

Burnaby Festival of Learning 2023

The Edible Landscape: Demystifying Food Justice

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report by: Desiree Gabriel & Jamie Hill
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The Edible Landscape: Demystifying Food Justice was a public event hosted May 5th, 2023 as part of the Burnaby Festival of Learning. Co-hosted by Embark Sustainability and SFU's Office of Community Engagement, the event gathered community members, students, researchers, food justice practitioners, and city staff to discuss food systems within Burnaby. Speakers and participants were prompted to explore the pitfalls of increasingly globalized and monopolized food systems as well as ways to move towards food justice. Special thanks to organizers Desiree Gabriel and Tara Flynn, and consultant Shelley Levis.

Event Synopsis

Event presented by:



PRESENTATION

Food Systems Lab | Elina Blomley, Dina Sadeghi, Hafsa Salihue

Representatives from Food Systems Lab presented context, findings, and recommendations related to the farm and local food to school movement in British Columbia, specifically focussing on policies and systems affecting Canadian farmers and food growers, teachers and staff in public education settings, families, and youth.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Moderator - Nelly Leo, Executive Director, Embark Sustainability Society | **Panelists** - Alison Gu, Burnaby City Councillor, Ingrid Manelik, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Gillian Der, Food Justice Coordinator of Renfrew-Collingwood Neighbourhood House

Panelists explored the longstanding histories and recent collective experiences of food in relation to power, including its use to build resilience against unjust systems, its weaponization by states and institutions against Indigenous and Immigrant communities, and its precarious accessibility when policies fail to serve the intersectional needs of community members.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Facilitators - Daisy Bigirwa, Rita Cheng, Stephanie Elder, Marie Haddad, Paige Ripley, Victoria San Martin, Mahroo Shahbaz, Anne Tran | **Notetakers** - Beth Clark, Jasmeen Dhillon, Felicia Dorin Jayasaputra, Jamie Hill, Pranjali Mann, Amy Sang, Vinisha Vinisha, Shakiba Zahabioun

Participants shared their lived experiences and explored just solutions on local and global scales. Discussion themes included connecting participants to food systems, identifying avenues for local community mobilization strategies, and upholding accountability within cities and academic institutions.



Findings

PRESENTATION

Food Systems Lab representatives' findings emphasized the following: **communication and procedural hindrances**, especially in relation to Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) zoning; **lack of policies** at scale, such as a national school food program; **lack of infrastructure** supporting food security projects; and **lack of funds** that would sustain reliable, ongoing support. They also shared that food security is frequently a side project rather than the responsibility of any given stakeholder, and current food security measures are overly reliant on a limited pool of volunteers and precarious procurement of funding.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Panelists realized insights that spanned sectors and stakeholders, including the following: **food sovereignty** needs to be centred by honouring food growers, prioritizing food literacy, and increasing access to gardening; **gaps in land use policies** are threatening ALR in relation to agritech and other pressures; **cultural food assets** are currently receiving inadequate recognition and support; **histories of discrimination in BC** excluding non-white food growers from food production spaces continue to perpetuate oppressive food production landscapes; and **reliance on charitable models** is inadequate to fulfill the growing food security needs of Burnaby.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Participants shared direct experiences living in **food deserts**, with several accounts describing that affordable or quality food required excessive travel or delivery fees.

Participants were frustrated with **monopolized food systems**, particularly monopolized grocery stores, and experienced barriers to accessing food due to **increased prices**.

Participants and their families have experienced interpersonal and systemic **stigma against cultural foods** and food preparation, in contexts such as schools and stratas.

Participants strongly desired increased access to **locally grown foods** and a decreased dependency on imported foods, especially food imported from the United States.

Participants had been witness to **excessive food waste** at both individual and organizational levels.



Recommendations

Incorporate increased capacity for local food procurement and community-centred food assets into long term planning.

MUNICIPAL ACTIONS

Protect ALR and industrial land from development pressure.*
Create supports for local food growers, co-ops, and family-owned greengrocers.

POST-SECONDARY ACTIONS

Update building use policies to increase individual and community food growing capacities.
Establish a minimum percentage local food in procurement contracts that is flexible and adaptable to seasons.*

UNIVERSAL ACTIONS

Undertake community food asset mapping, conduct community consultations and establish policy councils to identify community values.*

Implement interim actions that address current food security needs.

MUNICIPAL ACTIONS

Create policies or incentives that encourage businesses and organizations to redirect excess food to food distribution programs.

POST-SECONDARY ACTIONS

Create and support longstanding paid staff positions within public and post-secondary institutions to coordinate food programs.**

UNIVERSAL ACTIONS

Increase support for existing food distribution programs.
Subsidize expenses related to cost of living, such as rent, mortgage payments, tuition, and/or grocery expenses.

Champion food literacy and cultivate community-building around food.

UNIVERSAL ACTIONS

Introduce food literacy to K-12 and post-secondary students through education and programming that celebrates a diversity of cultural foods.
Dispel common misconceptions that lead to food waste by sharing accurate information about best by dates, food storage practices, and misshapen produce.

*Recommendation presented by Food Systems Lab.

**Recommendation adapted from information presented by Food Systems Lab.