

North American Nyéléni Consultations: Food Sovereignty in North America

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Context Analysis:

Where is the North American Food Sovereignty Movement?

The food sovereignty movement in North America is active, if decentralized and lacking a core coordination support structure. For the purposes of the Global Nyéléni process, North America region is made up of more than the two nations of Canada and the United States (U.S.). There are over 1,200 sovereign Indigenous, Native, Métis, and Inuit nations that call the land home. Many of these are active in the regional food sovereignty movement.

The food sovereignty and food justice movements have faced a growing set of challenges in the U.S. In the name of “fiscal austerity,” the U.S. government has cut thousands of families from food assistance and other social programs. Several states in the U.S. have passed “gag” laws that prohibit the documentation and dissemination of wrongdoings by agribusinesses. Increasingly a militarized police state, U.S. institutions use violence and incarceration against social movement communities, particularly young people of colour, migrants and human rights defenders, peace activists and social and economic justice advocates.

At the same time, signs of a new wave of popular, mass movements for #BlackLivesMatter, Climate Justice, and actions against Monsanto and other corporations have emerged. New national alliances have formed, strengthening the leadership of working-class families and communities of color to reclaim their lives and their bodies from structural racism and defend justice and food sovereignty.

Several national alliances with hundreds of members have been organized in the past decades, among these are the Food Chain Workers Alliance, The National Black Food and Justice Alliance, The Climate Justice Alliance – Food Sovereignty Work Group, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, HEAL Food Alliance, North American Marine Alliance, and the National Family Farm Coalition among others. All of these national alliances were invited to engage members to contribute to the 2024 Nyéléni Process North America (NA) Consultations.

Over 600 (documented through the Canadian government) unique Indigenous nations on Turtle Island at first contact had food systems that were robust, sophisticated, and sovereign. The National Farmers Union (NFU), the anglophone location of La Via Campesina (LVC) in Canada, is a major actor in continuing to build upon existing food sovereignty within the region through bridge building with the larger global movement for food sovereignty, encouraging their members, and others in the larger movement, to come to terms with the idea that food sovereignty wasn't a new concept even if it was learned anew from a global context - it had been present in the Indigenous nations of this region since time immemorial.

To note, Union Paysanne, the francophone location of LVC in Canada, has previously been instrumental in similar work within the province

of Quèbec, alongside a small but mighty (and growing!) group of food organizers, Union members, academics, scientists, citizens, and eaters who understand the relational work of building food sovereign systems.

In both Canada and the U.S., a systems approach to food is still mostly missing from most levels of government, public sectors (i.e. health, education), and public awareness. As ‘traditional’ settler food systems eroded, the price of living went up – and with the climate changing drastically (among many more factors) – food ‘security’ and ‘insecurity’ has become more visible in policy, public rhetoric and even in corporate capture. However, institutionalized programs promoting food sovereignty still lag behind. The word “sovereign” is one reason why. For many living in Canada, and regardless of the country being part of the British Commonwealth, the idea of kings and queens were completely new cultural concepts, and so the word ‘sovereignty’ is hard to claim as their own. Some folks who live and work deep in Indigenous communities expressed in the past how the word ‘sovereignty’ feels too close to the colonialism that they are still struggling against to this day.

This being said, momentum in the long struggle of Indigenous peoples against Canadian inflicted genocide has been increasing, with land and food often at the heart of actions, campaigns, encampments, and lawsuits. With #landback actions becoming more prominent, the word sovereignty has become more familiar, and so the connection between food and sovereignty seems to be more easily made.

International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty: The Ask

The International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty is an independent non-profit organization that coordinates the global food sovereignty movement. It is the backbone support structure of the Nyéléni process, and the touch point for other processes on food sovereignty around the globe.

The Global Steering Committee of the Global Nyéléni process, which is charged with coordinating the next in-person Nyéléni encounter in India 2025, was tasked to set up a regional coordination for consultations, which would directly inform and influence the agenda in India 2025. The feedback will support the global methodology working group to prepare a synthesis document which will be shared later on with the regions once again, as well as to start developing the methodology for the forum in India.

The IPC first approached the United States Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) as the first touch point in the region to begin building coordination from the region up. USFSA reached out to representatives from five other organizations and coalitions, making the coordination six people strong. The organizations were: Food Chain Workers Alliance; Action Aid; National Farmers Union; National Black Food and Justice Alliance; National Family Farm Coalition.

Who Came, and Why

The North American consultations happened May 8th and 9th, 2024, online, with an option to fill out a survey for those that couldn't attend the zoom meeting.

There were 125 participants, including coordination members, support staff and translators, who came from over 70 organizations, coalitions, networks, farms and community food centers, based in the many nations that make up Turtle Island.

The organizations that were present were:

* no online information found

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|--|--|---|
| 1. ActionAid USA | 17. Farmworker Association of Florida | 34. Land Loss Prevention Project |
| 2. Agricultural Justice Project | 18. Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA) | 35. Little Village Environmental Justice Organization* |
| 3. Agroecology Research Action Collective | 19. Food in Neighborhoods | 36. Loving Spoonful (Kingston, Ontario) |
| 4. Black Yield Institute | 20. Food Secure Canada (FSC) | 37. Malvern Urban Farm (Toronto, Ontario) |
| 5. Chantier de l'Économie Sociale | 21. FoodShare Toronto (Toronto, Ontario) | 38. Matahari Women Workers' Center |
| 6. Cheyenne River Youth Project | 22. Fountain Heights Farms | 39. Micronesia Climate Change Alliance |
| 7. Chinese Canadian Agriculture Association* | 23. Fresh Future Farm, Inc | 40. Mississippi Center for Cultural Production |
| 8. Climate Justice Alliance | 24. Gangstas To Growers | 41. National Black Food and Justice Alliance (NBFJA) |
| 9. Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA) | 25. Grassroots Global Justice Alliance | 42. National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) |
| 10. Community Alliance for Global Justice | 26. Grassroots International | 43. National Farmers Foundation (NFF) – Canada |
| 11. Community Food Centres Canada (CFCC) | 27. Grow Greater Englewood | 44. National Farmers Union (NFU) – Canada |
| 12. Cooperation Jackson | 28. HEAL Food Alliance | 45. National Right to Food Community of Practice |
| 13. Detroit Black Community Food Sovereignty Network | 29. Hilltop Urban Gardens | 46. Nelson Community Food Centre (Nelson, British Columbia) |
| 14. East Michigan Environmental Action Council | 30. Institute for Agricultural and Trade Policy (IATP) | 47. Nihikeya* |
| 15. Family Farm Defenders (FFD) | 31. Just Food (Ottawa, Ontario) | |
| 16. Farms To Grow, Inc | 32. La Semilla Food Center | |
| | 33. Lake Secwepemc Foodland Conservation* | |

* no online information found

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|---|--|--|
| 48. Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA) | 58. Rural Community Workers Alliance | 72. Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS) |
| 49. Operation Spring Plant, Inc. | 59. Rural Vermont | 73. Young Agrarians (YA) |
| 50. Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative | 60. Sankara Farm | |
| 51. Presbyterian Hunger Program | 61. Seeds for All | As well as academics affiliated with the following institutions: |
| 52. Relational Accountability for Indigenous Repatriation (RAIR) Collective | 62. Soul Fire Farm | |
| 53. Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) Los Angeles | 63. Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON) | 74. Center for Resilient Communities (CRC) at West Virginia University |
| 54. Restored Roots* | 64. Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC) | 75. Lakehead University (Thunder Bay, Ontario) |
| 55. Righting Relations Canada (RRC) | 65. Symbolied | 76. Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario) |
| 56. Roots2Empower | 66. Thunder Bay + Area Food Strategy (Thunder Bay, Ontario) | 77. Tuskegee University |
| 57. Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) - USA | 67. Treaty Land Sharing Network (TLSN) | 78. University of Manitoba (Winnipeg, Ontario) |
| | 68. U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) | 79. York University (Toronto, Ontario) |
| | 69. Union Paysanne (UP) | |
| | 70. Women Working Together USA | |
| | 71. Worker Justice Center of NY | |

There were farmers, domestic and ‘temporary’ farmworkers, treaty rights activists, Indigenous dietitians, seed savers, grazers, academics, community gardeners, food access workers, fisherfolk, scientists, food security folks and many youth, elders, and the inbetweens showed up in both the online and survey format.

Those attending had varied reasons they shared as to why they chose to participate. Many expressed curiosity about the Nyéleni process itself, not having heard of it before, while others were eager to be included in the next phase of the global conversation. Excitement and cheer were also shared, as folks expressed their anticipation in connecting with new people and old allies in the food sovereignty regional scene.

The North American coordination group would like to clarify that in the organizational structure of the IPC, organizations based in what is called Mexico form part of the Latin America and Caribbean Region and as such were invited to participate in the Latiin American and Caribbean Regional Consultation Process. Some participants in the NA regional consultations remarked that the absence of Mexican comrades, campesinas and campesinos during a regional conversation felt strange, sharing that voices were missing that needed to be present.

Methodology of the Nyéléni North American Consultation Process

Work on this phase of the global Nyéléni process began within the USFSA in 2022 through USFSA's membership in the IPC. In April 2022, USFSA held a food sovereignty consultation with USFSA members and allies with over 70 individuals and organizations participating, primarily from the United States. While this initial consultation provided important insights around priorities for the food sovereignty movement in North America, in alignment with the objectives of the global Nyéléni process, at the end of 2023 the IPC and the Global Nyéléni Steering Committee decided to initiate a second consultation process at regional level that aimed to expand the dialogue beyond our traditional food sovereignty allies and those already working with the IPC.

With this goal in mind, at the beginning of 2024, USFSA began reaching out to national-level networks in the U.S. and Canada working with and/or representing key rights-holders and priority themes (identified by the Global Nyéléni Steering Committee) including worker rights, Indigenous peoples, and the climate justice organizations. This led to the creation of the North America Region Nyéléni Coordination, consisting of USFSA, the National Black Food and Justice Alliance, Food Chain Workers Alliance, National Family Farm Coalition, and the National Farmers Union (Canada). Over the course of the winter and spring months of 2024 this group met weekly to build a common culture, a consensus-based decision-making process, and coordination roles and responsibilities, and an action plan to host the food sovereignty consultations. From these planning meetings the Coordination group identified dates for the consultation, secured interpretation services (english-spanish), and developed an outreach strategy. The outreach strategy centered around five core actions:

1. Securing representation of the wide range of member organizations of the Coordination groups' national networks;
2. Inviting organizations involved in the 2022 consultation process;
3. Identifying and inviting food sovereignty (and food sovereignty adjacent) organizations not part of the Coordination groups' national networks nor involved in previous Nyéléni/IPC work;
4. Identifying and inviting organizations outside of the food and agriculture sector that participate in the priority sectors identified by the Nyéléni Global Steering Committee;
5. Inviting allied academics with existing relationships with food sovereignty organizations.

A key component of the outreach strategy was requesting that invited organizations send representatives from their organizations/communities, with a limit of 2-3 representatives per organization/community, to help support a balanced dialogue during the consultation. Additionally, consultation questions were sent to confirmed participants before the consultation so that organizations could consult their memberships ahead of time.

The next step in the process for the Coordination group was to take the framing questions/issues provided by the Global Nyéléni Steering Committee and adapt them slightly to the North America context. The result of that process were the following questions, which formed the basis of the consultation:

1. What does food sovereignty mean to you, and how have you seen it grow and develop in your context?
2. How do you feel about the food sovereignty movement at the regional (North America) and global levels?
3. What would make the movement stronger? Do you see yourself in this movement?
4. What are the problems or issues you encounter in your respective spaces and how do you see those issues connecting to larger systemic crises (e.g. climate, housing, fascism, etc.)?
5. Who (e.g. organizations, actors, sectors, etc.) and/or what are the root causes of these interlocking crises? Who (e.g. organizations, actors, sectors, etc.) is resisting these crises and what are some examples of successful strategies and transformative actions?
6. Spend a moment and think about how you see powerful institutions and/or actors responding to these crises. Are these solutions helpful or are their proposed solutions false solutions that actually make the problem worse? Who is promoting these false solutions and what are some of their strategies and tactics?
7. Are market-based solutions(i.e. those created as a product of supply and demand rather than government influence) successful in your communities? What are some impacts and outcomes of these market-based solutions?
8. What are the genuine solutions or proposals that are needed to transform systems and address current crises and how do these solutions/proposals differ from conventional approaches or “false solutions”?
9. What are some key underlying principles of these solutions and how can these solutions be implemented to bring about meaningful transformation and a just transition for communities impacted?
10. How can we build collective power in North America for food sovereignty and what are the strategies for leveraging our collective power?
11. How can we build a stronger connection between North America and our global food sovereignty movement?

For the consultation itself, the event was organized across two days, in two hour sessions, at different times, to try to accommodate participants' work schedules and different time zones. The consultation program consisted of three core parts:

- Welcoming participants, overview history of the Nyéléni process and the IPC.
- Introduction of the consultation methodology and questions, including clarification of terms.
- Break out sessions for discussion, with groups limited to 5-7 participants.

Zoom recordings and detailed notes, with the support of Grassroots International, were collected during all the sessions. Additionally, the Coordination group developed an online form where participants who were not able to attend the two online sessions could provide written inputs. The online form also included questions for feedback (both personalized and anonymous) on the consultation itself.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, the Coordination group was then tasked with synthesizing the responses from all of the breakout groups to identify priority themes, strategies, and challenges/successes. which are detailed later in this report. This synthesis was submitted in report form to the Global Nyéléni Steering Committee.

► You can find a PDF of the synthesis report [here](#).

Finally, the Coordination group developed this finalized report, sharing the results with all participants, and reported back to the Global Nyéléni Steering Committee.

High Level Summary of the Results

Meaning / Challenges / Successes

Participants defined food sovereignty in overlapping terms, with a focus on access to food, meeting everyday needs, community control of all aspects of the food system, having a relationship with land, self-determination, healing the land and healing with each other, and people and producers defining the kind of food they want and how it is grown locally and regionally. Some participants named the solidarity-building and movement-building nature of food sovereignty. Many named food sovereignty as a form of getting free from systems of colonization and other oppressive systems.



Food sovereignty is a form of liberation and reparation”

Many participants from Indigenous nations defined food sovereignty from an Indigenous perspective, emphasizing liberation from colonial structures and land regimes, land back movements, retaining relationships with homelands, being able to return to Indigenous food subsistence, having inherent right to hunt and gather, and the sacredness of food.



Food sovereignty means self determination and freedom from a racist capitalist system that does not provide but extracts from us”

Participants described challenges in their local context that related to a lack of infrastructure and access to land, as well as challenges around water delivery mechanisms and food distribution. Others named the challenges of rural locations and being remote nations. There were also challenges named around the time and participation required in building food sovereignty and pressure to move away from democratic processes.

Many also named larger challenges linked to the broader context such as the impacts of climate change, sacred treaty rights not being honored, and the larger ideology of private property rights. Challenges primarily focused on how rural areas in the US and Canada have become dominated by ultra conservative, reactionary, and fascist politics, and how many rural people either support agribusiness, extractive projects (like oil and carbon pipelines), and conservative politicians, but also violently attack activists – especially Indigenous activists – struggling to take land back that was stolen during the genocidal and colonial expansion of these countries in the last century. This is due to a long history and continuing culture of settler colonialism as well as individualism, racism and white supremacy, and capitalism. Private property rights, especially to land, are some of the main reasons why rural people oppose liberatory agrarian projects. The Right Wing is also out-organizing in rural areas across North America, especially with white people. This is making the rural-urban divide worse, because the Right Wing demonizes people living in cities.



When they hear about the Land Back Initiative, they fear losing what they have.”

“How do we share the land? How do we conduct ourselves in ethical and outstanding manner?”

“Straight up racism and white supremacy in rural spaces making it hard for organizations trying to make space to thrive.”

Further, agribusiness and other extractive industries have destroyed rural communities. There are so few farmers anymore, and “Get Big or Get Out” agriculture makes them compete against each other. Farmers are going out of business all the time. Meanwhile, the price of farmland is increasing more and more and only corporations and financial companies can afford it. Young people cannot access land, and farming does not look like a viable life. Corporate consolidation and concentration has destroyed rural communities and economies.

Access to land is also a major issue for urban communities trying to grow their own food. There is a lot of empty, abandoned land in low-income communities of color that have been abandoned and disinvested from, but the land is often contaminated, and city governments are not helpful. There is a big need for fresh and healthy food in low-income communities in and around cities. There are high rates of food insecurity, and communities often face “food apartheid,” where there is an absence of food stores that sell cultural specific, fresh and whole food, due to corporate interest which put profits first and people last. Additionally, the process of gentrification – the financialization of housing and lack of tenant protections – has meant that urban communities are constantly being displaced, and land is always under threat from developers. Finally, the police harass community gardens and organizers, and they arrest and imprison organizers and community members.

Farmworkers face many issues, ranging from brutal work conditions related to the heat and increasingly erratic climate changes, to the legal ramifications of being undocumented and so unprotected by the legal system of the country they are contributing to through their labour. There are currently strong anti-immigrant politics and sentiment in the US and Canada which directly impacts how much government acts on the needs of farmworkers, and their advocates.

Participants named various policy, organizing and movement-building successes in their local contexts, for example:

- Successful organizing with food chain workers
- National Farmers union connecting farmers and Indigenous people through membership, projects and initiatives
- Allowing sale of poultry slaughtered on farm to be sold directly to consumer
- Addressing local policy barriers in Canada, advocating and passing breakthrough national school food policy
- Being able to participate in NBFJA has been healing - moving in spaces where black folks have ownership in the systems/supply chain

Assessing the regional movement / Opportunities

Several participants said that they felt there was a lack of cohesion around the definition of the food sovereignty movement, and that made it a challenge to come together as a coordinated movement and named the challenge of the co-option of the term and principle. Many spoke about the broader challenges of movement-building, and the lack of cross pollination across various groups and perspectives.

There was a sense that in a North American context we see huge challenges in building mass movements and a general lack of organized resistance against corporations. Many organizations and organizers don't have proper training or understanding of how to organize to really win and build autonomous, grassroots movements. There is too much of a focus on bringing out the same activists and not enough engagement with communities to get everyone involved. This is combined with a lack of political education of organizers and communities and a lack of priority on and space for political education.

Since COVID 19, many people and many communities are just trying to survive and don't have energy or time to organize or join organizations, and organizers are burning out. At the same time, organization is needed more than ever, as many activists and community members are feeling isolated and disconnected. Old networks and old organizations are either disappearing or don't have the capacity to fill the gap. Additionally, there is a sense of defeatism within communities, potentially due to how much worse the crises seem to be getting, despite our efforts to stop them: an overload of crises.



Burn out, eco-anxiety, stress of drought, climate change, make it challenging.”

“Farmers feel isolated. Having networks is critical - don't have enough - makes them more vulnerable.”

“Workers don't know where to go for help, who they can rely on.”

This is also connected to the non-profitization of movement organizations, which creates leadership issues and power struggles within organizations. Former movement organizations have become part of the status quo and reformist, often connected to the non-profit industrial complex.



Becoming a nonprofit changed the way we work: day to day management of people instead of movement work.”

Some participants named some specific contradictions that need to be addressed.



How does land trust and land access intersect with landback when it still sort of focuses on land ownership”

“Even when farming becomes agro-ecological, like organic, it can still take advantage of workers. That is an opportunity to connect to labor movement that has not been as pronounced”

Finally, there are additional challenges of trying to organize across sectors and across differences in social, class, race, and gender differences, which carries with it many inequities. And there are challenges inherent to organizing for food sovereignty and agroecology. Farmers need to be paid more for their crops in order to make agrarian livelihoods possible, but poor and low-income communities can’t afford good food as it is. Additionally, farmers and farm workers should be allies but are on opposite sides of labor struggles. And it is very difficult to scale agroecology when so many farmers are so embedded in the agribusiness system and when new farmers who want to practice agroecology can’t access land or other resources. Food sovereignty isn’t well-known, and agroecology is even less well-known.



We need to get rid of cheap food system, but many people need a cheap food system.”

“Farmers feel they are in conflict with farm workers. It’s hard to feel like they are part of a movement.”

The opportunities identified related to these challenges, for example the opportunity to connect across borders through vehicles like La Via Campesina, and the opportunity to connect agroecology movement and labor movement, as well as bringing a militant and movement-oriented perspective to strengthening our work.



An opportunity for the Food Sovereignty movement is to provide a container with a lot of inroads for people of various abilities and comfort levels to get involved and to connect to a larger global movement”

“We need disruptive forms of action here in the US. We look to the government for policy-based solutions but what we need is to build new movements.”

Connections to Larger, Systemic Crises

There are clear connections between the lack of access to and control over land for producing food with the lack of access to and control over housing and community. Gentrification is a neoliberal process of financialization and speculation that displaces communities, and the recent rise of hedge funds and other financial actors buying housing to rent parallels the rise of financial companies buying up farmland to rent to farmers. The connection to the invasion and attacks on Palestine were identified as being connected.

Additionally, many of the issues identified were part of the larger crises of economic costs for survival, especially around healthcare, housing, transportation, and so on. Healthcare, particularly in the US, is privatized and not guaranteed and is a major challenge.

The ecological and climate crisis, as well, is clearly connected to these issues, and also the political crisis in North America that deepens the urban-rural divide and that targets immigrants.



In the US, there is an anti-immigrant process and there are attacks against migrant workers. It is a structural problem. There is no agreement in the political system on how to handle immigration or create a path for citizenship, but capital continues to need cheap labor and now they are promoting guest worker visas and seasonal immigrant labor. This makes it harder for migrant workers who are already here and are undocumented and marginalized.”

Root Causes of and Actors Driving Systemic Crises

Capitalism was seen as being the root cause of rapid urbanization and a development model that destroys rural communities and agrarian ways of life and replaces them with global agribusiness, which treats food as a commodity. Additionally, the power of global agribusiness and corporate trade regimes, created a food system that treats food as a commodity and agriculture as an extractive industry.



Root cause is a cheap food system, based on private land ownership, subsidized drop in producer returns over decades, privatization of common resources (land, fossil fuels, research, etc) and resource extraction that depletes collective resources. And capital system is based on externalized costs, having someone else deal with pollution and contamination. Someone else will sequester carbon, take care of water, etc. And system based on high volume, low margins is no way to structure a food system, because of the problems.”

Neoliberalism, which is the retreat of the public sector and the embrace of market-based mechanisms, privatization, and financialization, as well as the consolidation and concentration of corporations and monopoly power, were also seen as a core root cause. It was noted that many of the problems that communities face can be fixed and solved, if only the proper amount of resources and capacity were brought to them. However, because these aren't profitable solutions – like making land and resources available to people to produce healthy food – they do not have any support. Philanthrocapitalism was also identified as a connected root cause, which is the rise of foundation resources going to these same kind of neoliberal solutions.



Neo-liberal economics and capitalism, and the belief in the efficiency of markets, while at the same time we have the corporate capture of government, which is working less in the public interest. It all contributes to the erosion of resources we depend on and undermines the contributions small farmers make to sustainable and healthy diets.”

The historical and ongoing colonization of North America, as well as the colonial, neocolonial, and imperialist actions of North American governments and corporations were also identified as root causes. Indigenous communities are still suffering from the results of colonization and genocide, and the problems of industrial agribusiness are intimately connected with settler colonization, settler agriculture, and an anti-Indigenous perspective. This is represented by the loss of connection to the land. Colonization was also deeply implicated with capitalism and with the intersecting oppressions of patriarchy, racism, white supremacy, and classism.



Everything from the 2007 Nyéléni declaration still applies to today.”

“The root causes of the interlocking crisis is colonialism and imperialism, land and resource theft, white supremacy culture, genocide, ignoring the connection to land, and living out of balance with the world.”

Militarism and the Military Industrial Complex was also identified as a root cause, which also includes the militarization of the police within North America and the degree to which oppressed communities feel the police state pressing on them.

Corporations, especially agribusiness companies, but also financial corporations, as well as corporations from other major sectors like fossil fuels and pharmaceuticals, were seen as being the main actors driving these crises.

Every discussion during the consultations identified a variety of powerful state/governmental and nonstate or corporate actors who address the various crisis through false solutions. Among these were: governments both national and state, congress, political parties, federal and state agencies, most prominently those dealing with agriculture and food, but also climate and housing and labor.

Some of the powerful non state actors mentioned are multinational corporations, controlling large scale industrialized agricultural or “Big Ag”, financial sector corporations working with carbon trading markets and carbon offsets, food systems corporations, chemical and fossil fuel corporations, and more recently technology and robotics corporations. The philanthro-capitalist sector now has a huge role in the development and funding of false solutions to the food, health, and environmental crises.



Market based solutions are based on false solutions, and will never have outcomes that are not based on generating capital.”

“Market based solutions are not applicable to Indigenous community as we are not individual profit-based communities but [rather focused on] communal prosperity and sustainability.”

The national governments of the US and Canada were largely seen as having been corrupted by corporate power and money, with the US Department of Agriculture and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

being seen as the biggest culprits, driving an agricultural model that works for corporations and destroys communities and the planet. The corporate media was also seen as being a key player, as the main source of propaganda and ideology.

Other sectors of the state, like think tanks, educational institutions, the police and the military, the legal system, the UN system, academia, and especially philanthropy were also identified as being key actors. Philanthropy was particularly singled out because the foundations are nominally working with us but have actually created a number of barriers to building movement and are instead supporting many “false solutions.”



There are transnational corporations operating right next to our First Nations reserve, and it is impacting us but we can't do anything about it. The Canadian Indian Act creates this situation. Until it is abolished, this 4th world reality will not change. Canadian corporations and operating systems (including nonprofit industrial complex) are part of the success of Canadian capital. Indigenous people are subsidizing the economy based on stolen land. We are trying to respond on an institutional scale without institutional support.”

Several groups spoke of the ways in which powerful actors are effectively coopting the language of social movements and promoting false solutions like “climate smart agriculture” and “regenerative agriculture”, getting “food security” through the myth of increased yields promised by “green revolution and “digitalized or precision agriculture” as well as “carbon credit” and “carbon trading” schemes, “biofuels” and “blue carbon” , and geoengineering to solve the climate crisis.

The corporate sectors are dedicating huge amounts of resources toward public misinformation, miseducation, and lobbying public policymakers. This public miseducation is accompanied by an increased corporate control over educational institutions and lack of access to education for poor and marginalized people.

These actors have pushed for the use of public funds in both Canada and the United States to incentivize the implementation of their false solutions at local and regional levels resulting in a variety of partnerships between corporations and government agencies promoting farming and climate schemes that push small farmers and Indigenous people off lands, waterways and seas and harming people and the environment.



Food security”, inside the logic of a globalized food system based upon industrialized export agriculture is a “band aid” supported by governments with the help of the nonprofit agencies that are full of good intentions and is a false solution.”

“The Food assistance system supports the corporate system, and this model is increasingly globalized.”

“There is a real threat of commodification of basic rights.”

Communities Resisting

Indigenous communities, and Black and Brown communities of farmworkers, family farmers trying to produce fairly and with nature, as well as urban communities on the frontlines of hunger, poverty and food apartheid, were identified as being the main communities in resistance. It was noted that for many of these communities, who have been oppressed and exploited and have faced genocide, that just existing is a form of resistance.

Youth were also identified as being at the forefront of new movement energies. Student protests against the Israeli attacks on Palestine were powerful evidence of the courage of the youth.



In Canada, we have this upsurge of youth who want to take back power in the context of the “polycrisis,” which has been identified as the climate crisis, economic inequality, the lack of affordable housing in Canada is crazy, the farmland, the inaccessibility of getting into farming (because of the price of farmland). Young people want to take power back by getting their hands in the dirt and building their own farms, massive amounts of work going into this. I can think of thousands of young people that want to take this as the next generation.”

Workers’ organizations and unions were also inspiring to people, as their has been a resurgence in worker organizing, especially since COVID.

Successful Strategies and Transformative Actions to build Collective Power

Many participants in the consultation felt that building new organizations and institutions coming from and accountable to the community and to the movement was a key strategy and transformative action. Building cooperative businesses, building our own food systems, and creating our own economies (even using our own systems of exchange like bartering) were identified, as well as building our own institutions for knowledge, like our own think tanks, as well as our own policy organizations. Community land trusts were also seen as a viable model to take back land in North America, though the MST of Brazil were an inspiration with their land occupations.

Connected to this idea was a widespread recognition of many community-level projects that were addressing problems, like reclaiming ancestral knowledge and practices, practicing agroecology, creating new systems of food access (like sliding scales, community markets, and community meals), community health engagement, and making connections between farmers and community institutions.

Political education, especially around the history and the cultures of all the peoples of North America, was seen as a key strategy and transformative action. Education, especially of the youth, was also emphasized.



Political education can go a long way - food sovereignty comes back to how we understand power and relationship.”

Connected to this was the need to build movement and make connections to other movements. Trying to organize and win back communities that have been taken by the Right Wing, trying to revitalize a progressive populism in rural areas, was seen as an important strategy and challenge.

Ultimately, a new way of living was identified as the key thing that needed to be achieved in North America, which starts by changing the way we as individuals live and how we interact with our communities, specifically by reconnecting and reintroducing ancestral practices and reconnecting to the earth.



Returning to ancestral ways is resisting: learning how to use things we call weeds as medicine, trying to teach young people, understanding the sources of food. Corn comes from a people, Okra comes from a people, and the people who spent 1000's of years to cultivate to make edible are important for youth to know. Teaching young folks about these histories and for people who are descendants of Africans, working with Gullah Geechee and their experience of Turtle Island, working with Indigenous, and how they resist colonization.”

Some of the solutions to the current moment in the North American Food Sovereignty movement participants discussed are as follows:

- Removing land from the speculative market for communities; Conservation easements; Land trusts.
- Real, deep coalition building, organizing across alliances to build movements that create strong community relationships that are healthy and positive to both land and people; Solidarity with Indigenous nations; Including agroecology and food in mainstream labor movements; Worker cooperatives; Create our liberated territory and be allies with Indigenous peoples; Sustained, liberated funding.
- Building in rest and care into food sovereignty work; Radical interdependence and holism; Community health and wellness as a goal; Healing ourselves as we work to undo or understand the harm that has been done to us, to our ancestors, to the natural world, and find ways for renewal/regeneration, and upliftment (as we grieve the loss of so much across the planet); Mutual aid and alternative currencies.
- Food and agroecology based in just transition; Solidarity economies; Self-determining food economies; Support local and regional people-centered non-extractive food systems and agriculture; Value Chain creation across community food producers/gatherers/fishers; Investments in Food Policy Group model supported in every community, with mechanisms to share across communities.
- Shifting narrative from survival to collective liberation, storytelling and controlling our narratives, People tribunals to testify and share experiences; Cultural easements; Radical feminism and gender equity, radical inclusivity including in economic structures, affirmative action and reparations.

- Expanding education networks and agroecological exchanges; Agro-ecoculture, ecological design and architecture; Political education that appeals to and can be used to organize the masses; Sharing information about specific struggles for food sovereignty in other countries that are being actively hindered by both corporate actions and state policies from Canada, USA; fund young land stewards, mentorships, incorporate the arts, support public education; Seed saving and exchanges.

The strategies of building the collective power to action these strategies were as follows:

Conversations and spaces (in-person and virtual) like Nyéléni that bring people together from all geographies, settings, socioeconomic backgrounds as well as a wide variety of practitioners beyond farm and food e.g. teachers, doctors, mental health, faith-based, poor people's campaign, etc. to exchange ideas, build connections, organize, work together.

- Accessible repository to sharing proven solutions.
- International solidarity, especially with the global south. Minimize US exceptionalism.
- Just transition in association with food sovereignty and agroecology.
- Just transition helps us focus on climate change, social justice, etc.
- Just transition looks at the need to replicate small scale eco farming in local ways and suggests that farmers who are caught in this system of mega farms etc are caught in this system that is not of their making.
- Ensure that food sovereignty is a mainstream issue and an embodied movement of the masses.
- Organize to reduce big ag which is exasperating climate change and loss of biodiversity by fueling unchecked growth and feeding into false solutions.
- Indigenous land practices, agriculture and food systems as core learning in K-12 and beyond for all children and adults.
- Unification of overlapping movements and terminology that can be understood by all.
- Political Education to include global knowledge of racial and social injustices (consciousness) and struggles as well as overall baseline quality education worldwide.
- Asset mapping.
- Funding to support regional and global organizing.
- Policies that support local and regional food systems and grassroots movements.
- Restorative and reparative justice.
- Work brigades.
- Collective storytelling and narrative amplification.
- Love, self determination, integrity, justice, respect for life and nature.
- Cooperative economics.

Next Steps

The North American Nyéléni coordination group will continue to meet in preparation for the 2025 Nyéléni process in-person encounter, with the goal of supporting the region to fully participate as best as possible. The North American region's representative to the Nyéléni Global Steering Committee, Jordan Treacle (NFFC), will continue to attend meetings and will update the coordination on plans for the in-person encounter. The coordination's synthesis report was submitted to the Nyéléni Global Steering Committee in September 2024. These regional reports will inform the Nyéléni Forum program, agenda and priorities in 2025.

► You can find a PDF of the synthesis report [here](#).

A Note from the Coordination

The Coordination would like to thank all participants, USFSA, Agrarian Trust and our home organizations who supported our engagement in the process. We would also like to thank all the volunteer facilitators, note takers and support folks who showed up when asked during the consultation. A true expression of movement building.

Relevant Resources

International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
<https://www.foodsovereignty.org/>

Nyéléni Process
<https://www.foodsovereignty.org/nyeleni-process/>

Nyéléni Newsletter
<https://nyeleni.org/en/homepage/>

Consultation Synthesis Report
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FK3yekNZ_59Sb43JmPo1d3zAWYi9PIN_/pub?urp=gmail_link