

Importance of this Report: A Statement from the VIPIRG Board & Staff

In a predominantly white city like Victoria, access to culturally relevant foods and ingredients is very limited. Being able to obtain these foods is important for a few reasons. Food is a vital part of preserving culture. Culture is a key part of one's identity; it is associated with safety and security. It is important to continue practicing culture by cooking cultural foods; doing this in itself is an act of resistance to the mainstream.

Food is very important to the work VIPIRG does. Communities and cultures gather around food. Further, feeding people is part of Coast Salish protocol. As such, food is provided at all VIPIRG's events and board meetings. At these events, community members are regularly heard sharing their experiences of using food as an act of resistance. In March 2016, during VIPIRG's annual 'Cracks in the Concrete: Coming Together at the Intersections,' various interactive panels and workshops were held, which included discussions on anti-black racism and immigrant and refugee women. Participants shared their thoughts on how the limited availability of diverse foods in Victoria is damaging to their sense of self and wellbeing.

Similarly, at Food With A Side of Community, a monthly event series organized by the Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour (SNIWWOC), immigrants and refugees tell of how important it is to have space every month where they can cook and share the foods of their ancestors with the public. Non-racialized individuals also express their appreciation at being given a deeper insight into cross-cultural experiences of food and how intrinsically connected it is to identity. The above sentiments are in line with our research findings, specifically the question, "Would better access to culturally appropriate foods improve your personal life and community relationships?"

The need to focus on food security is triggered by many reasons. Food security is directly linked to indigenous sovereignty. Part of indigenous sovereignty is the land, which brings us food. We cannot talk about indigenous sovereignty without talking about land and sustainability. Since the dawn of time, indigenous people have held a relationship with the land that is about giving and receiving instead of extraction. This means that it is our responsible to take care of the land and ensure that it is always sustainable.

Immigrants and refugees often come to Canada not by choice, but due to extenuating circumstances. Thus, they sometimes feel a disconnect from the land. As such, it makes sense to

build solidarity through stewardship of the land. We understand stewardship of the land to mean that we are all collectively responsible for taking care of the land and its occupants. This is especially important for settlers. Indigenous people, immigrants, and refugees have a historical bond because they experience similar marginalization from the government. Although some progress has been made in this regard, there is a need for further improvements that reflect the needs of these communities. As an organization primarily composed of settlers, VIPIRG employs a decolonizing framework to conceptualize food injustice research