) suggested that "today, it is widely acknowledged that the 'yield gains' associated with the green revolution of the 1960s and 1970s have tapered off largely because of deterioration in the structure, quality and fertility of the soil" (p. 908). In addition, the spread of patent-protected, fertilizer-dependent seeds through neo-liberal globalization policies has created debt and dependency on foreign aid amongst poor farmers around the world (Altieri, 2009: 103). The use of certain pesticides in treating seeds was recently linked to the worldwide decline of the honeybee population (Krupke, Hunt, Eitzer, Andino & Given, 2012), and scientists have been calling for further investigation into links between the general use of pesticides or herbicides and the occurrence of cancer in both children (Hoar Zahm & Ward, 1998) and adults (Dich, Hoar Zahm, Hanberg & Adami, 1997). The list goes on.

People in many parts of the world have been taking action at both the local and global level to resist and transform the dominant agricultural system. In North America, the drive to support local, organic agriculture and eat in season produce (thereby reducing

the environmental impact of transportation over long distances) is gaining momentum through such bestselling books as Michael Pollan's, *In Defense of Food* (2008) and *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006), as well as through popular documentary films such as, *Food Inc.* (Kenner, 2008; helpfully critiqued by Flowers & Swan, 2011). The gap between food producers and consumers is also narrowing through such food-centred movements as the 100-Mile Diet (Smith & MacKinnon, 2007), or the international Slow Food Movement, which promotes good, clean, and fair food for all (e.g. see Slow Food Canada, 2012). In parallel, the number of organic farms in Canada is on the rise, particularly in the province of British Columbia, which grew from 154 certified producers in 1992, to 430 in 2001 (MacNair, 2004: 10). The Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC, 2012) lists 68 certified organic farms on Vancouver Island (where I live) and the surrounding Gulf Islands—and this number is complemented by an abundance of non-certified farms, farms in transition, and backyard, community, or school gardens (LifeCycles, 2012).

### **Anti-racist food scholarship**

Despite this growing movement around food and organic farming anti-racist food justice scholars such as Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (2011) have suggested that the North American alterative food movement “may itself be something of a monoculture” (p. 2). These authors’ critique is sadly ironic given the widely held adverse opinion of mono-cropping practices within the small-scale organic food movement. It is particularly problematic in my home context since Canadians have long grappled with the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity. The Canadian Multicultural Act (Canada, 1985), for example, is an attempt to promote equity and equality amongst people of all cultural backgrounds. Yet, proponents of critical race theory have suggested that the rhetoric surrounding multiculturalism and diversity has become so powerful that it can render the majority of Canadians ignorant to current and real

interpersonal and structural acts of racism. Sherene Razack (1998) suggested that the denial of racism has become “integral to white Canadian identity” (p. 11) while Jo-Ann Lee and John Lutz (2005) further contended that “liberal multiculturalism does not address racism systematically, because racism is viewed as an individual pathology and not seen as part of the social order” (p.17). In this way, many Canadians (among others) have a tendency to either deny that discrimination exists, or view the results of interconnected ideologies of discrimination (Miles, 1989) as the anecdotal actions on behalf of ignorant individuals rather than systemic outcomes. Nevertheless, as will be discussed here, the so-called ‘whiteness’ of the North American organic food movement has not gone unnoticed, an observation that reflects my own experience of the local organic farming movement as well.

In their edited compilation entitled, *Cultivating Food Justice*, Alkon and Agyeman weave together fifteen chapters outlining the various ways in which race and class are implicated or ignored in just conceptions of food sustainability. Topics range from legal regulation surrounding some Chinese immigrants’ agricultural practices (Minkoff-Zern, Peluso, Sowerwine, & Getz, 2011) and hunger or food insecurity amongst farm workers’ in mainstream agriculture (Brown & Getz, 2011), to farmland ownership amongst Black Nationalist religious organizations (McCutcheon, 2011) and resisting or breaking mainstream stereotypes of (‘white’) veganism (Harper, 2011). Rachel Slocum further outlined the multiple lenses through which scholars are viewing “the intricacies of race, power and food” (2007: 520), which echo many of the topics mentioned above. These include, but are not limited to: the racial politics of various foods; food, identity, and nationalism; representations of difference via food; the roles of racialised groups in food production (e.g. in terms of agricultural knowledge and labour); colonialism, neo-colonialism, and settler society in global food circuits; the meanings of food consumption for differently located people in the spaces of body, home, community

and nation; and, finally, the racialised aspects of organic food production as well as the social movement (outlined above) in which this food production is embedded. Due to space constraints, I will not go into detail on each of these topics here, but interested readers could see Slocum (2007) for a list of useful references.

The overwhelming consensus among these authors is that the alternative food movement is dominated by a Euro-white membership that promotes ecologically-friendly, ethical food while—with a sense of tragic irony—largely ignoring racialised injustices, “an omission which reflects its adherents’ race and class privilege” (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011: 331). Said differently, and particularly in relation to a U.S.-based community food security coalition, “the movement’s whiteness has been brought up at every annual conference” (Slocum, 2006: 331). My own whiteness, and that of many people involved in the local food movement where I live, reflects this reality as well—a reality that provides the impetus for writing this paper.

As a result, although the alternative food movements may intend to promote ethical food practices, in practice sometimes normative assumptions based on dominant values are perpetuated through a lack of reflexivity around privilege. These may include unquestioned narratives that (a) ethical food necessarily must cost more and (b) *if only people knew* what was in their food and the unethical means by which it is produced, they/we would change their/our habits (Guthman, 2011). In flagging these assumptions, Guthman is not dismissing the global trade policies and processes through which certain foods are inequitably regulated or subsidized (expanded upon by Holt-Giménez, 2011); rather, she is suggesting that by uncritically accepting that ethical food *unfortunately but necessarily costs more* we limit our imagination and ability to argue for ethical food for all. Moreover, our motivations for eating the way we do are far more complex than the ‘if only they knew’ narrative would suggest (see also Flowers & Swan, 2011).



Because they are dominant, such assumptions, values, and norms typically go unquestioned, unnamed, and unnoticed by those in positions of relative social power—an absent centre “with the power to define itself only in terms of what it designates its opposites” (Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992:202). Said differently, whiteness presides as “the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations” (Lipsitz, 2002: 61-62). According to Brenda McMahon whiteness includes at least three layers: (2) the physical, phenotypal characteristics and limited skin pigmentation associated with Western Europeans, (2) the social privilege associated with dominant, Euro-Western cultural norms, and (3) the unarticulated beliefs, policies, and practices that maintain the status quo and reproduce power amongst ‘white’ people and those who have more closely assimilated to ‘white’ cultural practices (2007: 687). Julie Guthman further proposed that “the unconscious habits of white privilege are in some respects more pernicious than the explicit racism of white supremacy because [they are] not examined” (2011: 266). As the ‘if only they knew’ narrative implies, when such assumptions are left unexamined, even well-intentioned individuals and movements for social justice risk unconsciously measuring others against these unarticulated expectations. In so doing, they unintentionally reproduce the discriminatory practices they may have sought to overcome.

All this is not to say that people of colour do not participate in the alternative food movement; indeed various streams of the movement exist and people participating within them are diverse as suggested by Priscilla McCutcheon (2011) and A. Breeze Harper (2011) above. However, proponents of alternative food practices and other educators ought to be mindful not to misconstrue the challenge as “a diversity problem rather than as a relational process embedded in society that constitutes community food” (Slocum, 2006: 331). In other words, since whiteness is hegemonic in North America,

the alternative food movements located therein reflect this cultural hegemony. Food justice must therefore be analysed through a more **intersectional lens that includes an understanding of structural racism and classism** instead of individual acts of exclusion or racism alone (Holt-Giménez, 2011: 319). This somewhat paradoxically locates the organic farming movement as both alternative and mainstream at once, suggesting that in fact there are multiple, loosely related, occasionally overlapping movements underway. For the remainder of this paper, when I refer to the organic farming movement I am referring to this mainstream, Euro-white alternative food movement, to differentiate it from the Indigenous<sup>1</sup> food movement discussed below.

### **Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS)**

Despite the current surge of interest in local, organic foods, colonialism came close to destroying the Indigenous food systems – and the Indigenous peoples – of Canada. As Ball described, Indigenous people in Canada have “withstood the near destruction of their populations, social structures, and cultures as a result of colonial interventions” (2005: 3). These colonial interventions have included violent acts of warfare, exposure to diseases, segregation and restriction of travel through a system of land reservations, forced sterilization, forced confinement of Indigenous children in government sponsored Residential Schools, and social policies that promoted the legal adoption of Indigenous children into white families (Ball, 2005). Through a recent Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “the government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language” (Regan, 2010: 1). Nevertheless, the legacy of these policies has an ongoing impact not only on culture, heritage, and language, but also on food.

Over the past few decades, rates of chronic, non-communicable diseases such as obesity, type II diabetes, heart disease, and some forms of cancer have been rising disproportionately amongst Indigenous peoples (Damman, Eide, & Kuhnlein, 2008; Milburn, 2004; Power, 2008; Waziyatawin Wilson, 2004; Whiting & Mackenzie, 1998). “Canada’s Aboriginal people, for example, have rates of diabetes some three times the national average and higher rates of other chronic diseases” (Milburn, 2004: 414). These diseases are directly attributed to the ongoing effects of colonization and the Westernization of Indigenous populations worldwide, which means that changes “in diets, patterns of work and leisure have occurred with industrialization, urbanization, economic development, and the globalization of markets” (Damman, Eide, & Kuhnlein, 2008: 135). These dramatic lifestyle changes have resulted in a ‘nutrition transition’ away from traditional foods (sometimes called wild or country foods) toward highly refined and processed store-bought foods.

Factors influencing the decline of traditional food intake amongst Indigenous people include but are not limited to:

- increasing availability of Western foods, including in some cases culturally inappropriate food aid (e.g. the ‘boxes of hope’ distributed amongst poor Kolla and Jujuy households in Argentina, see Damman, Eide, & Kuhnlein, 2008);
- migration to urban centres where people are more apt to join the mainstream economy while adapting to urban lifestyles, leaving less time to fish, hunt, or gather traditional foods. This also results in fewer opportunities for knowledge transmission from elders to the next generations and weakening social bonds of reciprocity in the exchange of traditional foods;
- appropriation of traditional territories by governments and corporations, creating displacement from and declining access to land;

- decreased overall knowledge of traditional food practices due to the legacy of colonial education, including government supplied nutrition guides (e.g. those that recommend milk to lactose intolerant populations, see Milburn, 2004);
- effects of TV advertising and marketing of not only Western foods, but also of Western lifestyle;
- contaminants found in some traditional foods (e.g. mercury in fish and marine mammals, which are important staples in the Inuit diet in the Canadian North; see Chan & Receveur, 2000), as well as animal extinction and changing migratory patterns due to climate change; and finally,
- feelings of shame and cultural inferiority associated with eating traditional foods, especially amongst youth.

This last point is linked to Fanon's (1967) concept of internalized racism, where individuals outside the dominating culture, particularly colonized peoples, begin to accept the barrage of racist messages in their environment and come to believe that their differences from the dominant group truly are deficits or weaknesses.

For these and many other reasons, Indigenous leaders, scholars, and activists such as Waziyatawin Angela Wilson argue that:

as Indigenous knowledge is revalued and revived, our people become stronger and we fuel our capacity for meaningful resistance to colonization. Indeed, across Canada and in various parts of the world, Indigenous peoples are mobilizing to promote, protect and, in some cases, reclaim pre-colonial practices related to food (Baskin, 2008; Milburn, 2004; Waziyatawin Wilson, 2004). The importance of this work, then, cannot be overstated; the recovery of Indigenous knowledge is Indigenous empowerment" (2004: 371).

Food, therefore, cannot be viewed in isolation from other forms of Indigenous knowledge. Instead, it must be understood holistically in the context of interdependent relationships between land, language, culture, arts and crafts, health, spirituality, lifestyle, and general ways

of being in the world. The movement of Indigenous food sovereignty therefore strengthens Indigenous people's "ability to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods" (Indigenous Food Systems Network, n.d., section on Indigenous Food Sovereignty, para. 1).

Though the language of food sovereignty may be current, the practices, knowledge, values, and wisdom necessary to maintain both autonomy from the industrial agricultural system and healthy, respectful relations with the land are not new. For example, the Indigenous Food Systems Network promotes four principles based in traditional knowledge that are related to food sovereignty:

**Sacred or divine sovereignty:** Food is a gift from the Creator; in this respect the right to food is sacred and cannot be constrained or recalled by colonial laws, policies and institutions. Indigenous food sovereignty is fundamentally achieved by upholding our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food.

**Participatory:** IFS is fundamentally based on "action", or the day to day practice of maintaining cultural harvesting strategies. To maintain Indigenous food sovereignty as a living reality for both present and future generations, continued participation in cultural harvesting strategies at all of the individual, family, community and regional levels is key.

**Self-determination:** The ability to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods. The ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food we hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat. Freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, distribution and consumption in industrialized economies.

**Policy:** IFS attempts to reconcile Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws and policies and mainstream economic activities. IFS thereby provides a restorative framework for policy reform in forestry, fisheries, rangeland, environmental

conservation, health, agriculture, and rural and community development. (See listing for Indigenous Food Systems Network in references.)

While these four guiding principles provide a framework for Indigenous food sovereignty (in Canada), they are related in purpose if not by signature to a global Indigenous and peasant-based movement for food sovereignty referred to as *La Via Campesina* (2012) or the peasant road (see also Aurelie Desmarais, 2007; Borras, Jr., 2008; Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2010; Torrez, 2011). This movement constitutes a transnational “peasant-led network that has grown to represent 200 million farmers in 70 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, and encompassing approximately 150 local and national organizations” (Etmanski, in press, para 8). Every country’s right to autonomous decision-making power over agricultural policy, in consultation with peasants and Indigenous peoples is a key element of the *Via Campesina* movement (Schuurman, 1995).

As mentioned above, since multiple, occasionally overlapping food movements exist, the extent to which these global actions to promote Indigenous Food Sovereignty are understood within the more mainstream elements of the organic farming movement are unknown. In my experience of this movement, I have learned about the structures (e.g. corporate interests in unjust global trade policies) that give rise to the dominant agricultural system, but rarely have I had conversations about the acts of racism that permitted the near decimation of the original inhabitants of the on which we now farm. Certainly, some farmers actively promote this kind of analysis, for example, a grassroots group in this region, the Rainbow Chard Collective, makes reference to *La Via Campesina* and argues that their own “work as food activists is not done until it is made accessible to all” (Rainbow Chard Collective, March, 2011, n.p.). Although these larger struggles for food sovereignty are directly linked to the political context of the organic farming movement, whether or not

the privilege of whiteness precludes awareness of these struggles is a topic that merits more research.

### **Food as a potential means of solidarity**

Although the organic farming movement and Indigenous food sovereignty movement are fundamentally related through their focus on food, with proponents no doubt intersecting and overlapping to some extent, they appear to be emerging on parallel rather than deeply interconnected trajectories. While some scholars have (cautiously) suggested that organic farmers' knowledge *is* a form of Indigenous knowledge (Sumner, 2008), others have proposed "that it is essential to open an inquiry into sustainable food practices that do not operate in opposition to, but rather *autonomously* from the mainstream foods movement" (Mares & Peña, 2011: 200). As described above, since reclaiming Indigenous food systems is an act of self-determination, empowerment, and resistance to ongoing racism and the effects of colonization, the movement for Indigenous food sovereignty will likely continue gaining momentum on a parallel course to the organic farming movement. My intention, therefore, is not to suggest that Indigenous Food Sovereignty become subsumed under the organic food movement.

Yet, in returning to the question of what opportunities exist to more explicitly link an intersectional social justice perspective (in particular, an anti-racist and Indigenous Rights perspective) to the small-scale organic farming movement, Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman put forward a very practical stance. They have called for solidarity of effort by virtue of the relatively privileged members of the organic farming movement seeing "the low-income communities and communities of color most deeply harmed by industrial agriculture as potential allies" (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011: 332). Otherwise stated, "if activists in the food movement are to go beyond providing alternatives and truly challenge agribusiness's destructive power, they

will need a broad coalition of supporters” (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011: 4; see also Mares & Peña, 2011). Respectful engagement will no doubt mean moving beyond a superficial or aesthetic desire to become more diverse, toward a critically reflexive relationship based on mutual learning, not to mention a level of tolerance for the imperfect politics of solidarity (DuPuis, Harrison, & Goodman, 2011). In my community, this will also involve unsettling the settler (Regan, 2010) through a recognition that the organic farming movement exists by virtue of settlement on unceded Indigenous lands.

Said differently, this call for solidarity across difference is reflected in Vandana Shiva’s (2005) work to demonstrate the symbolic link between the longstanding practice of seed saving to maintain biodiversity and the inherent value of human diversity. She argued that:

The seeds being pushed to extinction carry within them seeds of other ways of thinking about nature, and other ways of fulfilling our needs. [...] Cultivating and conserving diversity is no luxury in our times. It is a survival imperative. It is the pre-condition for freedom for all. In diversity, the smallest has a place and a role, and allowing the small to flourish becomes the real test of freedom. (Shiva, 2005: 94).

As such, not only does solidarity across difference offer a broader coalition of support against the practices of industrial agriculture, in these times where we are faced with increasingly complex socio-economic and ecological challenges, the value of not only remembering, but working together to actively regenerate diverse knowledges cannot be underestimated.

Nevertheless, as farmers and educators in the organic farming movement finds an appropriate balance between respecting autonomy and seeking ways of working in solidarity across difference, it will also be useful to understand that not all knowledge is meant to be shared with all people at all times. “This notion of knowledge-



sharing, or a freely accessible knowledge commons is itself a euro-centric assumption” (Corntassel & Gaudry, in press). This means that Elders and knowledge-keepers may choose the conditions under which certain knowledge can and will be shared. Members of the organic farming movement who seek to work across difference must respect this fundamental right to autonomy and desire to protect knowledges that were nearly decimated through colonial practices.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has aimed to raise awareness amongst educators interested in learning through the organic farming movement, by suggesting that we ought to attend more explicitly to the politics of race, class, and other dimensions of power and privilege embedded in this movement. The critique presented here represents an area of potential growth not only for farmers, but also for consumers of organic or alternative foods. However, responsibility to critically examine the embedded Eurocentric assumptions of this movement and work to mitigate the detrimental outcomes of such assumptions extends far beyond the role of farmers and consumers, especially as farmers themselves are often facing economic constraints (Pilgeram, 2011; Tunncliffe, 2011). Those of us who self-identify as educators, including me, have a role to play in raising awareness and creating an infrastructure of support for deepening the anti-racist and class analysis within the organic or alternative food movement. This analysis includes acknowledging that although members of this movement may be struggling against the detrimental effects of industrial agriculture worldwide, many of us are simultaneously benefitting from the privilege of whiteness. Moreover, this privilege is not necessarily perpetuated by individual acts of racism, though they may of course occur. Rather the legacy of colonialism has created and maintained structural injustice for Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, injustice perpetuated through reduced access to healthy, culturally appropriate foods. As Indigenous peoples fight for

sovereignty, not only of food, but of cultural, linguistic, and spiritual practices that serve to regenerate their health, adult educators committed to the goal of food justice have an opportunity to learn how to become better allies.

## Notes

1 In line with Waziyatawin Wilson, I am giving preference to the word “Indigenous” over other terminology such as First Nations, Aboriginal Peoples, American Indians and so on, “because of the implicit notion of coming from the land and being of the land, [which supports] a political declaration about [Indigenous peoples’] claims to the land” (2004: 371).

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## About the author

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