



Planning with the Land and Food Sovereignty

Host: Cici Stirrett

Panelists: Leigh Joseph, Curtis Clearsky

10:30am - 11:30am, October 22

Virtual BC Comprehensive Community Planning Workshop 2020

Topic Overview

- **Cici Sterritt - Gitxsan - resides in Secwépemc territory - Williams Lake**
 - Have been involved with CCP for a long time
- *Leigh Joseph (Styawat) - Squamish Nation*
 - Ethnobotanist, doctoral candidate
 - Looking at link between health and healing, and getting out onto the land, rebuilding relationship between plants, medicinal plants, etc.
 - Squalwen Botanicals - plant based skincare business
- *Curtis Clearsky - Blackfoot and Anishinaabe*
 - Community builder, musician, father,

Cici - What are you learning about resilient and rising through your projects?

- Urban areas? COVID?

Leigh

- Started through a CIHR funded project - with Squamish and Trondek Hwechin (Yukon First Nation), managing type 2 diabetes through access to cultural important plants/foods
- Cree and innu communities also involved
- Building up to do a one year program with Squamish to provide as many opportunities for land based experiences as possible
- Were meeting once a month - land based workshop - how to harvest plants in a good way, not overharvesting, processing and creating something with it
- Full circle experience with plants - to rebuild our individual relationships with plants at the same time as being together as a community and rebuilding plant-based practices
- There is a lot of resilience there - there are so many barriers that have been put in place for us to access our plant relatives
- What role does land play in identity? What role does reclaiming land-based practices play in this? We need to ask - How do we identify what our own wellness looks like?
- Part of that process is creating land-based opportunities for us to figure this out
- When i think about resilience - there is healing happening across our communities in relation to colonization; the more we share stories and recognize our own resilience - daily acts of connection, resistance, ways to nourish ourselves
- My work - what does it mean to be resilient as an individual, and then looking around me to see how we can lift each other up to be resilient together



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- COVID - we started the program in June 2019, were meeting in person every two weeks to talk together - in March 2020, everything shifted online
 - We took the suggestion from the community - to create a plant recipe and field guide, and plant knowledge cards, to share with participants and the community

Curtis

- Urban Indigenous experience - as a young person, I was not connected to food, to land (because of being in the urban area)
 - UBC Farm had program connecting urban indigenous people to gardening - finally got involved when they had a feast, celebration, blessing of the land
 - Brought the young people/families from working at the Friendship Centre, people in the DTES, elders, young people, knowledge keepers - community of urban Indigenous people
 - Also involved people from UBC, professionals, etc. - Cross-cultural, intersectional space
 - Conducted ceremonial work, gave thanks for coming growing season
- This was a profound experience - kind of like an epiphany - everyone from all walks of life was sitting together, enjoying the salmon and food
- Where I was at that moment was at the right place - I was there to witness and experience the beauty of connecting with food, culture, community
 - I knew I had to continue this kind of experience again in the work I was involved in - always working to connect the youth back to food work, at UBC Farm
- Always championing - get youth back to the land, providing opportunities for urban Indigenous people to connect to the land
 - Was offered to lead this work - ran the program for 4 years
 - Lots of growth and development in connecting community - bringing more people in, creating intergenerational space for elders, youth, everyone in between
- What I've learned
 - When we as Indigenous people are connected to our culture and land bases - it's a powerful connection; it's a powerful space. It's what empowers us. I've witnessed so many positive outcomes for our people. For young people, for relatives coming from the DTES struggling with complex challenges.
- Often people are coming into this space not having had any opportunities like this before - growing food, smokehouse, etc.
 - First time being introduced to these cultural opportunities
- The power I've witnessed in people getting involved - something gets "activated" - this is the way our ancestors have always been, this is the way we should be
- Part of supporting this work is financially sustaining the opportunities - funding was drying up - needed to look at new strategies



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- Social enterprising - prompted research into traditional Indigenous economies
- How did our communities, or even as individuals - how did we function/conduct business before colonization?
 - Good trade with our neighbours
 - Always reciprocal with each other
 - Reflecting on traditional values - how can we practice these in a modern way?
- Looked into partnership with Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Tsawwassen FN - they created first Farm School
 - Creating reciprocal support for UBC Farm - connecting urban relatives out to Tsawwassen FN Farm School - bringing the food into the urban area, opportunity to purchase organic, Indigenous grown food
- Now work with First Nations Food Systems Project
 - Work with many Nations across BC - to support them with community engagement
- Circle of Courage concept - Dr. Martin Brokenleg - medicine wheel teachings

Open to Questions:

- Leona Humchitt - Hailzaqv - COVID - looking at it through a rose-coloured lens - this is a time to be still, for spiritual cleansing; climate has rebounded; in light of the crisis, our people have become closer, more loving, caring, concerned for each other; no extractive industry present taking our resources
 - Never waste a good crisis - we have always been strong and doing this as a people
 - Epiphany - it's like a hook to reconnect us to our way of life; the system that our ancestors had in place regarding Indigenous economies go way back - not just regional, but BC, Alaska, US - Chinook jargon (trade language)
 - Trying to knock on doors - to embrace the system of trade/barter that our ancestors had - to suggest to our communities that we need to reconstitute this system, especially right now
 - A species extinct is a right extinguished - it's more than food, it's ceremony, trade, health, the identity of who we are
 - Plant a seed - should consider in some shape/form to reconstitute the system of trade/barter regionally, BC, Alaska? - creating an Indigenous food sovereignty marketplace
 - Granny garden program - Bella Bella
- Mariah & Em - Whe-la-la-u
 - Thank you Leona, I want to acknowledge our connections with Bella Bella. Your community supported our food efforts and we traded herring roe and seaweed



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this year. We were able to distribute to our 'Whe-la-la-u community, and we look forward to continue to strengthen our trading system with your Nation :)

- Kim Chevrier - us wanting to turn to our traditional ways; developing the CCP is a whole new process
 - Engagement - food sovereignty, gardens, etc. that we can aspire to develop in the future
 - Book suggestion - Madawaska garden - the Indigenous teachings about reciprocity and care for the land
- Adeana Young - Haida - funding resources, CCP means empowering people to use their voices, taking grassroots approach and giving our leadership direction
 - Give power back to our people - we have opportunities to get on the land in Haida Gwaii - we have the right to occupy, be harvesting, etc. in our unceded lands
 - Teaching approach - need funding resources to support elders, other community members to teach these lessons
 - In the world today, everything is money - but we don't need to be paid to uphold our culture, to be on the land. Taking the politics out of who we are and what we do as Nations. This is a struggle because we need money to keep programs going - how else can we empower our people for food sovereignty?
- Sherry Boudreau
 - Appreciate Leigh's program - Starting with respect to the land - what are our protocols? What is necessary to even go into the landscape in the first place?
 - Need to understand our responsibility to this connection - it's not just about harvesting, being fed, it's about reciprocity
 - Cultural communication - new people to Canada; start harvesting plants in ways that were stripping the environment; who can blame them, they needed to support themselves
 - Education - what is our "land philosophy"? What are our expectations as "Canadians"? - as we reinvigorate what our landscape has (ie. practice of carrying salmon up to the blueberry patches) - how do we expand that cultural consideration and relationship conversation with non-Indigenous people around us?
 - There are lots of people who need food!
- Leigh - starting with shifting the concept of plants as resources to plants as relatives - what changes for people when this shifts? How does that change our parameters for how we are in relationship with that being?
 - Ethnobotany is an extractive field of research - our Indigenous knowledge and science, connection to place, has a key role in how we build our own ideas of responsibility, how we are in relationship



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- Learning from case studies - ie. the yew tree
- Glenn Jim - Food Sovereignty is such an important component to language revitalization as a land-based language teaching tool. there are many possibilities/variations to field-to-table type of projects

Key learnings

- Part of the process of figuring out what our own wellness means - is creating land-based opportunities for us to figure this out
- Resilience - what does it mean to be resilient as an individual, and then looking around to see how we can lift each other up to be resilient together
- Knowing you are in the right place - to witness and experience the beauty of connecting with food, land, culture, community
- Reinvigorating Indigenous economies - systems of trade, barter across regions, BC, Alaska - creating an Indigenous food sovereignty marketplace

Amazing Quotes

“The red cedar tree in your backyard is not a resource, it is a relative.” - Leigh

“When we as Indigenous people are connected to our culture and land bases - it’s a powerful connection; it’s a powerful space. It’s what empowers us. I’ve witnessed so many positive outcomes for our people. For young people, for relatives coming from the DTES struggling with complex challenges.” - Curtis

Participant quotes:

“In the world today, everything is money - but we don’t need to be paid to uphold our culture, to be on the land. Taking the politics out of who we are and what we do as Nations. This is a struggle because we need money to keep programs going - how else can we empower our people for food sovereignty?” - Adeana

“Starting with respect to the land - what are our protocols? What is necessary to even go into the landscape in the first place? Need to understand our responsibility to this connection - it’s not just about harvesting, being fed, it’s about reciprocity.” - Sherry



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Further Resources and Links

- Glenn Jim - In my nation (W̱SÁNEĆ), this group PEPAKENHAUTW Society (<http://pepakenhautw.com/>) has a green house for traditional plants and foods. You will find detailed information and tips for community growers. I guess I should warn them to prepare for a flood of emails
- Kim Chevrier - books of interest...
 - <https://thesacredgardener.ca/product/madawaska-forest-garden-softcover-book/>
 - <https://thesacredgardener.ca/product/sacred-gardening-ebook/>

Notes by: Tecla Van Bussel