



## Editorial

**“Its smoke must make it blind”<sup>1</sup>: Fire and a commitment to regeneration**

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As Volume 7, Number 1 of *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation* (CFS/RCÉA) goes to print, the world is on fire. The COVID-19 pandemic has made visible some of the most problematic elements of modern society. People and communities that have been made most vulnerable throughout history (e.g., racialized and Indigenous people, women, seniors, and those living in poverty) are being impacted much more severely by the disease itself, but also by the impact of isolation, job losses and the additional mental and physical stress. The deaths of George Floyd, Tony McDade, David McAtee, Chantel Moore, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rodney Levi, among countless others, at the hands of police are (yet another) wake-up call to the ongoing systemic oppressions that are part of a living reality for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. The strengthening of the Black Lives Matter movements, along with associated social justice-oriented movements working in solidarity, are actively challenging systemic racism and oppression in all their forms. In Canada, there is a particularly nefarious history of Black and Indigenous people being disproportionately killed by police, incarcerated, and treated as second class citizens. The burning that is so apparent in this moment, is not an explosion that incinerates everything in its path but a slow burn that has been in motion for hundreds of years and is only increasing in intensity. What we are seeing and experiencing today are the implications of capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy and settler-colonial systems and structures that have been intentionally established to benefit those in power at the expense of the majority of the world's population.

Many critical food scholars have documented the impacts of this burning across food systems, particularly its uneven impacts on farmers and fishers, workers across the food chain,

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<sup>11</sup> This line is from Lorna Crozier's poem, "The Gods Don't Tell Us Everything" written in response to the BC wildfires of 2017. Crozier reminds us that fire doesn't discriminate - even if we do - burning as it does everything in its path.

women and especially on Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. Despite mounting evidence that we are at a tipping point and a new course is essential. In 2018, the UN (backed by the world's leading climate scientists) warned that we have less than 12 years to keep global warming under 1.5C, or risk the consequences of increased droughts, floods, and extreme heat. While this would have devastating consequences for all humanity, it will be felt most acutely by those living in vulnerable situations as access and availability of food is threatened. In this issue, Ross and Mason draw our attention to the concerns of Indigenous peoples in the Northwest Territories over the effects of climate change. The climate crisis is not new and has already had disastrous impacts on the planet and its inhabitancy. In this vein, Ross and Mason use Indigenous methodologies to explore how communities can combat the rising threat of food insecurity through the adaption of local food procurement programs that can not only provide consistent access but also recognize the cultural importance of wild foods for these communities. Read it alongside Kristen Lowitt's review of *Indigenous Food Systems*, a collection of essays that brings together and calls attention to the Indigenous scholars, communities, and settler allies at work with and through food.

In this current climate of uncertainty, the importance of alternate food access cannot be emphasized enough. As the current health crisis becomes an economic crisis the question of food insecurity has been pushed to the forefront, as evidenced by images of miles-long lines to access food banks, bare shelves in grocery stores, outbreaks in processing facilities, and general concerns about the sustainability of food systems. Who has access to food, who does not, and how can this imbalance be rectified are questions asked by several of the authors in this issue.

Two original research articles focus on food and food systems through postsecondary institutions. The first piece by Meredith Bessey, Lesley Frank, and Patricia L. Williams titled, "Starving to be a student" looks at increasing concerns of food insecurity among undergraduate students in Nova Scotia along with the barriers, facilitators, and potential policy solutions. Like food security in society as a whole, the authors find that lack of material resources were the primary cause of food insecurity. In addition, they identify the need for broader systemic changes that do not rely on charity responses. The second piece by Michael Classens and Emily Sytsma titled, "Student food literacy, critical food systems pedagogy, and the responsibility of postsecondary institutions" addresses pedagogical approaches for teaching about just and sustainable food system. Their article argues that food studies educators need to focus more directly on critical food literacy.

Other authors focused their attention at the community level. In her research article, "A Participatory Study of the Health and Social Impact of a Community Food Centre in Ottawa, Canada", Aganeta Enns, considers ways that community-based initiatives can build longer-term solutions to growing rates of food insecurity. In a qualitative study of the Parkdale Food Centre in Ottawa, Ontario, Enns argues that traditional food assistance can be greatly enhanced through integrating food, health, and social programming.

Finding alternate ways of accessing and disseminating food is not only desirable, but necessary. However, the growing number of alternate food options raises new questions about

definitions, labels and who is truly being provided access. This is an issue raised by Si and colleagues, who turn their attention to CSAs in Canada and China. They question the meaning of the term CSA and who has access to them. They argue that the potential for increasing access to healthful foods exists through the use of CSAs, especially as the pandemic threatens supply chains, but that they may not be easily adapted to the most vulnerable and food insecure. Turner and Minaker present another alternate food option in the form of community gardens. There is a quantitative study of the economic, environmental and social impacts of this particular kind of urban agriculture. In seeking to convey the value of community gardens in monetary terms, Cochran and Minaker are building a case for their investment potential in the eyes of policy makers and government officials.

In the wake of COVID-19 outbreaks in processing plants, food safety as an aspect of food security has been covered widely in the news media. In this issue Speed and colleagues introduce an important discussion about building better collaboration between public health sectors that deal with food safety and security in British Columbia. While written before the pandemic, the importance of finding collaborative ways to ensure food safety while maintaining food security is an issue being felt globally. As food security becomes an even more widespread concern in the face of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic the questions being asked by these authors are more important than ever.

The need for more sustainable, accessible food is also brought to light in three reviews. Fabiana Li's review of Ann Shin's documentary, *The Superfood Chain* is a timely reminder of the resources, labour and the practices behind the glamourized quinoa, kale, salmon and acai. The small bright local strawberries now being harvested look nothing like Julia Guthman's portrait of the California strawberry as reviewed by Janette Haase (pictured with black flesh, yellow leaves, grown as they are on oil and chemicals). Both reviews give us an account of what political action looks like, as delivered by film and books – as well as venturing to suggest what it *could* look like if a more just and sustainable food system were to be achieved. Finally, Serge-Olivier Rondeau looks at the newest edition of Michael Carolan's *The Sociology of Food and Agriculture* and unpacks its pedagogical uses and its critical reach.

Ellyse Winter's article "Obscuring the Veil: Food Advertising as Public Pedagogy" looks at accessibility through another lens. Accessibility means availability and affordability. Moreover, it also means transparency. Drawing on Marx's commodity fetishism, Winter investigates the ways that food advertisements and packaging conceal the social, economic, and environmental relations behind the animal products and by-products consumed in Canada and the United States. She argues that critical food pedagogies can play a vital role in exposing the underlying framework of our industrial food system.

While COVID-19 has laid bare the structural inequalities underlying our societies, it is also being felt daily on an individual level across the globe. The loss of daily social rituals, the abrupt transition to digital interactions, and the lack of a clear timeline for when things might return to 'normal' have fundamentally changed how we interact with each other. Emily Reisman reflects on this in her commentary on the effects of COVID-19 on the Jewish seder, an

experience which likely rings true for many who have attended important social events through a digital lens, rather than in person. While her article focuses on hope for future change, it reminds us of the importance of carrying forward the collective remembering of not just the effects of the pandemic, but also the issues it has revealed.

As any ecologist knows, burning is destructive but it leaves in its wake new growth, new life and new possibilities. In Canada, we see Black, Indigenous and People of Colour taking leadership in a new round of uprisings and protests, speaking and writing, teaching and research - not just today but building from the time that the burning began. While many of us are outraged, we also recognize that we have a responsibility to not just stew in our frustration and point fingers at others, but also look within, at ourselves because we can all do better.

This is especially true for CFS/RCÉA. It has been one year since we launched our new governance structure, with two hard working staff, a strong and diverse Editorial Collective, a Governance Committee made up of Canadian Food Studies (CAFS) board members and a committed Journal Advisory Board. We have published many insightful volumes with critical and insightful articles, and we have much to celebrate. In June 2020, we held a journal retreat to reflect on the past year and discuss the current moment. The group identified many ideas for the journal's long-term sustainability but also recognized that there is also room for improvement to making the journal even better.

In June 2020, CAFS released a statement on racialized police violence that was grounded in its mission to promote "critical, interdisciplinary scholarship". The statement acknowledged that systemic and institutionalized racism is not just a historical feature but is active within academia and is experienced acutely by Black communities as well as Indigenous Peoples. It stated, "As food scholars and educators, we have a collective responsibility to acknowledge these truths and work to actively confront and challenge them through research, teaching, critical analysis, and collective action." The CAFS board committed to a number of actions including to learn and work within an anti-racism paradigm. They also committed to reporting back to the membership and sharing additional steps in the near future. Regeneration is possible, and CFS/RCÉA is committed to doing that work.

## References

Enright, Michael. The Sunday Edition. (2017, July 14) "*The gods didn't warn us*": a poem about the B.C. wildfires by Lorna Crozier. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/998082115950>