

Food Access

Relevant Details

- Due to Aboriginal people's high likelihood of living in poverty or extreme poverty, access to food, especially healthy food is a large issue that affects many members of the communities (66% of Vancouver's Aboriginal population being poor in 1995, Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003) 40% of off-reserve Aboriginal children live in poverty (Campaign 2000).
- Many Aboriginal people live in poverty, and therefore eat more affordable food which is detrimental to their health and can lead to high risk disease for Aboriginal people (diabetes).
- Some Aboriginal people are able to travel to their home territories to gather food such as berries, fish, or wild meat, but many people cannot due to being non-status, having no money to travel, not being connected to their home community, or it not being safe for them to return home even for short periods of time (note, that many on-reserve individuals also do not have this access for various reasons).
- Most Aboriginal programs incorporate food in order to attract participants and to help address the problem of food shortage, but resources are scarce so the food is minimal.

Who's Involved?

Vancouver Native Health and UBC - Urban Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden Project

- Goal is to provide the opportunity and support for Aboriginal people living in East Vancouver to improve their opportunities and capacity to grow their own vegetables.
- Includes social time, intergenerational time, cultural workshops and events celebrating Aboriginal traditions around food, the harvest and the seasons.
- Community Kitchens onsite incorporating the food planting, nurturing, and harvesting so participants get the "seed-to-table" experience if they come out on a regular basis.

Grandview Elementary School (2055 Woodland Drive)

- Hosts a community garden to which students have access.
- This school has a high Aboriginal population.

Musqueam First Nation

- Has similar lack of food access issues that other urban Aboriginal people face due to high rates of poverty and a lack of resources to grow their own food.
- Some members are able to take part in food fishing, but many do not have access to a boat or fishing supplies that would allow them to exert their treaty right to food fish.

Partnerships

The Urban Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden Project is based on partnerships. A complete list of funding and community partners can be found at www.vnhs.net/programs/garden.htm.

Committees

- None

Trends

- The growing gap between rich and poor in Vancouver is leaving many people vulnerable to homelessness, hunger, and poverty. This is especially true for Aboriginal people who historically live in poorer conditions than non-Aboriginal people.
- Many Aboriginal people come to Vancouver in hopes of attending school or finding a well paying job. This is very rarely realized, and many Aboriginal people find themselves living on welfare and/or on the streets rather than finding the opportunities they had hoped for. In the meantime, leaving their traditional territories greatly decreased the likelihood of accessing any traditional foods that may be available and accessible on their home reserve.

Gaps

- There is a distinct lack of community kitchens offered through Aboriginal organizations; this is likely due to a lack of cooking facilities and/or funding to support such programs.
- There is very little attention paid to the issue of food access or food security within Aboriginal communities. As with other issues, it is something that is faced on a daily basis, but not named or collectively addressed as a single issue. For Aboriginal people, many issues are directly related to poverty, lack of access, and discrimination.

Contact Information

Addresses, phone, fax, email, and website information for any of the organizations above can be found in the Contact Information section of this manual.