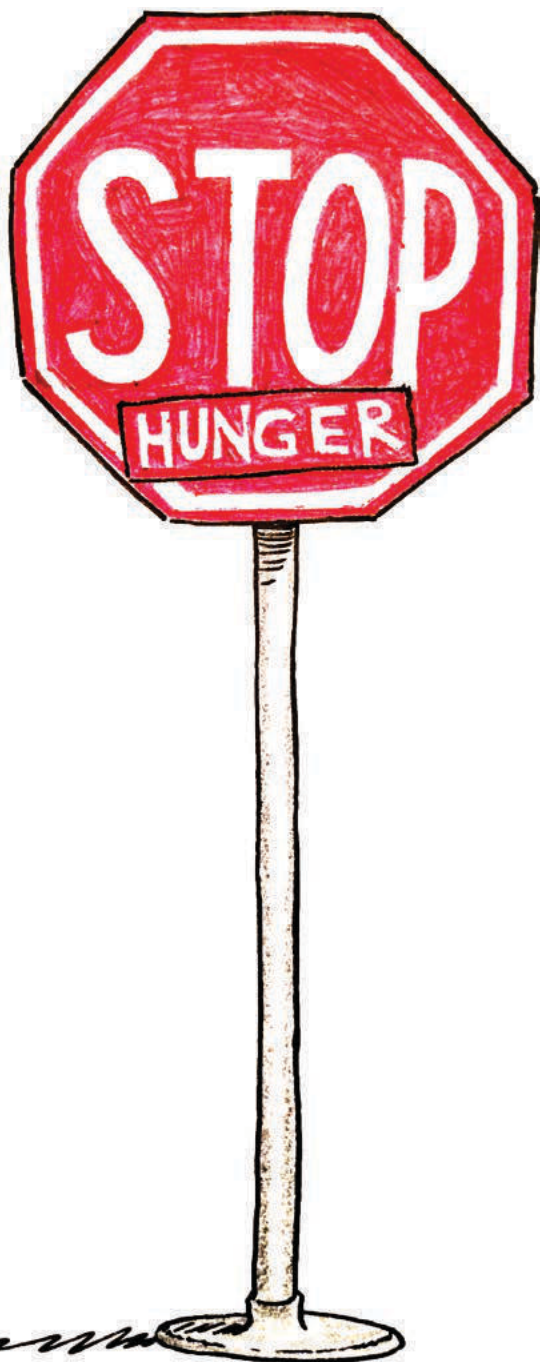


RIGHT
FOOD
Z I N E

Winter 2016/17
ISSUE 15



FREE

A GIFT THAT GIVES BACK



• Last delivery date is
15th December 2016

Celebrate the holidays with delicious, hand picked goodies! The Neighbourhood House brings back its Seasonal Gift Basket this year, with gourmet foods from local artisans, featuring chocolates, caramels, coffee and much more, including our own homemade mustards and jams. Gift Baskets can be ordered through our website; deliveries begin in December. For more information, contact giftbasket@dtesnhouse.ca. All profits benefit the several programs we provide for the Downtown Eastside community, details can be found on our website, www.dtesnhouse.ca.

CONTENTS

- 1 **The Gift That Gives**
- 2 **The Zine Team**
- 3 **Letter from the Editor** *by Stan Shaffer*
- 4 **Is Food a Human Right?** *by Anthony Goertz*
- 8 **The Day after Christmas: Shortcomings in the Charity Food Model in the DTES**
by Carol White
- 10 **The Charity Model, a Weak Reaction to Hunger in Canada** *by dm gillis*
- 12 **The Welfare Food Challenge: A Tactic For New Social Movements**
by Rory Sutherland
- 14 **From Plate to Policy**
by Downtown Eastside Kitchen Tables
- 16 **Time to Talk About GMO's**
- 18 **Learning to Live the Way of Life in Ulluisc, near Lillooet** *by Shannon Hecker*
- 22 **Grow Lotus Roots at Home in a Big Pot**
by Godfrey

Anthony Goertz



Shannon Hecker



Stan Shaffer



Godfrey Tang



Carol White



Rory Sutherland



Mike DuBelko



Lance Lim



Mitsue Pierfederici



Hendrik Beune



JOIN THE ZINE TEAM!

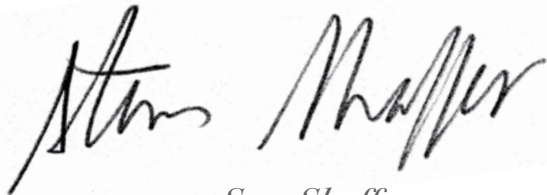
Interested in contributing ideas, articles, poems, illustrations, photos, or other artwork to the Right to Food Zine? As a community partner, we would love to hear what you have to say!

Find us at the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House at 573 East Hastings. We meet on Wednesdays from 12:30pm to 2. 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 invoiced!

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the 15th edition of the RTF Zine published since 2012. At the beginning, I lacked first hand knowledge or experience about the DTES and what life was like for people who lived there. Moreover, I was uninformed about the concept of food insecurity, or the right to food. With the help of Neighbourhood House staff and many generous teachers—amazing people living in poverty who struggled for basic survival on meager incomes and who committed themselves to benefit others—I began to understand their difficult living conditions and fierce community spirit. They educated me about the indignity of waiting in line in all weather for charity food, being turned away because there was nothing left for that meal, and having to start over again in another line up. Additionally, they were unable to access sufficient nutritious food to sustain their physical and mental well-being. It's humbling and infuriating when a middle class person encounters this level of grinding poverty and daily struggle in a society that's otherwise so wealthy and comfortable. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have collaborated with such talented, community-minded people over the years—all the previous writers, artists, designers, and supporters as well as the current Zinesters who have worked diligently to produce this issue. Zine 16, coming in April 2017, will focus on the BC election. Happy holidays to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan Shaffer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stan" and the last name "Shaffer" clearly distinguishable.

Stan Shaffer
RTF ZINE EDITOR

IS FOOD A HUMAN RIGHT?

by Anthony Goertz • photos by dm gillis

The short answer is yes. The human right to have access to adequately nutritious food is acknowledged at every level of government, from municipal charters to international declarations. The right to food is an enshrined right in Canada, which the government has made an obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill.

The long answer to “is food a human right?” is still yes, but it’s complicated. First, a brief history. The birth of human rights is hard to trace, but the earliest known official declaration is the Cyrus cylinder, a big, round clay tablet with decrees carved all over its surface. These decrees are attributed to Cyrus the Great, the first king of Persia, who conquered Babylon and freed its slaves and wanted to set out what everyone’s rights were in this new world. So he laid out what the Persians’ rights were, the Babylonians’, the slaves’, ex-slaves’, everyone. It remains the

oldest known document of its kind, and has inspired history’s subsequent declarations, from England’s Magna Carta (1215), the U.S. Constitution (1787), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), and the one most relevant to us, the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As the world reeled from the ravages of World War II, the United Nations was formed around the explicit goal of spreading and ensuring greater peace throughout the world. One of their big efforts was the creation of an international document laying out basic human rights that every government and person could contribute to and hopefully ratify. This ambitious project became the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, spearheaded by Eleanor Roosevelt and published in 1948. It was written by delegates from all regions of the world and widely accepted. It was the first global expression of the rights all human

beings should have. It has influenced the constitutions of many nations, including Canada's Bill of Rights (1960) and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), which apply to us today.

The section of the charter that is most relevant to a discussion of food rights is Section 7, which states that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice." This right applies to every person in Canada, including non-citizens. If you're a human being and you're in Canada, the government has made an explicit commitment to ensure and protect your right to "life, liberty, and security."

Since food is essential to a person's life and well-being, the right to have access to it is made explicit by the government. Federally, Canada has the Charter (quoted above), and, more specifically, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, signed in 1976, which states that everyone's basic human rights are "realized when every man, woman, and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement."

According to Stats Canada, about 4 million Canadians face severe food insecurity. In reality, this figure is probably much higher because the survey does not take homeless people into account, or people living on reserves or military bases. Folks struggling to feed themselves also face a range of other

problems connected to their lack of food. Under a capitalist system, poverty is the common denominator in people's inability to get healthy food, and this can lead to and compound a variety of health problems, like diabetes, increased rates of cancer, obesity, and so on. These health problems often stem from a lack of basic nutrition, and they account for billions of dollars in annual healthcare costs, cost that could be prevented if people had greater access to better food. Food-insecure people rack up more than twice the healthcare costs of people who have access to adequate nutrition. A better diet means more energy and a stronger immune system, and this feeds all the other areas of one's life, from work to relationships to one's ability to manage time. Food is energy is work is livelihood.

So. The government has an explicit obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill its citizens' right to adequate food. One of the general ways that the government fulfills this obligation is by issuing welfare payments to those who are low income. But the actual provision of food comes primarily from private organizations, like neighbourhood "soup kitchens," and other charitable establishments, of which there are several in the DTES. These organizations usually rely on private donations of food and money to keep their programs going, and while they serve an important function, they still exist within the charity model, which can be unpredictable, resource limited, and patronizing.



Given the fact that we live in a capitalist society, in which charity is the predominant poverty reduction strategy, it's difficult to call on the government to do more to protect people's right to food. Food is expensive, and the government has no mechanisms in place to provide food directly. While access to food is an enshrined right, it's not easily enforceable. It is more of a negative right than a positive one. A negative right is a right that can't be taken away from you. Negative rights are often called civil liberties, i.e. your right to free speech or freedom of assembly. A positive right, on the other hand, is when something is provided for you, like a safe injection site or food stamps or welfare cheques. Even though they fill acute needs, positive rights are difficult to establish

because they present an upfront cost to the government. It would, of course, cost the government a lot of money to provide food to the people who need it most.

But two things: first, isn't that what a government should be for, to help provide for those in need? And second, research from the BC Civil Liberties Association and elsewhere has shown that providing food for those in need would save the government money in health care costs resulting from poor nutrition.

In the past, political activists have sometimes succeeded in defending positive rights by framing them as negative rights, as in the case of Insite, North America's first safe injection facility, located in the DTES. The Portland Hotel Society and two of Insite's members filed a lawsuit

against the BC government when the site faced closure, and since it had already been established, closing the site would mean more infections, more overdoses, and more deaths. Instead of applying for the government to approve and fund the facility, the Portland Hotel Society argued that disallowing the site would infringe on people's existing right to "life, liberty, and security of the person." In other words, PHS framed a positive right (provision of Insite) as a negative right because taking it away would infringe on people's security and freedom.

Establishing government food programs is difficult work, particularly in a system dominated by the charity model (for more on this, please read dm gillis' article in this issue). The Vancouver Food Charter, adopted in 2007, lays out the city's commitment to "a just a sustainable food system" that "recognizes access to safe, sufficient, culturally appropriate and nutritious food as a basic human right." While agreeable in its ideals, the Vancouver Food Charter is only two pages long and is more of an inspiring call to action than a specific policy guide. So what can people do if they don't have access to quality food? What is their recourse? Unfortunately, change seems to require a grassroots approach. We can write to our local politicians and

encourage them in their responsibility to defend their constituents' right to have access to healthy food. We can participate in public demonstrations that call for increased welfare rates (see Rory Sutherland's article in this issue). We can join the growing number of people who are pressuring the government in various ways to keep the promises they've made to the people they've promised to serve. Food is fundamental to life, liberty, and security, and our government has made an explicit commitment to respect, protect, and fulfill it. It's up to us to keep them accountable. Our health depends on it.



**Providing food
for those in need
would save the
government
money in health
care costs
resulting from
poor nutrition.**

The Day after Christmas: Shortcomings in the Charity Food Model in the DTES

by Carol White

Daring to criticize the charity food model may be seen by some as Grinch-like. It is hard not to come off sounding like a Scrooge or even worse anti-Canadian. Canadians have a long tradition of being exceptional at demonstrating charity in times of crisis. We have seen this most recently with our response to the plight of Syrian refugees.

Four years ago I started working at the DTES Neighbourhood House. Prior to this I had worked in the world of other Neighbourhood Houses and charities so was not unfamiliar with the great emphasis placed seasonal giving. Many people defer their giving until this traditional time and organizations recognize this as a strategic time to get out their message. Canadians have a long tradition of giving food hampers and seasonal meals in December. The NH is no exception. Our seasonal fundraising drive is anchored by the sales of a seasonal Gift Basket made up of locally sourced social enterprise goods along with products and produce from local east side suppliers.

Schools and Neighbourhood Houses often gear up for these events weeks in advance. **What is surprising to discover however is that in the DTES there is a stark contrast between the amazing abundance of free turkey dinners available and the relative famine in the following weeks.** These seasonal feasts seem to be planned with little foresight as to how people are to manage in mid-January when people are often without any food. To exacerbate this even more, Provincial assistance cheques are issued during the week of December 20th when meals are plentiful but not again until the January 20th. This means there is a long cold 5 weeks with no funds and no food for many. In the lead up to Christmas the Potluck Society publishes a handy list of holiday meals for the community. **In some venues there are three full turkey meals per day in the week leading up to Christmas Eve but on Christmas day itself very few are offered.** DTES orga-

nizations have proven time and again that we work well together supporting food and health as with Homeground, the Alley Health Fair and the Family Fair. However because most non-profits remain completely dependent on those who contribute both time and money and when these contributions are focused in the weeks leading up to Christmas our ability to manage and provide for in the post-holiday slump is very limited.

I am also mindful that when much of Christmas giving involves long line-ups, offers little or no choice of food or when it will be available over a sustained period of time the charity model reveals its flaws. At the DTESNH, while we offer programs to scale with meal options that include fresh organic foods we too are embedded in the same model. Advocating for better food options, providing community kitchens and bringing awareness about food security, the environment and social justice are small steps toward changing the model as well as providing a winter feast timed for mid-January to fill that big gap.

According to the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition website of the 5 things we should know about poverty in BC two stand out. First, BC rates as “one of the most generous provinces in Canada when comparing the average percentage of income we donate to charity. “This seems especially true when we witness international crisis. Second, the cost of poverty in BC is

What is surprising to discover however is that in the DTES there is a stark contrast between the amazing abundance of free turkey dinners available and the relative famine in the following weeks.

about 9 billion a year when considering health care and criminal justice costs and loss of productivity.

The cost of a poverty reduction strategy? Three billion, and how should we spend this 3 billion? I will leave the reader with these words from the BC Poverty Reduction Website:

“Poverty is an underlying social determinant of ill health, so all of the other objectives will have a direct impact on improving the health of low-income people. That said, government provision of essential health services and community health care—home care, home support, assisted living, long-term care, and community mental health services — should be enhanced and expanded. These services are particularly important to lower-income seniors (mainly women) and to people with physical and mental disabilities, and the people who provide these services are primarily low-wage women (a majority of whom are recent immigrants).”

THE CHARITY MODEL, A WEAK REACTION TO HUNGER IN CANADA

article & photo by dm gillis

CHARITY:

kindness and pity in one tidy act of giving, addressing needs that shouldn't exist in our wealthy nation, and providing the giver with a warm and satisfying feeling.

Sadly, the much coveted charity model, and a sorry system of government welfare, appear to be as close as we'll allow ourselves to get to an equitable redistribution of wealth. It also provides the charitable license to cast mild, if unconscious, shame upon recipients while preserving expectations of cheerful and unqualified gratitude. The giver gets this, and a tax deduction along with bragging rights. Maybe even a place in Heaven.

The emphasis of this brief article is limited to food insecurity in Canada, the harsh income disparities that cause it, and how we might mitigate their impact on those effected by

hunger—people facing barriers to employment, the underemployed, seniors, many people with disabilities and others. And don't forget child poverty. They live with hunger and malnutrition every day, and our nation's inadequate reaction is absolutely necessary to the maintenance of a charity model that fails to effectively address this injustice.

IF YOU'RE A FAN OF THE CHARITY MODEL, HOWEVER, NO WORRIES. FOOD INSECURITY ISN'T LIKELY TO END IN CANADA ANYTIME SOON. NOR ARE THE PROFOUND FEELINGS OF ISOLATION, HUMILIATION AND PHYSICAL PAIN IT CAUSES. INDEED, IT'S LIKELY THAT CHARITY WILL REMAIN ONE OF OUR MOST ROBUST REACTIONS TO THE MANUFACTURED SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL GAPS THAT CAUSE SUCH SEVERE HARDSHIP.



Good hearted folks will continue to put change into coin boxes, food into grocery store foodbank boxes and make year-end donations. Meanwhile, the self-congratulatory cult of the corporate executive will continue to create vast charitable facades, costing them nearly nothing, and supported primarily by their customers (think McDonalds and Donald Trump). For big business, charity will continue to be a thrifty form of brand enhancement, and their need for cheap branding remains never ending.

If we wanted to, though, could we eliminate poverty and hunger in Canada, by stepping away from our reliance on charity? Perhaps we just need to rethink reacting with sympathy, and instead provide those in need with opportunities, gateways into employment that pays a living wage, safe housing and guaranteed minimum incomes that differ from

welfare in that they come in livable amounts, and are made universally available so that pity and shaming, in this regard, are rendered obsolete.

But if all of this happened tomorrow, and charity was no longer necessary, would those who support the model feel cheated? Would they want back that special feeling they get when they deliver packages or write a cheque? If so, one might wonder if this need to commodify poverty is burned into our DNA, and if that is true, couldn't we consciously endeavour to evolve beyond it?

CAN WE EVER ADVANCE BEYOND A CHARITY MODEL IN WHICH THE NET BENEFIT GOES TO THE CHARITABLE RATHER THAN THOSE LIVING IN HUNGER?

THE WELFARE FOOD CHALLENGE: A TACTIC FOR NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

by Rory Sutherland

Welfare rates have not increased in this province since 2007, well before Raise the Rates launched the first annual Welfare Food Challenge five years ago. It may feel like nothing has changed over the years, but unfortunately, it has: it's gotten much worse. This year's Challenge finished on October 23rd and participants purchased all the food they consumed for one week with only \$18. This is the amount that Raise the Rates has calculated someone on welfare has left for food after paying their expenses. In previous years, the amount has been higher (\$26), but the rising cost of rental accommodation has forced the adjustment to this year's budget. It's obviously impossible to adequately feed oneself with \$18 per week, and the Challenge emphasizes the absurdity of a social welfare system that produces such an outcome in a wealthy country like Canada.

As a Challenge participant this year, I couldn't help but wonder if what I was doing was going to actually result in any positive change. I also found myself feeling uncomfortable with the sensationalism that can go along with the Challenge. My ethnicity, education, class, and ability all grant me privilege.

I'M ANGRY THAT LITERALLY EVERY DAY PEOPLE ARE LIVING THE WELFARE FOOD CHALLENGE, YET THEIR VOICES ARE NOT HEARD; HOWEVER,

WHEN PEOPLE WITH PRIVILEGE DO THIS IT SUDDENLY BECOMES A NEWS STORY AND THEIR NOBLE SACRIFICE IS LAUDED. IS THE CHALLENGE POVERTY VOYEURISM?

It gives the media a story that might be seen as based on the suffering of others in our society. It can be seen as those with privilege controlling the dialogue around poverty and silencing those for whom poverty is an everyday reality. It also provides a spotlight for those taking the challenge to gain exposure and raise their profiles, which may personally benefit them. These issues are problematic and need to be critically reflected upon by anyone supporting the Challenge.

The Challenge organizers do a great job stressing that this is not about whether or not one can eat a healthy diet with \$18 a week, or the specifics of how one might do this (you can't!), but that it's about applying political pressure toward a specific outcome: raising welfare rates. Many of the Challenge organizers and spokespeople have lived experience subsisting on welfare or social assistance. The Challenge was launched with a press conference here at the DTES NH, and what I saw were people living on welfare organizing logistics for the event and speaking out to the media about their experience and their demands. Direct involvement by those individuals most affected by this issue in



the planning and carrying out of the Challenge is evidence that the project has legitimate connections to, and support from, those that are most deeply impacted.

We live in a society in which everyone is not equal. **Deeply imbedded power imbalances mean that large sectors of the population are marginalized and excluded. Conversely, other groups carry a great deal of privilege and it's very difficult for members of this group to see this privilege, let alone engage in a conversation about eliminating these power imbalances.** The general absurdity of a "welfare food challenge" can break down barriers, open space for dialogue, and provide an opportunity to disrupt commonly held assumptions. The idea is outrageous, but then so is the fact certain citizens living in a rich country are prevented from accessing food.

Is the Welfare Food Challenge going to get welfare rates increased? No. The Challenge should not be seen as an end in itself, but as part of a series of advocacy initiatives that exist on a spectrum. At one end, letters are written, articles are published, information is shared on social media, community groups are supported, and petitions are signed. At the other end, more direct actions happen such as the annual CBC Food Bank Day protest. In this more extreme tactic, activists march down the street from the Carnegie Centre to the CBC building and erect an alternative radio broadcast, "the poor peoples' radio," in front of CBC's event.

THE MESSAGE FOR THIS ACTION IS SIMPLY THAT CHARITY IS NOT THE SOLUTION TO HUNGER AND INCREASED WELFARE RATES ARE NEEDED.

This more radical action breaks some minor laws, in a ridiculous and fun way, but ultimately demonstrates the deep frustration that occurs when all other avenues have been exhausted, yet peoples' rights continue to be violated.

The Challenge is an exciting illustration of new social movements uniting diverse groups for a common goal. This event brings together antipoverty, food security, legal advocacy, labour unions, and other community groups to rally around a shared concern: abysmally low welfare rates. Gone are the old, labour-based movements and what have emerged are the new social movements, such as human rights, LGBTQ, women's and the environment, that are fragmented and complicated, but also inclusive, creative and global in reach.

For me, taking the challenge was about showing solidarity with people who are living in poverty. We can't give up on equality and the notion of the common good simply because powerlessness and lack of concern for one another might begin to seem natural – it's not! These abhorrent social conditions are man-made, therefore changeable. Actions like the Challenge highlight that many people do want change and are willing to use their knowledge, creativity, and commitment to make it happen.

potluck



Downtown Eastside
Kitchen Tables

FROM PLATE TO POLICY

*A journey through the plates of the
DTES Fall 2016 – Research Summary*

by Downtown Eastside Kitchen Tables



From Plate to Policy shares the lived experiences of people directly impacted by the charitable food system in the DTES with food providers, funders, healthcare professionals and policy makers to bridge the divide between stakeholder groups and to better understand the complexities of food insecurity. Knowing that most organizations do not have the capacity to conduct community consultations, over the course of a month, we conducted in-person interviews at the DTES Kitchen Tables Fresh Produce Market, the DTES Neighbourhood House and Strathcona Community Centre Backpack Program. If your organization wishes to share the information provided, please credit DTES Kitchen Tables, a program of Potluck Café Society.

Emergent Themes:

The following are the main themes that emerged from the interviews.

1 The need for more protein, fresh fruit and vegetables

Participants repeatedly mentioned the importance and need for fresh food. The prevalence of sugar, white bread, white flour, and white pasta in the neighbourhood was identified as excessive. Many people highlighted the health and social benefits of fresh and organic ingredients, fewer pesticides and less processed food.

2 Health impacts of available food

Because of the type of food available, participants discussed not being able to follow recommendations and requirements from their healthcare providers - specifically those with diabetes or heart patients. Many identified weight gain as an issue, linked directly to the type of free food they were accessing.

3. Issues with line-ups

Line-ups were identified as discouraging and physically draining. People often waited, only to receive nothing or not enough food in the end, often resulting in anger and frustration. Some would line up multiple times in the same line so they could take food home and not have to go through the experience again elsewhere or as a safety measure so they don't have to go out again at night. People would often save food for Sundays and evenings as there is less food available during these times.

Participants were asked the following questions, all of which were optional.

1. What does a meal mean to you?
2. Describe your best food memory?
3. If you had a magic wand to improve food in your life, what would it create?



DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

4. Presence of racism and violence

Experiences of racism and physical assault came from almost every person who didn't speak English as a first language. Chinese speaking seniors identified this as a recurring theme. Examples of this included being given less than English speakers, being called names, physical violence, and a failure of service providers to respond to these instances or protect them. Despite this, their need for food forced them to continue accessing free food.

5. Income constraints

Many participants made a direct link between their income and the ability to access food. People noted that rising rents left less money for food, forcing them to buy cheaper or less food. The increasing cost of food has also resulted in less food for the same money. Some said because of inconsistent employment income their ability to afford both food and rent is very challenged.

6. Expressions of thankfulness

Many participants told of positive experiences eating in the neighbourhood and expressed gratitude for being able to access free food. Although many challenges were identified, many participants credit the ability to stay alive to the free food available.

“
In the DTES I have experienced this love constantly. It's good people are working together
”

7. Importance of sitting and setting

When asked the question what does a meal mean to you?, the majority of responses included sitting, or sitting down with family or friends. Others clearly outlined a particular setting (ie. kitchen table, at the holidays, at my parent's house). These responses indicate that the environment that people eat in holds importance and many relate food to a social experience or being able to offer hospitality to others.

8. Lack of access to kitchen facilities

Many participants identified the limitations of living in housing without kitchen facilities and not being able to prepare food. This was seen as an immense barrier to accessing healthy food of their choice. Those living in buildings with shared facilities identified difficulties such as: damaged or missing cookware, smoke alarms being set off, and the lack of secure space to store food. Others pointed out that having a kitchen only mattered if you had the income to buy food. Otherwise free food was the more realistic option.

TIME TO TALK ABOUT

GMOs

With recent news that Germany has joined Scotland and a smattering of other countries in banning or trying to ban GMO seeds, time for a fast review.

First, although there have been many research studies into the impact of GMO's and our bodies, the main impact is the class of GMO plants that are called "Roundup Ready". That means the plants are naturally resistant to the chemicals in Roundup, (glyphosate herbicide) so fields can be sprayed, and everything will die except, for instance, the corn crop.

Second, not that many food crops are genetically modified – but the ones that are, specifically corn and soy, find their way into virtually every processed food, from tortilla chips to soft drinks – some estimates are that up to 80% of grocery foods contain GMO's – except those specifically marked as non GMO, or that are certified organic. Canola, Corn, Potato, Rice, Soybeans, Sugar Beets, Squash and Tomatoes are all approved for GMO production, and for some of these crops, 90% of what is grown in Canada and the US, especially canola in Canada and corn in the US is genetically modified. Well, try to figure out, with that list, how many items in the grocery department are not 'tainted' with GMO's – most estimates are over 80%, from corn flakes to baby formula.

The science will rage on for years, because for every study that tries to link GMO to human disease, the biotech companies like Monsanto, Dow, Bayer etc. will have a study that shows there is no problem with GMO's, or glyphosate herbicide.

Right or wrong, the debate has been about how GMO's affect human cells, and that is not the story that should be written.

For every cell in the human body, there are 10 bacteria – the little people that digest our food – (creating heat that keeps us warm), making nutrients available, running our immune system etc. That doesn't mean we're 90% bacteria by weight (or we would be very ugly and slimy.)

Monsanto has long argued that glyphosate is perfectly safe for humans. That's because glyphosate works by disrupting the shikimate pathway in a plant's metabolism and ultimately kills them. Human metabolism does not have the shikimate pathway, so the herbicides don't kill us (based on Monsanto science) But when they are safe for humans, they are referring to our human cells – and not referring to the little work-horses that run our metabolism, only to our own body functions run by human cells, tissue, muscles and organs.

The shikimate pathway is the metabolic route used by bacteria (including fungus and algae), as well as parasites and plants, for biosynthesis - turning minerals and nutrients into amino acids and hormones.

This is where the concern is, and while the scientists will battle back and forth about the impact of GMO's on our cells, those bacteria, outnumbering our cells 10:1, have the same metabolic system as the plants that Roundup Ready kills. Recent on-going medical problems including increases in auto-immune disorders, leaky gut syndrome (often blamed on glutens), celiac disease, hormone imbalances, mental illness, brain inflammation etc., which are controlled by gut bacteria are more and more being linked to problems related to our bacteria based metabolism systems.

It is very likely that scientific opposition to GMO's will more and more focus on the impact, especially of so-called Roundup Ready crops, on our bacterial population instead of the impact of skin cells.

However, in the meantime, the most recent news is this:

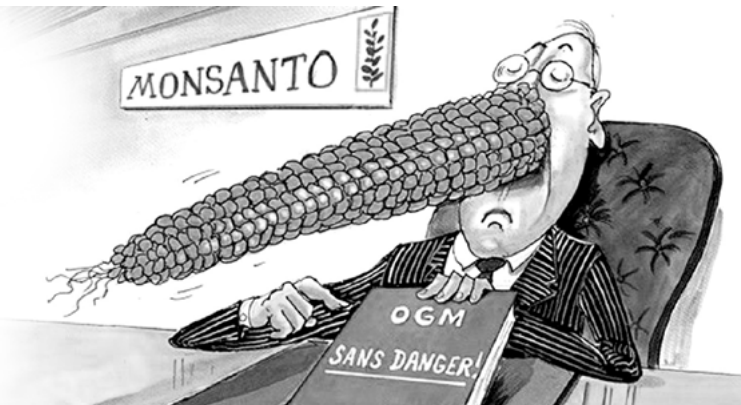
GERMANY JOINS SCOTLAND IN SEEKING BAN ON GENE-MODIFIED SEEDS

Germany is taking steps to outlaw the cultivation of genetically modified crops in Europe's biggest economy.

The Agriculture Ministry plans to officially request that producers of GMOs exclude Germany when applying to sell seeds in European Union, Christian Fronczak, a spokesman for the ministry, said Tuesday. Scotland took similar measures earlier this month.

“The German government is clear in that it seeks a nationwide cultivation ban,” Fronczak said by phone from Berlin. “There’s resistance from all sides, from the public to the farmers.”

Germany is taking advantage of new measures allowing countries to opt out of growing gene-modified crops. Switzerland's Syngenta AG and U.S. rival Monsanto Co. have been among the strongest proponents of the seeds, which are mostly banned in the EU because of what some say are uncertain environmental and health effects. Monsanto maintains the products are safe.”



LEARNING TO LIVE THE WAY OF LIFE

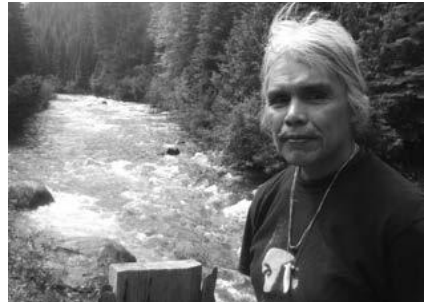
by Shannon Hecker

In the last issue of the RTF Zine, I wrote *Renewing Our Obligation to Protect the Land* about St’at’imc villages Ulluisc and Sutikalh (located close to Lillooet in so called BC). Both villages are off of “reserve land” protecting St’at’imc lands and waters from unwanted development and destruction.

For the past 16 years, Sutikalh (home of the winter spirit), has prevented a \$500,000,000 dollar ski resort from desecrating the Melvin Creek Valley. Hubie Jim (photo: top right) and Doug Dan have been maintaining a small village at Sutikalh with many people coming from all four directions, being part of what Hubie describes as “building community where everyone is taken care of.”

Early in 2015, loggers from Aspen Planers Company desecrated an ancient village site during an illegal clear cut and dumped a huge slash pile into salmon-bearing Junction Creek. St’at’imc elders Ken Thomas and Albert Joseph took action to prevent any further desecration by asking Christine Jack to set up camp at Junction Creek to heal and protect these lands and waters. Just over a year of living on the land, a small village has already been built by supporters. For Christine, Ulluisc is a place for people to come together - “We’ve become Ulluisc – not just Chris or Kenny.”

In this issue we give you an update from our most recent visit to both villages. The



Hubie Jim at Cayoosh Creek, Sutikalh

last three weeks of August is a bountiful berry harvest at Sutikalh with berries everywhere! Hubie counted **“24 EDIBLE KINDS [OF BERRIES] AND ABOUT THE SAME AMOUNT THAT CAN KILL.”** **ONE WOULD NEED TO WALK THE LAND YEAR-ROUND TO BE ABLE TO PICK THEM ALL.**

The wild raspberries were ripe for picking, but some were very small due to erratic weather (there was frost once a month in May, June and July), signs that clearly point to the fact that climate has already changed. We also picked thimbleberries, huckleberries and hoosum (soapberries), wild strawberries and currents. Each berry has different medicinal qualities, all rich in anti-oxidants.

The only running water comes straight from the mountain. We drank from a beautiful underwater creek that surfaces at the entrance of Sutikalh, which doubles as a food cache; coolers are kept in the glacier water to store meat as there is no

refrigerator. Smoking or drying food is the traditional method of preserving foods also still used to this day.

I learned the hard way that when cooking with a woodstove you don't want to be making lunch at noon in August—unless of course you enjoy having a good sweat in the kitchen. Everything takes planning and one must think ahead, be prepared and never leave things until the last minute.

Hubie would like to see the completion of the heated greenhouse so that fresh veggies can be grown year round and with more permanent residents, this village will one day be self-sufficient. In the meantime many people from the surrounding area share their harvests and preserves with Sutikalh because land defense is a full time job.

The salmon run came and many St'at'imc were fishing at the river. One day a young man came with his uncle to give some fish to Hubie and Doug, but went back to the truck to get more once he saw we were visiting. No one asked or expected anything; it's just the way of the community to take care of one another.

We left Sutikalh and went to Ulluilse for a few days. Happy to learn more about preserving different foods, Christine showed us how to dry plums in screens; we also did some canning and smoked some deer that elder Ken Thomas got. Christine explained, “We must gather food for ourselves and enough for others who may not be prepared.”

WITNESSING STARVING CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL HAS FUELED CHRISTINE TO FEED OTHERS BEFORE SHE FEEDS HERSELF. GOING BACK TO THE LAND IS DECOLONIZATION IN ACTION.

It takes a whole community to work together to catch fish, gather berries, roots, vegetables and also to process and preserve these foods. Not to mention, Christine has a garden and plans to build a greenhouse. A cold cellar is where the jarred foods and some fresh vegetables are stored.

THERE IS NO ELECTRICITY FOR REFRIGERATION SO FOOD PRESERVATION IS NECESSARY FOR SURVIVAL. FOOD SECURITY IS A DAILY TOPIC OF CONVERSATION.

Christine tells us she was “relieved they were able to gather salmon even though it's been limited by DFO.” Christine was shut down at their fishing site by DFO (Department of fisheries and oceans); however, “based on traditional values I only took what was necessary – 10 more salmon.” With the help of supporters much of the salmon was canned at the square house on the Xwisten reserve. For Christine it was a whole new experience sharing this responsibility with visitors. Different berries and plants are in season throughout the year and people are welcome to come learn how to identify and harvest at Ulluilse.

Elder Ken Thomas harvested salmon together with his wife and grandson.



Christine Jack in the root cellar at Ulluilse

They process much of the salmon in the traditional wind drying method used to preserve fish for winter- called tswan. Ken “catches them and breaks their necks, while Aiden packs five fish per dry rack and Mabel will cut the strips.” Although happy to share their harvest with friends and family, Elder Ken lamented that the numbers of fish coming back are dwindling. Most years he has “about 300 tswan, this year only 36.” Ken shared his disappointment that he wouldn’t have as much extra salmon to donate to pow wows and gatherings.

Christine discussed the many issues surrounding the survival of wild salmon and is very concerned about the recent spill at the Mt. Polley mine. She will not fish any runs from that spill because of heavy metal contamination. The oceans, rivers and streams that house salmon feed not only people but many other animals, plants and trees. The salmon—a keystone species — are in grave danger and we need to protect their habitat. Christine tells us with conviction how **“WE NEED TO RETURN TO OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE (AS HUMANS), BECAUSE EVERYTHING AROUND US IS GREATER THAN US. INTERCONNECTEDNESS - WATER, SALMON, TREES, BEARS, WOLVES, BUGS - WE ARE ALL CONNECTED.”**

Christine shared teachings around using every part of any animal caught; using the deer as an example: the brain is used for tanning the hide, hooves used for rattles and other ceremonial items, antler broken down into handles for tools or buttons. She looks forward to using other parts like shins for awls or bladder for a water container. Going back to the land and traditional way of living life is an ongoing learning process.

Acknowledging that we should only take what we need, it is also very important to always give back. To show gratitude for all the beings that have provided food and medicine since she first came up to live on the mountain, Christine gave an offering on the summer solstice. It was a bundle made of 13 different foods she gathered in the last year: smoked deer meat, smoked salmon, fir tips, rose petals, T’sweta (greens), Hak’wa (greens), wild potato, wild onion, hoosum, huckleberry, black currant, gooseberry and tree sap. Christine mentions that she always came up to the mountain to gather food, so now it’s just easier.

Christine also grew a lot of food in a garden next to the cabin this summer and is building a greenhouse as well. She asks that visitors with any skills or supplies for growing fruit and veggies to come and share their skills at Ulluisc. Many Non-GMO seeds have been donated to the village and Christine works hard to save seeds from each variety to have more for next year.

Both Hubie and Christine advocate for people to keep a seed bank with fast maturing varieties of plants because natural disasters can and will affect our access to buy groceries at any given time.

ONE DAY, WE MAY BE LEFT WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO GROW OUR OWN FOOD TO SURVIVE. COMMUNITY BUILDING IS KEY TO SUCCESS; WE NEED TO LEARN TO RELY ON EACH OTHER INSTEAD OF GLOBAL CORPORATIONS TO PROVIDE OUR FOOD SUPPLY.

On our drive back to the Sutikalh from Ulluisc, Ken points to a huge swath of clear cut around a so-called environmental wildlife habitat. “A logger all my life



Elder Ken Thomas and Grandson Aiden Thomas

and never seen anything like that,” Ken exclaimed. He explained there’s no such thing as an isolated block of environmental wildlife habitat because all the logging around the area would scare off any animals living in that area.

Clear-cuts, mining and other developments are always being proposed to develop the area with the promise of jobs for impoverished people. Sadly this sort of progress doesn’t leave much for future generations in terms of food harvesting and often tears communities apart. This is happening worldwide and while this devastation ultimately affects everyone on the planet, indigenous communities are often on the frontlines.

We are at a pivotal time in history because the natural balance of mother earth is being altered at an alarming rate. Anyone living in Vancouver can attest to this – spring flowers were blooming this January and again in October. The ongoing environmental disasters around the world surely attest that climate has in fact already changed. We need to immediately execute a strategic plan to reduce our waste, pollution and energy consumption so that humans may continue to cohabit on this earth.

This means a whole lot less of buying stuff we don’t need. Consumerism is fueling the extractive resource industry. The changes we need to make are drastic and are pretty much the antithesis of how progress is defined. Success should not

be measured by how much material wealth a person has but by how much they give back to their community and help others.

LEARNING TO LIVE THE WAY OF LIFE IS NOT EASY. IT TAKES A LOT OF WORK AND DEDICATION TO GIVE UP THE LUXURIES OF THE CORPORATE WORLD TO GO BACK TO A SIMPLER, YET LESS DESTRUCTIVE WAY OF LIVING.

However, we certainly can’t all just up and leave the city permanently, which would put a tremendous strain on the local ecosystems if there were to be a huge influx of human activity. By visiting and participating in the villages at Ulluilsc and Sutikalh, people are given an opportunity to learn alternatives to the capitalistic and oppressive values imbued by western culture.

HAVING AN ABUNDANCE OF FOOD SEEMS TO BE ALL WE REALLY NEED IN THIS LIFE; MOST OF THE OTHER THINGS ARE JUST DISTRACTIONS.

Having control of our own food production is not out of reach. We need to take back our power as people from corporations. Learning to grow our own food will enable people to be self-sufficient—even in the city. Small scale urban farming could be one solution and raising less common animals for food such as rabbits have been shown to be a viable sustainable alternative for urban dwellers. I certainly do not have all the answers, but maybe, if we try, we can learn to use only what we need and live together in a way that has less impact on our mother earth.

For more info visit: <http://sutikalh.blogspot.ca/> and <https://www.facebook.com/reoccupationofjunctioncreek>

GROW YOUR OWN LOTUS ROOTS!

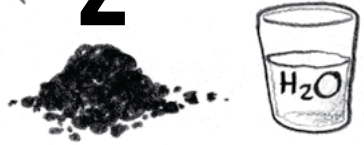
Words by Godfrey Tang • Illustrations by Anthony Goertz

Lotus roots are good to eat raw or cooked. Its fruits, flowers, leaves and roots are food and traditional Chinese medicine. The best thing is that you can economically grow the lotus in a pot at home!

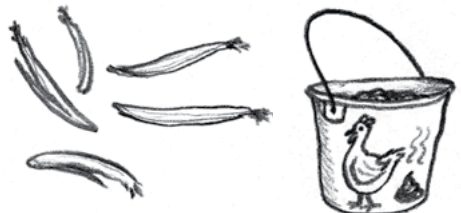
1 In spring, one needs a pot (the size determines the harvested product) with some vegetable clippings.



2 Add soil and water.

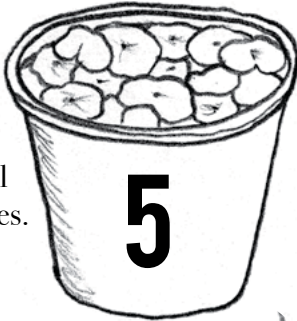


3 Add corn husk leaves and chicken manure.





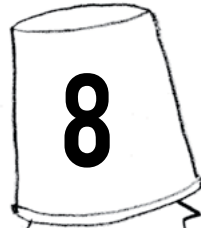
Submerge a few lotus roots with shoots in the soil mixture in the pot.



Soon there will be a lot of leaves.



7 And flowers!



When autumn comes, leaves will turn yellow and die off. Empty the pot and get a lot of lotus roots!



RECIPES!

FRIED LOTUS ROOTS

Ingredients: 500 grams lotus roots, 100 grams celery stalk, 30 grams mashed garlic, 20 grams mashed ginger, 1 cube of red bean curd, oyster sauce, salt, sugar, and peanut oil.

Preparation:

Clean, peel, slice lotus roots and blanch.

Wash and cut celery.

Put oil in a hot pan to fry minced garlic and ginger.

Add lotus roots and celery and stir fry.

Add the rest of the ingredients. Enjoy!

LOTUS ROOTS & PORK RIB SOUP

Ingredients: 500 grams lotus roots, 300 grams pork rib, green onion, ginger, cooking wine, salt.

Preparation:

Clean, peel, slice lotus roots.

Clean the pork rib and blanch.

Put lotus roots and ribs in a pot with lots of water.

Bring to boil, add ginger and wine.

Simmer for 2 hours.

Add green onion and salt before served. Enjoy!

LOTUS ROOT SALAD

Ingredients: 400 grams lotus roots, 1 pear, 1 red hot pepper, 1 green hot pepper, a few celery stalks, 4 dried red dates, 1 tablespoon of white sesame seeds, 1 cup of sweet rice flour, 1 cup of Licorice juice, 1 tablespoon of hot pepper powder, salt, vinegar.

Preparation:

Mix water and sweet rice flour and slow heat to a thick paste.

Peel and rid the seed from the pear then shred.

Wash, clean the seed of red and green peppers then shred.

Take out the core of dried red dates and shred.

Chop celery into small strips and blanch in hot water.

Wash the lotus roots, soak in vinegar for 3 minutes then slice into thin pieces.

Mix all the above and leave for 20 minutes. Enjoy!

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.

RIGHT TO FOOD ZINE

Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
573 East Hastings St.
Vancouver, BC
V6A 1P9

rtfzine.org

Publisher and Editor • Stan Shaffer

Assistant Editor & IT • Mike DuBelko

Layout & Design • Mitsue Pierfederici, Priyanka Borkar & Anthony Goertz

Illustrations • Anthony Goertz

Contributing Writers • Anthony Goertz, Carol White, Doris Chow and Anna Cavouras,
dm gillis, Godfrey Tang, Rory Sutherland, Shannon Hecker, Stan Shaffer

Printing • Studio Print Group

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the original authors and contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House.