

Planning for Indigenous Social and Ecological Resilience in Times of the COVID-19 and Climate Crisis

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The unpredictability of climate crisis (i.e. the lasting cooler temperatures throughout the spring), as well as the COVID -19 public health crisis has challenged the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS) - Indigenous Food and Freedom School (IFFS) and Wild Salmon Caravan (WSC) to demonstrate a chaordic leadership style. Since the COVID-19 lockdown we have convened monthly webinars titled: 1). Putting our Solidarity Economy into Action During times of Crisis, and 2). Indigenous Resilience - Fraction Action Plans. The ability to find order in chaos is no stranger to Indigenous peoples who have experienced and overcome high rates of stress and uncertainty throughout the process of colonization where many experience historical and ongoing systemic injustices. Building on the relationships we have constellated prior to the lockdown, we continue to find ways to articulate proposals and plans to address the huge disparity in the social determinants of health and health outcomes associated with; poverty, food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, lack of access to land in our traditional harvesting areas and rural home communities, to the lack of infrastructure in both urban areas for growing, harvesting and procuring food.

Among the most marginalized in socio-economic status, there is a critical need for more adequate access to clean, healthy land and infrastructure to help us respond to our own needs for adequate amounts of clean, healthy and culturally appropriate foods in tougher times ahead. As the mainstream economy collapses due to the economic fallout of the COVID-19 and the climate crisis, we are appreciating and inquiring into the blood memory that enabled our ancestors to survive the last smallpox epidemic and great depression of the 1930's.

During the COVID-10 lockdown, the WGIFS has been consolidating funding, knowledge, and networks at various scales, community, regional, tribal and inter-tribal in BC and beyond to our settler friends and allies. Building on our 2020 Vision, we feel it is more important now than ever to continue advocating for the creation of an Indigenous foodscape that would breathe some much needed social and ecological resilience into Strathcona Park, by restoring Indigenous foodlands, and establishing an Indigenous seed heritage garden, as well as an Indigenous feast hall complete with large scale community kitchen for preparing, preserving and storing large amounts of food.

The crises call for deep, lasting, and meaningful changes that have enabled Indigenous peoples to maintain the oldest living memories of what it means to regenerate and heal from multiple layers of stress and trauma associated with the historical and ongoing social and environmental injustices. This calls for a radical revisioning of Indigenous concepts of time, humanity and nature within our collective right mind.

The WGIFS is developing an emancipatory Indigenous Food and Freedom School toolkit that we are aiming to launch in September 2020, and have developed fractal action plans to create a critical pathway for our members, and friends and allies working to support us in solidarity and mutual aid. The fractal action plans are intended to give structure and cultural safety to scale out our organizational capacity to serve as intermediaries in Indigenous territories, and lead and influence regeneration and healing of Indigenous land and food systems at multiple scales, from the micro to macro.

The Wild Salmon Caravan celebrations, parades, feasts, and curated exhibit at Strathcona Fieldhouse is being re-configured to the virtual reality during the COVID-19, and we are currently seeking funding for a paid Coordinator's position to help us convene a Council of Coast Salish Matriarchs to guide us in facilitating the larger vision as intermediaries and guests of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), selílwitlh (Tseil Waututh), and sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) nations

The strength of Indigenous food sovereignty has always been in our networks of giving, sharing and trading. We are extending, rather than intensifying, our growing, harvesting, and sharing, and trading of seeds, land, food, and consolidating technical, human, and financial support within our networks. We call on the Rainbow Peoples (Black Brown, Red, Yellow and White people to donate to our Solidarity Fund to help us build capacity to respond to our own needs for adequate amounts of healthy culturally appropriate foods in times of need.

Stay tuned for more information coming soon on upcoming announcements on how you can support the Indigenous women, lifegivers, caregivers, artists and traditional knowledge holders that are on the front lines of much needed deep and meaningful change.

For more information on how you can support contact:

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Visit our website: www.indigenousfoodsystems.org, and www.wildsalmoncaravan.ca