



Photo by dm gillis

RIGHT TO FOOD ZINE

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OUR MANDATE

The Right to Food zine's mission is to promote the human right to food that is healthy, nutritious, affordable, and presented with dignity. Our voices reflect the diversity that is the Downtown Eastside. Our articles, research, and recipes speak to the DTES residents, social justice groups and beyond. We inform our readers, while fostering the desire to know more and to become more engaged. As part of the DTES community, we strive to be a tool for community building.

WWW.RTFZINE.ORG

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This 17th issue of the RTF Zine migrates in three directions as we depart from our standard fare of food security. The topic areas are the drug crisis, sustainability, and hyphenated identities.

Based in the DTES, the Zine can't avert our eyes from the deadly fentanyl plague, averaging four victims per day in BC. Articles by Dr. Salil Gupta, dm gillis, and Chris Miewald of SFU's Centre for Sustainable Development explore the costly ravages. (Some of Chris's research was conducted at the NH.) As others have noted, if the victims were not stigmatized by drug use, mental health problems and poverty, governments at all levels would be delivering urgent medical and legal assistance. In 2001 Portugal expanded its welfare state, decimalized all drug use, moved it to public health, and used the considerable savings for harm reduction programs. Sixteen years later, it has less drug use than most other countries. In my opinion, that's a model the new BC NDP/Green government should initiate here.

The sustainability section introduces Dawn Morrison of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty and the Wild Salmon Caravan. See the stunning back cover poster, read her article and participate in this awesome event. Other articles here draw attention to the poor health of our soil and how it can be remediated; Nurture Nature: Our Pantry of the Future, making ecological sense; people in the DTES and Strathcona who roll up their sleeves and contribute to community building; the Tuesday night prep group at the Neighbourhood House whose culinary dedication creates delicious free vegetarian meals on Wednesdays from 10 am-2 pm; and a description of a dynamic local food provider, Food Stash, where two UBC ethnography students volunteered this spring.

Concluding with the UBC theme, the Zine collaborated with Dr. Kerry Greer and her ethnography students who had placements throughout the DTES area. What a pleasure to listen to and learn from these thoughtful, bright young people whose insights are informed by big hearts and current sociological thinking. Their three personal reflections about being hyphenated Canadians—partly Filipina and partly Chinese-Canadian remind us of Canada's 150th birthday celebrations, and the rich, culturally diverse history of our city.



Stan Shaffer
RTF ZINE EDITOR

VANDU MEETING FOCUS ON FENTANYL STATE(S) OF BEING

BY *Dr. Sahil Gupta*

In the lobby of the office, just off Main and Hastings, members from Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) gather for the Education and Action group. It's 2 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon in early February. About 30 people gather around to discuss the ongoing drug crisis.

There is a palpable urgency and frustration to deal with the spate of overdoses: to move beyond medical treatment to solve the drug crisis. Issues of housing and poverty play a complicated role in the way people use and are affected by drugs. In a recent CBC Radio essay, Dr. Hakique Virani, a public health specialist in Edmonton, Alta., spoke about the need for harm reduction policy that doesn't have its own agenda.

Vancouver has been hit hard in the never-ending drug crisis that Canada currently faces. Out of the 914 people who died from illicit drug use in B.C. in 2016, 215 were in Vancouver. Drugs like fentanyl (or something stronger) are responsible for a majority of these overdoses.

More than 80% of the drugs tested in one sample at Insite were positive for fentanyl. This included drugs that people thought were uppers like crystal methamphetamine.

Fentanyl is an opioid (a class of painkillers that will stop the body from breathing and make the person sleepy given enough of it) - that's 100 times stronger than morphine. Carfentanil, an opioid 1000 times stronger than morphine, is also starting to be found around Vancouver, and it may have been partly responsible for a big spike of overdoses at the end of 2016 in B.C.

Back at the VANDU meeting, people share their experiences of dealing with fentanyl. Many had close calls with it personally. Everyone seemed to know a friend or family member affected by it. Planning was underway for the National Day of Action that took place on Feb. 21.

There are a number of institutional resources dedicated to the ongoing drug crisis. A Mobile Medical Unit that

As of June 30, 2017, there were over 600 deaths and if we continue at this rate, there will be over 1500 deaths in 2017.

was situated at 58 West Hastings Street offered people a place to get connected to addiction treatment with medicines like methadone or Suboxone (trade name for buprenorphine/naloxone). A new research institute, the BC Centre on Substance Use, has also been established to develop new tools to solve the problems of drug use. These are important steps in getting people connected to treatment for addiction.

Even with all the resources, the number of deaths and the sheer toll on the community has continued to increase. Marlene Mountain, a 55-years-old who has been living in the neighborhood for the last eight years, felt hopelessness about the ongoing drug crisis. “The community here is falling apart,” she said, and that down here, using drugs is like “Russian roulette.” She hopes that more users will be able to test their drugs before they use them.

There was a mix of hope and impatience in the room at VANDU. Three safe injection sites were approved to start in Montreal on Feb. 6, the first of which opened June 19. Members wondered when the community would get safe injections.

Drug users and community activists in the neighbourhood have teamed up to launch pop-up injection sites while the government waits to figure out their response. The Overdose Prevention Society that was started by Sarah Blyth responds to hundreds of overdoses in mini-booths around the DTES community. A group at Portland Hotel

Society, Spikes on Bikes, rides the alleys to help people. They stock naloxone kits and help bring people back from the brink of death on an hourly basis.

Access to medical addiction treatment, handing out Narcan kits, and safe injection sites are important steps in the drug problem. But the more complicated pieces of the puzzle—getting people housed, employed, or treated for mental illnesses—take longer. We know that if people use on the streets, they are afraid of getting caught by the police or have their things stolen. They are more likely to use unsafely.

Taking the criminality away from using drugs by making drugs legal offers one way to reduce many of the harms of drug use.

In his interview, Dr. Virani says that “our imposition of ‘help’ (on our terms) while failing to truly accept the humanness of the individual’s behaviour might paradoxically cause the problem we thought we were fixing. To address this overdose epidemic, what we need to fix is our perspective.” The problem that Vancouver and Canada faces is larger than one solution will be able to bring. Working with those most affected directly and using the evidence to try different approaches, not ones that are politically palatable, are important next steps.

Sahil Gupta

is a freelance journalist, who is an emergency doctor.

HOW DRUG USE AFFECTS THE DIET OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH AIDS:

Summary of Results from the Food As Harm Reduction Study

BY *Christina Miewald and Eugene McCann,*
Department of Geography, SFU

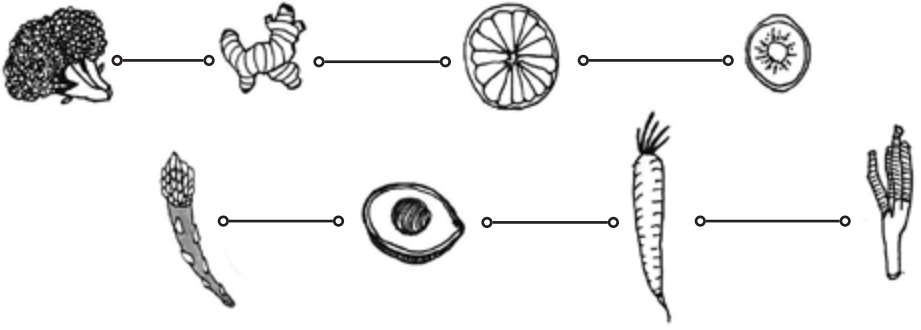
The Food as Harm Reduction (FaHR) study is a community based research project conducted by the Dr. Peter Centre, which provides meal and harm reduction services for People Living with HIV (PLWHIV), and the Department of Geography at Simon Fraser University. This study explores how drug use can affect diet for PLWHIV who use drugs. It also asked if food should be incorporated into harm reduction programs and services. The Vancouver Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded the study. A report on the findings is available here: <http://www.sfu.ca/geography/community-engagement/food-harm-reduction.html>

Sixty PLWHIV who use drugs, told us where they access food, if they felt food secure and if they felt drug use affected their diet. Eighty-eight percent of respondents said they experience some level of food insecurity, meaning that they are either unable or uncertain that they can acquire or consume a diet of adequate quality or quantity in socially acceptable ways.

This is important because food insecurity has been linked to poor health, especially among PLWHIV.

The research emphasizes that drug use contributes to food insecurity. Seventy-seven percent of our respondents feel that their drug use affects their diet, including what they eat, how well they eat, when they eat and where they eat. For example, Paul notes that, “When you’re using a lot of drugs you just have your mind on one thing: that’s using drugs. You don’t think about eating or taking care of yourself.” Others report not wanting to leave their residence when using drugs and, in some cases, avoiding food providers. As Carlton explained, “When I’m using I tend not to eat. You’re so high and you’re where you are, you don’t want to go out and get [food]”.

Everyone we surveyed uses some form of food assistance and usually more than one. These resources include: food banks (91%); free or low-cost meal programs (81%), and community kitchen programs (30%). The Dr. Peter Centre, Native Health’s Positive Outlook Program and the AIDS Vancouver food bank are the most commonly used. These places are critical sites for accessing nutrition and



harm reduction services. In particular, the Dr. Peter Centre and Positive Outlook Program were central to our participants' daily routines, often being visited for breakfast and lunch. They are also spaces where people feel safe and supported. Maurice and Paul highlight the importance of these programs. When asked why he likes the Dr. Peter Centre, Maurice responded, "Just knowing that I have a place to come to where it will be safe for me, rather than just wandering the streets. At least I can come here and watch some TV; just get away from the outdoors. The people that work here I like, they're very understanding." Paul said he appreciates the Positive Outlook Program because of "the people and the atmosphere in there, everybody knows me there. It's kinda like [the TV show] Cheers, when Norm walks in. I walk in and everybody's like, 'Hey Paul.' It's really welcoming there."

Participants in our study also buy food from low-cost grocery stores, such as Sunrise Market.

Small grocery stores and produce stands are important spaces for buying fresh produce at prices that are affordable to those living on social assistance.

However, these small stores are in danger of disappearing, due to rising rents and gentrification. Therefore, it is critical to support and protect both social service providers and also these retail spaces that are used by members of the community.

Our recommendations for enhancing food access and security for PLWHIV who use drugs include:

- 1 Support and enhance daily meal programs for PLWHA who use drugs in spaces where they feel safe and supported, including meals on weekends and evenings.
- 2 Nutritional standards are critical for PLWHA who use drugs. Fruit and vegetables in forms that are nutritionally adequate and appropriate in texture for people with dental and other issues should be provided.
- 3 Respondents liked being able to choose what they ate and wanted to have their preferences taken into account. Home cooking, or meals served with care and attention were most appreciated.

shame wheel
by *dm gillis*

the shame wheel spins
only slowing round shift change, the fentanyl dawn
after doing the graveyard
handing out rigs at the door and listening to plights
having to be tough at times
down here where no one backs down
no, no bread tonight no sandwiches
yeah, I got socks no razors
yer right, I don't know what it's like
fuck me, another OD in the men's room
as the neighbourhood tilts into daytime
throwing its own mercury switch
naloxone doesn't always work it's all about timing
sirens ambulance and fire the cops stay away
we're good Samaritans after all
though none of us has heard of the Samaritan Pentateuch
it was Eric he had a bed in the sanctuary
did he have family?
the Mayor calls it a bloodbath
then has an organic lunch
the shame wheel spins

shame wheel



A MORE EVOLVED APPROACH TO CRIMINALISED DRUG POLICY

BY *dm gillis*

Earlier this year, the BC Coroners Service reported 136 suspected drug overdose deaths in British Columbia, a 97.1% increase over the number of deaths occurring in April 2016¹. The inclusion criteria for these deaths is as follows—

Inclusion Criteria: The illicit drug overdose category includes the following:

- Street drugs (Controlled and illegal drugs: heroin, cocaine, MDMA, methamphetamine, illicit fentanyl etc.)
- Medications not prescribed to the decedent but obtained/purchased on the street, from unknown means or where origin of drug not known
- Combinations of the above with prescribed medications²

The report goes on to summarise, in part that—

- The number of illicit drug overdose deaths in Apr 2017 (136) equates to about 4.5 deaths per day for the month.³

The disturbing number of illicit drug use deaths prompted Vancouver Mayor Gregor

Robertson to say, “The near-record number of drug overdose deaths in the fentanyl crisis is a bloodbath in all corners of Vancouver with no end in sight...”⁴

Robertson was in Ottawa at the time, attending the annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference, where in his keynote, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau seemed to draw a line on the sidewalk: “We will not rest until we turn the tide,” Trudeau said. “We’re listening and we’re here to work with you.”⁵

For her part, in 2016 BC Premier Christy Clark has said, “There are a lot of gaps in the system and we’ve got to close those gaps, we’ve got to...”⁶

What is notable about all three leaders, representing the three levels of government in Canada, is that they have done virtually nothing since having made these statements to address the crisis. So let us, in this leadership vacuum, propose an idea to these three paragons of clay-footedness.

Early in the first half of the twentieth century, alcohol was outlawed, to



various degrees, across North America. Eventually, the outcomes associated with what would come to be called Prohibition were recognised and found to be negative enough for its near-universal repeal in Canada and the US by 1933. (In PEI, it lasted until 1948.)

The costs associated with prohibiting a substance like alcohol, such as policing, health care (poison booze), lost tax revenues, and the impact on business by the undermining of the distilling, brewing and hospitality industries, were obvious. (These impacts were felt even more significantly in the US⁷ than in Canada⁸ during their respective Prohibition eras.)

There was the cost, also, in human lives, resulting from the bootleg trade in a product made unlawful by the state that, through its unfettered underground manufacture and government interference, amounted to an often deadly bathtub-cooked product. This bootleg liquor often contained lethal wood alcohol, the

presence of which was made worse, in the US, by the government sanctioned poisoning of industrial alcohols to further deter consumption⁹. There is no evidence of Prohibition working. The lesson was that people still drank illegal and lethal wood alcohol laced gins and whiskeys.

Now, heroin and other illegal drugs made deadly by the addition of fentanyl have become a primary cause of death among street level users and others in BC and elsewhere. The death toll includes people living with addictions and recreational users, and the mostly preventable carnage remains one of British Columbia's greatest shames.

But what if the Prohibition of these outlawed drugs ended, using a gradual model to facilitate effectiveness? First, increasing access to existing harm reduction models, like Insite, could be implemented, followed by decriminalising private medicinal use with a doctor's prescription. Private recreational usages

would then be allowed, ultimately with the goal of public access and use, like nightclub settings. Positive outcomes might include:

- First, an end to the carnage. In Vancouver alone, as of May 22, 2017, the drug overdose death toll was 170 people in Vancouver.¹⁰
- This end to the carnage would be achieved by a resultant safer, cleaner supply of drugs and an end to street dealing. This would put street dealers out of work, but who cares? (This isn't to say that all sources, and use of, unsafe drugs would disappear; there will always be a market.)
- Elimination of the criminal market place would result in a reduction in the cost of policing and incarceration costs.
- The removal of the enormous stigma attached to illegal drug use and addiction would allow its real causes to be addressed, increasing recovery and abstinence rates and improved overall mental health.
- A Substance Tax could be applied, both retail and corporate, with those dollars used to decrease the causes of addiction, notably poverty, a lack of secure housing and the lack of physical and emotional abuse recovery programs. Perhaps the revenue could even help fund a GMI, or Guaranteed Minimum Income.

Those are just a few of the possible positive outcomes of lifting the Prohibition of street drugs, but the

negative outcomes must be considered as well. Here are a few, for example:

- New and even more addictive and lethal drugs may fill the vacuum left behind by the loss of the current illicit street trade.
- If implemented across North America, or even worldwide, the lifting of the drug Prohibition would render drug cartels redundant. Once put out of business, these cartels could go straight and go corporate rather than dissolve, bringing with them, into the corporate realm, their criminal business practices, a domain already plagued by corruption.
- Big Pharma corps like Pfizer could move in to collude with other corporations and governments to monopolise and control markets, and to fulfill a primary commitment to their stockholders to drive sales and increase profits by creating an ever-growing cohort using opioids and other legalised drugs.
- Distillers and big tobacco, too (looking to replace revenues lost to trends toward healthier lifestyles), could step in to mass produce a product, promoting it to their traditional demographics, including youth.

It's obvious that the drug policies we have now aren't working, and clearly legalising street drugs is not a cure-all. It does allow, however, for the problems associated with the sale and use street drugs to be addressed in far more effective ways. It is, therefore, time for a more practical, more evolved, approach to criminalised drug policy.

¹ <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/death-investigation/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

² <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/death-investigation/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

³ <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/death-investigation/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/new-numbers-robertson-opioid-crisis-feds-bloodbath-1.4144404>

⁵ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/new-numbers-robertson-opioid-crisis-feds-bloodbath-1.4144404>

⁶ <http://globalnews.ca/news/3027187/christy-clark-says-her-government-needs-to-do-more-to-combat-opioid-crisis-in-b-c/>

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition_in_the_United_States

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition_in_Canada

⁹ http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2010/02/the_chemists_war.html

¹⁰ <http://www.straight.com/news/920056/vancouver-mayor-calls-fentanyl-crisis-bloodbath-overdose-deaths-continue-soar>



A STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS GUIDES THE WILD SALMON CARAVAN

BY DAWN MORRISON OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The Wild Salmon Caravan (WSC) is a celebration of the spirit of wild salmon. Ancient ceremonies and songs of Indigenous peoples, as well as creative expressions of community engaged visual and performing arts, will call the wild salmon home to the rivers, lakes, streams

and communities of the Fraser Basin and Salish Sea Corridor. The creative energy of the WSC will serve to educate, inform, and transform the darkness surrounding the industrial storm that is endangering wild salmon.

The WSC 2017 is calling on individuals, artists, organizations, and communities who have nurtured historical cultural and ecological relationships with wild salmon over thousands of years to host arts and cultural events. We are calling on the Vancouver Island, coastal and northern communities to self-organize and join us for Mardi Gras Style parades, feasts, ceremonies, performances, and public education events that will take place during the week of October 7 to the 12th. Wild Salmon are the most important cultural and ecological keystone species in the forest, fields, and waterways of the myriad Indigenous territories and what is known to the settlers as BC, and have inspired many artists and cultural expressions throughout the ages. Guided by a stream of consciousness and the powerful metaphor wild salmon provide on how to work together to overcome enormous odds in unity, strength, and resiliency – this is the same spirit in which the Wild Salmon Caravan celebration is organized.

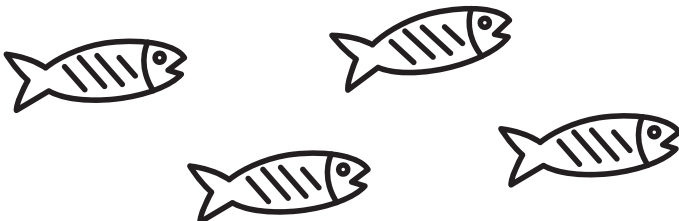
Financial support from the First Nations Health Authority, City of Vancouver and Vancouver Parks Board

C 150+, and Adams Lake Indian Band are making possible the planning, coordination, and promotion of the WSC journey from Vancouver to Adams River, as well as parades and community arts engagement activities in the Vancouver, Chilliwack, Merritt, Kamloops, and Chase areas. Following the leadership of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty and our regional planning teams,

we hope you will join our celebration of the spirit of wild salmon and nurture the creative energy that wild salmon have inspired

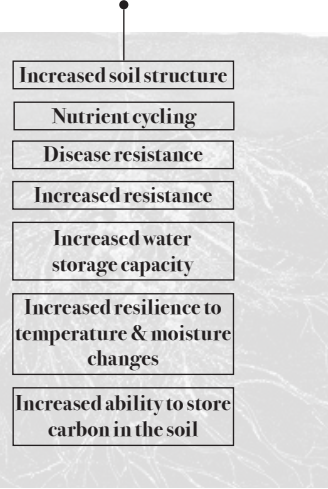
by attending one or more of the upcoming arts build workshop or parades being planned in a neighbourhood near you.

For more detailed travel itinerary coming soon, you can follow us on our Wild Salmon Caravan Facebook page and website address <https://wildsalmoncaravan.wordpress.com/> Save the date and stay tuned!





ROLES OF ORGANIC LIFE IN SOIL



MATTHEW KYRIAKIDES

THE LIFE OF THE SOIL

There is an entire universe beneath our feet. A previous issue of the Zine pointed out the fragile and potentially devastating state of soil across the globe. Widespread erosion, toxic soils, and a decreased capacity to deal with environmental change are all linked to escalating social, environmental, political and health problems. This does not have to be the case!

Soil is a living, breathing organism home to untold trillions of organisms. One table spoon of good top soil can hold up to 1 billion bacteria, several yards of fungal filaments, several thousand protozoa, thousands of nematodes among many others. It's not just dirt – it's alive, and all of these actors play a crucial role in healthy soil function (see box).

Mycorrhizae, a symbiotic relationship between plants and fungi, are a critical component of west coast soils. Think of them like a finely woven web connecting many of the plants and fungi, allowing them to capture far more water and food than they would be able to gather on their own. The plants feed the fungi sugar in exchange for water and nutrients. This relationship is fragile, however, and growing increasingly damaged in the face of development.

Our role as humans is to get out of the way and help support the regeneration of these complex cycles. We must re-enter the ecological dialogue by encouraging diversity in all of our systems. This can be done through old agricultural practices of caring for the soil – crop rotation, compost management, minimal to no soil disturbance, microbial inoculation, diverse plantings, and the extensive use of cover crops to build organic matter in the soil. **I dream of agricultural land blending into wild spaces without any clear boundaries, birds and water flowing seamlessly throughout.**

"Learn to love the dirt beneath your feet, the mysterious and sacred earth upon which we all depend."

Almost all urban soils have been abused and neglected to the point of potential toxicity and degraded function. Many of our plant, bacteria and fungal allies can help us to clean up some of this mess but this is beyond the scope of this article. Check out *Earth Repair* by Leila Darwish or any of the works by Paul Stamets and *Radical Mycology* for more information.

A combination of regeneration of damaged lands and waterways, conservation of healthy space, and widespread support for development in line with ecological principals is needed. Agriculture, industry, and urbanization must all fall in line with the flows of the ecosystem; wild nature is the yardstick by which we can measure the success of our endeavours and draw inspiration for our dreams. We must get to know our soils and grow according to what is suitable for the biome and not what the market dictates.

READING LIST FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Teaming with Microbes • Jeff Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis

Teaming with Fungi • Jeff Lowenfels

Dirt: The Erosion of Civilization • David R. Montgomery

Out of the Earth: Civilization and the Life of the Soil • Daniel Hillel

The Soil Will Save Us • Kristin Ohlson

The Ultimate Guide to Soil • Anna Hess

NURTURE NATURE: OUR PANTRY OF THE FUTURE

HENDRIK BEUNE

I live in a city, formerly rated as one of the most livable cities in the world. That was just before Barcelona took top place in 2003. Judging by its architecture, this is a rich city, located in one of the top ten most beautiful settings in the world. With the 2010 Olympics, Vancouver got unprecedented exposure in the world press and became a more desired location for people from all over the world to live. Foreign investment and real estate speculation followed, and now Vancouver is one of the most expensive cities in the world to buy real estate.

Unfortunately, however, Vancouver is geographically locked in: in the North is the Cascadia mountain range, while in the South and East is the fertile Fraser valley, with much of it already developed for housing and the rest under pressure for development.

Most of the farmland is preserved in an Agricultural Land Reserve, but loopholes are used to build huge homes with driveways, destroying the agricultural use.

Meanwhile in central Vancouver, developers are becoming rich by building higher than before and the DTES is gentrifying, meaning that prices for everything are escalating around us and the rich are displacing the poor. This is a typical scenario of our time, now

becoming known on a geological scale as the “Anthropocene,” in which humans, driven by unfettered capitalism, have modified the world around them on a global scale.

City-dwellers get their food predominantly from local super-markets, which are supplied by global markets. Everyone must eat so the market is highly speculative and the food is grown so it can be transported over great distances without losing its appearance. Many of the foods we see these days are genetically modified, so they can tolerate herbicides and pesticides, which are used to kill off all other organisms in the monoculture farm plot. This agro-industrial system has increased the world food-supply, but it has also had an overall negative effect on the resilience of our food-supply system and the quality, taste and nutrient value, of our food. So where does the future lie?

There are many options, but one thing is for sure: the global agro-industrial system, which currently dominates our food supply system, is fundamentally dangerous and unsustainable. Moreover, as it functions, it’s destroying the genetic diversity of our food supply, diminishing the productivity of our soils and contributing to global climate change by its dependence on fossil fuels for chemical fertilizers, pest- and herbicides control, and above all transportation.



**Support your
local farmers
markets and
grow your
own food!**

Almost 30 percent of all carbon dioxide produced in North America stems from transportation (US Environmental Protection Agency). So there really is only one answer, buy local!

Support your local farmers markets and grow your own food! Your food will be tastier, more nutritious and support the local economy. You will have a more direct connection with your food and how it's produced. You may have to eat foods only when they are in season locally, but research shows that our bodies are actually attuned to that.

Food is medicine and eating local food when in season has health benefits.

Many wild plants are edible and if you become interested in using wildy foraged foods, you will find that many local plants and mushrooms will combat common ailments better than pharmaceuticals.

Nature provides, so nurture nature! Oppose stupid projects like the Site C dam on the Peace River, which destroys

valuable crop land. As California dries up through depletion of their aquifers and as Mexico and the Southern US region become drier through imminent climate change, BC will need our fertile valleys for local food production.

Some people believe in the superiority of technology and human inventions over nature and everything else. They may prefer to eat burgers from cloned cells grown in petri dishes rather than from agro-industrial produced or even pasture-raised cows. Wheat-grass, cultured algae, cultured mushrooms and fermented foods such as yoghurt, kefir and kombucha are some low-tech produced foods that certainly do deserve a spot in our pantry of the future. Our future depends on the choices we make as individuals and on understanding the problems of the food system as a whole. Think about that next time you go shopping or head to a restaurant for a healthy, tasty, nutritious and sustainably produced meal, rather than a mass-produced one from the agro-food industry.

A SMALL CONNECTION TO A PLACE FAR AWAY: NO RICE AS CULTURAL FOOD INSECURITY

by Phebe Ferrer, UBC ethnography student majoring in International Relations with a minor in Asian Canadian and Asian Migration studies



Eating rice here in North America is cool. Exotic. It's different. It's the atypical lunch food, tucked away into the Asian section of the supermarket. It is the option, rather than the staple.

Coming to Canada from the Philippines, rice has always held a special place in my heart and on my plate. It is the only food that really makes me feel full, alongside my ulam (dish). I almost naturally gravitate towards restaurants and other food outlets that serve rice dishes, whether I'm on my university campus or just going around downtown Vancouver.

However, now that I'm living in this city, I'm often in a situation where there is no rice available for meals, like in event catering. I've gotten used to this type of situation and it isn't a total loss to me, but still, I could feel my unsatisfied appetite, making me look forward to going home where rice is always present.

While for me not having any rice available isn't a total loss, I reflected upon communities such as refugees and recent immigrants, for whom the loss of rice or another staple food not commonly available in Vancouver must be more painful.

I thought about the concept of food insecurity through a cultural and identity-oriented lens, where the unavailability of a cultural food can relate to a disconnection with a place or community, or with one's identity.

I reflected on the importance for refugee and immigrant communities to have their cultural foods available to them, knowing that for me, food has personally been a small connection to a home far away, and a steady anchor in the uneasiness of my liminal identity.

While studying at the UBC Learning Exchange and coming to Chinatown every morning for my classes, I would walk past the Chinese stores full of dried fish, different types of nuts and fruit, and I would take in these smells, bringing me back to markets in my town and my lolo's (grandfather's) cooking. With these smells came fleeting thoughts about how Chinatown was an important place for Chinese and Chinese Canadian communities, as food linked them to their cultural heritage and helped to build community. Indeed, I often saw Chinese seniors buying food at these stands and conversing with the shopkeepers while pointing to or holding their wanted purchases.

I also recall the first food gathering I had with my class at the Learning Exchange, which was catered with Syrian food by a company led by Syrian refugee and immigrant women. While eating the delicious meal they had prepared, I wondered what the business meant to these women, in being able to cook, eat, and share their cultural foods in their new home in Vancouver. I wondered about how important it must be for them to have this opportunity, while being far from home. I also thought about videos I've seen of Syrian

and Lebanese women having the chance to create similar businesses while living in refugee camps, also serving food to their communities.

At the very least, I am grateful that there is rice available when I want and need it, with vibrant Asian, and particularly for me, Filipino and Filipino Canadian communities present as well.

“

Language, one of my professors told me, was the key to identity. Well, how about food? What about the importance of food for a community and for one's identity, and the impact of the absence of this food? How does having "no rice" feel for different people?

”



TUESDAY NIGHT PREP GROUP: A CUT ABOVE THE REST

By Rory Sutherland, Manager of Operations, DTES NH



Every Tuesday night something very special happens at the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House. A band of dedicated, creative, culinary wizards known as the Tuesday Night Prep Group (TNPG) takes over the NH kitchen and turns heaping boxes of fresh organic produce into delicious home-cooked meals. The prep program is often referred to as the “Iron Chef, DTES NH.” The weekly produce donation is always different and the skilled prep night volunteers have two hours to transform it into mouth-watering dishes that over 200 people will feast on at the Wednesday Community Drop-In. The group is diverse, from Sue who is well into her 80’s, to high school students with a budding interest in social justice. Some come from a few blocks away and others come from across town, but all are committed and passionate about the Right to Food. **Prep night is also a social space where connections are made between diverse people, with the common ground being a passion for food justice.**

I recently reached out to the group for feedback, and here’s what one of our prep team members had to say about his experience with the program:

“The organization and the preppers keep me coming, and the cause makes it all worthwhile! I have a strong affinity for the staff at the DTES NH, as well as the team’s ability to make so much happen with limited helping hands,

donations, and resources. It’s a remarkable group! The energy that the volunteers bring every week is second-to-none, and I feel we all have a shared sense of enthusiasm, duty, and belonging.

“We are trusted and respected to figure things out, and I think that works well! Moreover, I particularly love the sense of autonomy and spontaneity that comes on prep nights. I think on a small scale it represents some of what the DTES NH stands for.”

Finally, I have felt a tremendous vibe of togetherness when I interact with our neighbours... we’re serving people, but we’re not giving to them. We volunteer with folks who live and work in the DTES and all over Vancouver, and we’re united by our desire to make and eat delicious food in a safe and copacetic environment. Everybody just works alongside each other. And I think that’s how a community ought to work. The DTES NH definitely embodies that.”

It’s clear that volunteers benefit from participating as much as the NH benefits from their hard work and dedication. And they have their work cut out for them as the program challenges the standard charity model of food provision in the DTES.

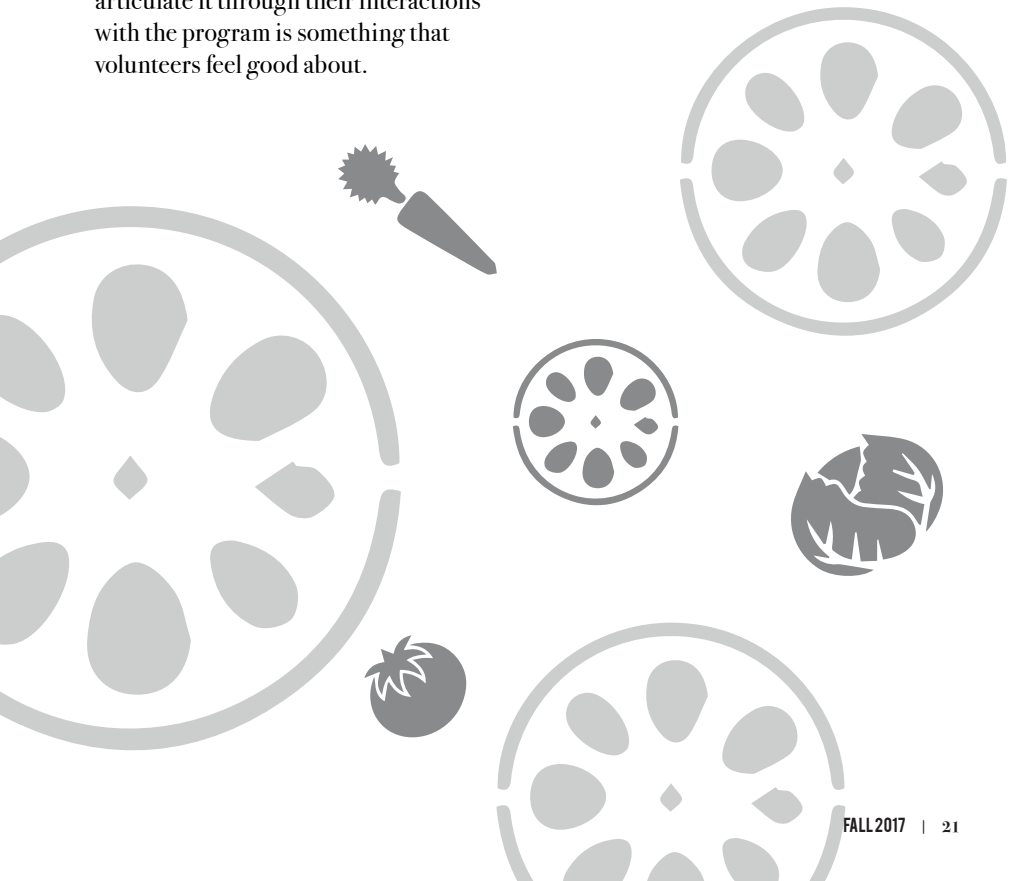
This is reflected at TNPG in a number of ways:

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

“*Ingredients used are mostly organic, chemical flavour enhancers are avoided, production is small-scale, everything is made from scratch, and all ingredients are posted with the menu. The emphasis is on the deeper meaning of the food and preparing dishes that are healthy and will stimulate social connections, rather than feed the greatest number of people.*”

The Right to Food underpinnings of TNPG inspire people, and being able to articulate it through their interactions with the program is something that volunteers feel good about.

The prep team is always looking for enthusiastic volunteers, so if you're interested drop by the NH and sign-up. Culinary expertise is not mandatory, but welcome. There are generally two types of preppers: those who love to put their heads down and chop, chop, chop and those who are there for the delight of the spices, seasonings and thrill of culinary experimentation. We are elated to have you no matter which of these categories you might fit into.



FINDING A COMMUNITY IN FOOD SUSTAINABILITY: THE STORY OF FOOD STASH FOUNDATION

by Brooklyn Rocco and Andy Holmes,
UBC Ethnography students

Have you ever stopped to consider what happens to the food in grocery stores that cannot be sold? The tomatoes, onions, or apples that don't get bought by consumers? Prior to our experience of working with Food Stash Foundation, a newly formed Vancouver charity, we had not been aware of how we can play a role in shaping what happens to food that's destined for waste.

nearly expired, and then giving these items to various local charities based in Vancouver. Primarily, Food Stash focuses on perishable goods ranging from dairy products to produce to baked goods. Food Stash Foundation allows for its partners to have an active voice in the products they receive to be sure it is what they can actually use, in terms of food type and quantity.

Food Stash Foundation was created in September 2016 by David Schein who felt compelled to make a change in Vancouver after watching the documentary *Just Eat It*, which raises concern about the issue of food waste in Canada. David started Food Stash with the first mission being to reduce the amount wasted food. He then expanded his approach as he realized there were plenty of people in the Vancouver area who could benefit from the food he collects. According to an interview with David, "Whether it's lawyers, doctors, single moms, whoever it may be, it's just important to me that it's not thrown out... then we thought, okay, some people can benefit from this food more than other so let's try to help those in need first".

**As reported by the
United Nations in 2011,
approximately one-third of
food intended for human
consumption is wasted or
lost globally.**



Upon considering the staggeringly high amount of food waste that occurs, we have begun to think about ways we can make our world a more sustainable place both environmentally and socially.

Our thinking has stemmed from volunteering with Food Stash Foundation. It has a two-fold mission statement of diverting still-edible food that would have otherwise been wasted due to its unattractive state or status as

Originally, food stash was supported entirely by donations but now that it is growing and expanding its mission, it has become a registered Canadian charity and anticipates applying for grants.

So you might be wondering, what does a typical day look like for Food Stash and its 20 volunteers? It involves collaborating with approximately 50 different food suppliers such as grocery stores, markets, restaurants, cafes and farms, to pick-up food that is being donated. For instance, when we joined Food Stash's founder, David Schein, on one of his pick-up and delivery days, we travelled to five different retail locations to pick-up food. From there, the food was then brought to various community organizations in the Vancouver area, a combination of charities serving people from diverse backgrounds and communities. With about 30 food recipient partnerships, these organizations are then able to use the donated food at their discretion.



Some community organizations will act as a mechanism for re-distribution of food, while others will utilize the food to create a community meal.

This requires Food Stash to be incredibly flexible as each partner on both the supplying and receiving end has different requirements for what a successful partnership looks like.

With that being said, Food Stash operates in a variety of neighbourhoods

within the city and each partner interacts with Food Stash in different ways. These interactions are essential in allowing for Food Stash to focus on both the environmental and social aspects of their mission statement because without one, there cannot be the other. It has been a truly enriching experience to watch the community rally together in order to make Vancouver a more sustainable place.

With the work done so far, Food Stash has been able to divert over 100, 000 pounds of food to communities who are able to positively benefit from food that would not have been easily accessible otherwise.



Our volunteer experience with Food Stash has shown us its effectiveness by which food suppliers donate what they can and Food Stash becomes a mechanism ensuring that food is distributed to those who demonstrate need. Food Stash has only been in operation since September 2016, and we are excited to see the services they provide continue to grow and expand in the communities in and around Vancouver.

If you would like to learn more, check us out on Instagram @ **foodstashfoundation** or online at **www.foodstash.ca**

THE EMOTIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL ASPECT OF FOOD: THE FAMILY DROP-IN PROGRAM AT DTES NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

By Sandy Ngai-Yin Lun, UBC Ethnography student



A woman with a loose purple top and tight jeans grips her plastic reusable plate with her left hand and uses her other arm to carry a baby girl with bouncy blonde curls. Following tightly behind the woman, a young child grabs her own flowery plastic reusable plate from the start of the “buffet line.” The woman goes around the table, looks behind her, scrunches her eyebrows together, and says, “Patricia, have more of the salad!”

In the Family Drop-In program at the DTES NH, buffet-style dinner is a means by which staff and participants disrupt the notion of charity, by giving participants more control over their choices. Staff, volunteers, parents, and even children are active participants in the process of food preparation and food consumption. Children, families, and staff move swiftly and freely around the space, similar to the freedom of one’s own home (Neighborhood House literally!).

The buffet-style dinner in the Family Drop-In program also shifts the understanding of food insecurity beyond just “obtaining sufficient, nutritious, personally acceptable food through “normal food channels” (Davis and Tarasuk, 1994, *Hunger in Canada*).

“

Rather, it’s to view food security as a dignified human experience including the spatial, social, cultural, political, and emotional aspects of obtaining food.

”

Children at a young age are given the opportunity to actively choose what they want to eat with other children, families, staff, and volunteers in a healthy, dignified manner. Children in the Family Drop-In were asked to draw images of what they understood as “community,” “food,” and “home.” One of the most common themes drawn by the young children is fresh fruits and vegetables.

Below is a recent artwork by the young artists in the Family Drop-In:



“

Art has the ability to send a powerful message that even at a young age, there is value to having access to healthy dignified food.

”

PEOPLE WHO ROLL UP THEIR SLEEVES IN VANCOUVER'S STRATHCONA NEIGHBOURHOOD

by Lauren Brown, SCC Food Security Coordinator

It's the last day of school and as I ride my bike toward the Strathcona Community Centre, I see lots of familiar faces as students and their parents make their final mass morning migration before summer break. The school year has come to a close and routines have dissolved, allowing families and friends to go their separate ways for a couple of months. However, some members of this amazing community have stepped up to create community-building opportunities for their neighbours throughout the summer and beyond!

Every year, the Vancouver Foundation accepts applications for Neighbourhood Small Grants, which are open to residents wanting to create connections, fun and good memories with their neighbours. In Strathcona, we're lucky to have a number of inspiring individuals who are keen to roll-up their sleeves and contribute to their community. Collaborating with such genuine and dedicated individuals is my favourite part of working at the Strathcona Community Centre.

A few of the many successful Neighbourhood Small Grant projects these individuals have created for us to enjoy over the next few months include:

- Make a Friend, A Women's Social Group organized by Memoona Azhar (Thursdays from July 6 to Aug 24).

- What's in Your Pantry? A Culinary Chinatown Tour and Community Kitchen organized by Lance Lim (Tuesday July 18).
- Community Salmon Canning organized by Shiloh Belliveau (August, date dependant on salmon availability).
- Family Fun Cooking organized by Nicole Thurgood (date TBD).
- World Food Day Celebration organized by the Backpack Program Leadership Committee (Friday October 13th).

“ To know others and feel known in exchange is therapeutic and essential for wellbeing. These events create an opportunity for people to make more connections, something we likely all could use a little more of. ”

For more information about the Neighbourhood Small Grant projects listed above, contact the Strathcona Community Centre. If you would like to submit a proposal for a Neighbourhood Small Grant project next year, check out www.neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca or ask at your local community centre next spring.

TWO HYPHENATED IDENTITIES IN THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF VANCOUVER'S CHINATOWN

Sandy Ngai-Yin Lun & Andy Holmes
UBC Ethnography students

Sandy

I walk into Maxim Bakery on Keefer Street, and an inviting sweet smell of Chinese baked goods envelops my body. I shyly say, “LayHo” to the lady behind the counter. I managed to find the right vocabulary to say “pineapple bun” in Cantonese, but then it goes downhill from there. “Uh uh...that bun over there with the coconut flakes on top?” I say in Chin-English. Chin-English is my way of code switching between English and Cantonese. It’s a way of communicating to my elders in my hyphenated identity of being a first generation Canadian-born-Chinese.

My parents left Guangdong-Guangzhou, China, a Canton-speaking province close to Hong Kong in 1992 in hopes for a second child (China’s one-child policy) and a better life. My parents would reflect on their weekly trips to Chinatown: the inviting space that feels like being back “home,” a place where people are speaking the same dialect as them, a place where they can find

“*Food that reminds them of the land they left behind.*”

Chinatown was a place where they were welcomed and accepted. They would go into Chinese herbal stores to buy ingredients for their “tang” (soup).

“*But will these local stores still be there for me to shop with my children?*”

Will I still see the familiar faces of the butchers from my favourite cured barbeque meat shop? How will I teach my children about the “hot” and “cold” food that I need to eat to balance my bodily temperaments? Chinatown is a sacred place filled with history and memories of the generations before me and hopefully can be preserved for the generations to come. As an individual living in a hyphenated identity of being Canadian-born-Chinese, this is a place that I can connect and learn about the past and the future.

Andy

I wish I could also delve into a discussion about colonialism, missing and murdered women, and the war on poverty too, but that will be saved aside for another time. I fully acknowledge that the Downtown East Side and Chinatown are home to many communities, many of which face unique, beautiful, and at times, painful histories that must be acknowledged and addressed now and in the future. Whenever I pass the intersection of Pender and Columbia Street in Chinatown, Vancouver, I make note of the building my grandfather lived in--which now has a beautiful mural for people to contemplate about Chinese-Canadian history.

“Should this building ever disappear I am worried that my grandfather’s memory may one day be lost.”

Chinatown holds a sacred place in my heart, especially considering the fact that part of my identity is symbolically tied to the history of my family’s immigration to what is now Canada. Despite my mom having immigrated to Canada at a young age, her great-great grandparents had settled in what is now Canada. Hence, I am a 6th-generation Chinese-Canadian from my mom’s side of the family, and I see Vancouver’s Chinatown as a reminder that Canada has a long history of immigration outside of just Europe. Chinese immigrants were once not wealthy, and often unfairly treated by all levels of government. I see Chinatown as my connection to my past and future. Neighbourhoods come and

go in relation to changing social, political, and economic relations in our society, but Chinatown to me will always be my reminder of my grandfather’s life—a life that gave me life and my future. Gentrification should not be allowed to erase the rich yet troubled history of racism and struggle my ancestors experienced in a society that did not always welcome them.

“This is why Chinatown’s heritage needs to be preserved; otherwise, the diversity of Canada becomes glossed over by glass condominiums and expensive specialty restaurants.”

As beautiful or tasty as these may be, they will never suffice my craving for my Chinese heritage to be remembered.

LET’S REMEMBER THE IMPORTANCE OF CANADA’S MULTICULTURAL HISTORY DURING OUR 150TH CELEBRATION.

Stan Shaffer



Mike DuBuelko



Brooklyn Rocco and Andy Holmes



Shannon Hecker



Sandy Lun



Mitsue Pierfederici



Hendrick Beune



Rory Sutherland



Carol White



Priyanka Borkar



JOIN THE ZINE TEAM!

Interested in contributing ideas, articles, poems, illustrations, photos, or other artwork to the Right to Food Zine? As a community partner, we are deeply interested to hear from you and what you feel is important.

Find us at the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House at 573 East Hastings. We meet on Wednesdays from 13:00 to 14:30. Or get in touch with us at rtfzine@gmail.com

The Right to Food Zine relies on generous donations from the community to produce each issue. If you like what we are doing and want to show your support, please visit rtfzine.org to donate or get involved!



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