

# **Access to Local Food in Francophone Canada**

ANTIRACIST AND  
DECOLONIAL  
PERSPECTIVES

# Authors

**Leslie Touré Kapo** specializes in the social construction of race, class and gender and their impact on the life trajectories of people living in working-class and immigrant neighbourhoods. He is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the *Collectif de recherche Action Politique et Démocratie* (CAPED) at the Université de Montréal. His research focuses on the social construction of masculinities of youth from black and racialized communities.

**Dina Hussein** holds a master's degree in political science from the University de Montréal and specializes in public policy in the area of civic participation and the fight against exclusion and discrimination experienced by racialized minorities living in a disadvantaged socio-economic context. Recipient of the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec's Medal for Youth, Dina is involved in her community, particularly in Côte-Des-Neiges, in the development of social projects for racialized youth and women through various volunteer commitments.

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# Executive Summary

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This report provides an overview of local food access through the lens of anti-racist and decolonial perspectives in francophone spaces in Canada. We present general principles of the realities experienced by racialized and marginalized communities based on Food Secure Canada's action plan (FSC 2020), Growing Resilience and Equity. Decolonial and anti-racist perspectives allow for a better understanding of the complexity of individuals and social groups' relationship to food, particularly within the dynamics and systemic issues faced by racialized, marginalized, immigrant, and indigenous communities. An analysis of our current food system shows various imbalances that have a concrete impact on these communities. The COVID-19 health crisis, climate change, socio-economic issues, and the effects of racism and discrimination are all barriers to accessing local and sustainable food for all Canadians. Thus, understanding the basic concepts of a sustainable food structure must go hand in hand with food justice to better address food policies and practices. The deployment of spaces for dialogue would allow for a better contextualization of barriers within certain vulnerable and marginalized groups. Based on this research, FSC proposes a series of seven recommendations that can support organizational and systemic actions that promote more inclusive sustainable food, particularly in Francophone Canadian spaces. The time is ripe for healthier, more just, inclusive, anti-racist and sustainable food systems.

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## Introduction

On April 1, 2021, Benoit Charette, Quebec's Minister of the Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change, Minister Responsible for the Fight Against Racism, and Minister Responsible for the Laval Region, announced the implementation of an independent and sustainable food system in the district of Bordeaux-Cartierville<sup>1</sup>. This district, located within the borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville in the northern part of the Island of Montréal, presents a number of interesting demographic characteristics for the purposes of this report, notably that 51% of its residents are recent immigrants, and 47% self-identify as belonging to a visible minority. The Bordeaux-Cartierville Food System Project, "De la fourche à la fourchette" was created with the goal of developing a collaborative network encompassing food production, transformation, distribution and consumption, as well as waste management and reclamation. The project seeks to provide borough residents in need with green spaces in which to cultivate vegetables and fruit trees, a new collective kitchen space and food baskets. The Gouvernement du Québec has provided financial support for this initiative as part of the "Climat municipalités—Phase 2" program, in the context of the climate change crisis and the global COVID-19 pandemic, which both have measurable effects on marginalized and vulnerable populations. The broad strokes of this project also bear a close resemblance to one objective of Quebec's Government Action Plan to Foster Economic Inclusion and Social Participation 2017-2023, namely, to "improve access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food for people with low incomes."<sup>2</sup>

This government initiative dovetails neatly with the interests of this report on *Access to Local Food in Francophone Canada* from an antiracist and decolonial perspective. Our goal is to analyze the intersection between growing interest in local foods, largely influenced by the effects of the pandemic, and access to healthy food for racialized, marginalized and low-income communities. We start with Food Secure Canada's action plan (FSC 2020), *Growing Resilience and Equity*, in order to present the overall lessons and principles that can be extracted from successful examples within Canada, particularly in Francophone spaces.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.quebec.ca/nouvelles/actualites/details/programme-climat-municipalites-phase-2-larrondissement-dahuntsic-cartierville-disposera-dun-million-de-dollars-pour-implanter-un-systeme-alimentaire-durable>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.mtess.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/ADMIN\\_plan\\_action\\_2017-2023\\_synthese.pdf](https://www.mtess.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/ADMIN_plan_action_2017-2023_synthese.pdf)

## An Initiative to Expand and Multiply

Nonetheless, we are of the opinion that this announcement from the Minister Responsible for the Environment and the Fight Against Racism does not go far enough. This initiative could have been the ideal moment in which to deepen the reflection on decolonial and antiracist movements within Montréal and the province of Québec more broadly. It was also not made explicit who the project's target population would be, nor was mention made of the direct effects the ongoing COVID-19 crisis had on racialized, marginalized and immigrant populations, especially on matters of health and food. Stéphane Poirier of the Institut de recherche et d'informations socioéconomiques (IRIS) advised the Québec government as early as April 2020 of the need for a new public corporation mandated with securing food sovereignty for Québec's entire population, using the Hydro-Québec corporation's role in the hydroelectric industry as a model. Indeed, nationalizing hydroelectric utilities was one important factor in Québec's economic emancipation, while simultaneously making it a global leader in green energy. The two-pronged mission of this public corporation would be to provide local public institutions (hospitals, schools, etc.) with fruits and vegetables, and to increase the autonomy of Québec's 17 administrative regions throughout the winter and spring (IRISa 2020). The IRIS proposal urges the government to act quickly on the public health and food data that has emerged during the pandemic. It also supports the position that the province has sufficient resources to extend the pilot project beyond Bordeaux-Cartierville to the rest of Québec, thereby guaranteeing access to a sustainable and balanced diet for the entirety of the population in all its diversity.

## The Limits of Globalization

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the limits of food systems that rely on the effects of globalization, characterized by the outsourcing of economic activity and, especially, the regionalization of agricultural and food production at a global scale. According to economist Francis Delorme, the crisis has revealed the limits of growth-based economic models and the myth of outsourcing economic activity.<sup>3</sup> In his view, the crisis represents an opportunity to revisit the benefits of a welfare state model, which is characterized by the value it places on communities' shared interests. He proposes a relocation of the economy that seeks to stimulate local small and medium businesses, especially in the agricultural sector. For Jacques Nantel, professor emeritus at HEC Montréal, relocation presents a challenge in terms of competitive pricing for local food products as compared to those

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<sup>3</sup> Leblanc, Étienne. May 6, 2020. « L'après-COVID-19 : "Il ne faut pas gaspiller cette crise" », [radio-canada.ca, https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1699783/coronavirus-crise-economie-delocalisation-agriculture](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1699783/coronavirus-crise-economie-delocalisation-agriculture)

imported from around the world. In that vein, the Coalition pour l'exception agricole et alimentaire has proposed an international convention with the goal of addressing the dearth of legal protections for food security and striking a balance between commercial considerations and non-market values related to food.<sup>4</sup> For his part, farmer Jean-Martin Fortier takes an optimistic view of the agricultural and local food sectors in Québec. Furthermore, he supports the idea that the ongoing global pandemic will help foster a relocation of food production, given the context that 40% of agricultural products in Québec are imported and that the majority of large-scale agricultural production in Québec is exported. He credits this optimism to consumers adopting new eating habits centred around seasonal products and reducing food waste.

## A Return to Respect for Food

Access to local and sustainable foods remains challenging for Canadians, especially in Francophone areas, and even more so when considering communities who experience the most marginalization. In fact, seasonal products are not a new idea in the fields of agriculture and food. The food practices of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples have historically framed this logic through a sacred relationship to food items and a culture of respect for food. Kepkiewicz and Dale (2018, 2) underline that food sovereignty in Indigenous communities is founded on four principles:

[...] the necessity of maintaining Indigenous relationships with land; the ongoing work of Indigenous peoples in shaping healthy and culturally appropriate food systems; the daily maintenance of Indigenous food systems by Indigenous peoples; and the need for Indigenous influence over policies at all jurisdictional levels.



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<sup>4</sup> Coalition pour l'exception agricole et alimentaire. May 30, 2020. « *Autonomie alimentaire, un enjeu qui dépasse nos frontières* », ledevoir.com, <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/579864/autonomie-alimentaire-un-enjeu-qui-depasse-nos-frontieres>.

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However, Canada's settler colonialist history caused lasting damage to that vision by legitimizing and normalizing settler occupation and control over Indigenous lands. Indigenous food systems and relationships to land, water, culture and identity have been especially affected by the institutionalization of private property, intensive investments in arable land and industrial agriculture:

« In uncritically (and often unconsciously) maintaining these investments, settlers take an active role in ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their traditional lands and food systems » (Bohunicky 2020, 12).



Using this as a starting point, we can then lay the foundation for a decolonial and antiracist approach in this report on *Access to Local Food in Francophone Canada*. We begin by establishing an overview of the current food policies at work given the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of climate change, drawing from the FSC action plan for 2020. We then restate the central tenets of local and sustainable food systems: food self-sufficiency, food security and food sovereignty. Next, we examine decolonial approaches to sustainable food systems, followed by a discussion of critical race theory as it relates to sustainable food. Lastly, we review current initiatives and issues in sustainable food in Québec and Francophone Canada. We conclude this report with a series of recommendations to foster a decolonial and antiracist approach to local food in Francophone Canada.

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# Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Climate Crisis on Food Issues

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Food is a fundamental human right, and recent changes in socioeconomic contexts, public health issues and climate change constitute unprecedented challenges to that right. In this section, we examine the neoliberal shift in the food sector and its effects on the population starting from the late 1980s, sparking peasant movements at a global scale. The ongoing pandemic is just one in a series of crises stemming from modern capitalism and accentuated by climate change. This finding represents a major challenge for public institutions and decision-makers seeking to guarantee fundamental human rights and meet the needs of society's most vulnerable populations.

## The Neoliberal Shift in the Food Sector

Neoliberal ideology had a major influence on the global economy at the start of the 1990s, especially in the food and agricultural sectors, as access to new information and communications technology created a knowledge-based and intangible economy in a context of international regionalization of production (Pouch 2012, 10). This led to a new international division of labour and a reconfiguration of agricultural and food production that prioritized the insertion of strategic and decision-making entities in Northern countries and pushing developing countries like Brazil and Argentina to become the world's farms. While Canada positions itself as a major exporter, the intensification of competition and increases in production and development of infrastructure in other exporting regions like Asia and South America have drawn concerns as to this model's dependence on the stability of commercial distribution. The internationalization of capital and regionalization of agro-alimentary production have pushed peasant and farmer movements to organize at the international level, in particular around the Vía Campesina movement, to develop a concerted statement on the fight against neoliberalism. Yet these resistance movements have not been able to attenuate the effects of the financialization and speculation in the agro-alimentary industry, whose

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recent history is marked by two spectacular periods of spikes in pricing, in 2007 and 2010, leading to what were dubbed "hunger riots" in many cities in the Global South.

## Climate Change, the Pandemic and a Series of Crises

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is just one in a series of major crises stemming from modern capitalism, which disproportionately affect society's most marginalized populations on issues related to food. "Normal was a crisis," according to Naomi Klein's shock doctrine, highlighting the degree to which the status quo already includes crises at the social, economic and environmental level. IRIS researcher Julia Posca added that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequality and injustice within modern capitalist societies by aggravating the weaknesses in Québec's health and social services networks, whose employees in Québec are primarily women (IRISb 2020). She also called attention to the deterioration of working conditions in the health, social services and food sectors and the increased precarity in working and renter households, accelerating insecure living conditions in low-income households, among which racialized and Indigenous communities are overrepresented, and increased gender inequality in division of domestic labour and violence against women.

Climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed the vulnerabilities in our food systems. Financial insecurity in many households has led to more registrations for food banks and community services, largely due to job loss or reductions in work hours. In 2020, Fei Men and Valerie Tarasuk (2021) showed that nearly 12.7% of Canadian households were affected by food insecurity over the past 12 months of the pandemic. FSC also registered a significant increase in food insecurity in Canada, using statistics from the University of Toronto's PROOF project<sup>5</sup> that show that 4.4 million people have been affected by food insecurity so far. This total is expected to double quickly, disproportionately affecting Indigenous, Black and racialized communities (RAD 2020, 4). IRIS researchers Minh Nguyen and Bertrand Schepper similarly predict an annual increase in grocery bills of about \$487 (IRISc 2020). Groceries will represent a larger share in Québec residents' budgets due to a decrease in discounts and due to the cost of health measures required during the pandemic, which will especially affect low-income households. While these projections do not allow us to measure the effects of the health crisis on vulnerable populations with total precision, they still support the notion that "this pandemic is making poor families, who will be more affected by sharper inflation in food prices, poorer." Nguyen and Schepper (IRISc 2020) therefore call for public institutions to

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<sup>5</sup><https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

implement strategic surveillance of the issue through data collection and documentation of food price and budget variance in Québec during the pandemic versus prior to the pandemic. This analytical tool would help improve our understanding of these fluctuations and their effects on populations. Québec is also participating in the Canadian Community Health Survey. Data collected will shed light on Canadian households' financial capacity to access healthy food.

### **A Challenge for Vulnerable Populations**

The impacts of socioeconomic inequality—unhealthy diet, social and geographic exclusion, racism, discrimination, and poverty—lead to a more rapid transmission of infectious diseases. White (2020) demonstrated that both recent and historic pandemics—H1N1, SARS, Ebola, and COVID-19—have disproportionately affected more vulnerable populations. Alongside this challenge is the fact that modern urban transformation requires real political will and the development of concrete action plans to fight against poverty and make improvements in health and food security. This finding begs the question of whether institutions have the ability to guarantee and improve both living conditions and quality of life for Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, and for marginalized communities in a broader sense. How can we promote initiatives that support urban and local resilience among these populations in the context of a health and climate crisis?

A healthy, local diet is part of a broader relationship linking quality of life, the economy, health, land governance and identities. FSC has noted a heightened awareness of these issues among Canadians, who want to contribute more actively to resilient local food networks since the start of the pandemic. The implementation of local sustainable networks could be carried out through strategic investments in local and regional food-related infrastructure, as in the Bordeaux-Cartierville Food System project "De la fourche à la fourchette," or by developing food hubs, decentralized small- and medium-sized slaughterhouses, and processing and unloading facilities. The goal would be to support and promote food production, processing and distribution at the micro-, small-, and medium-scale in the near future. That being said, how can we guarantee priority access to these initiatives for Indigenous, racialized and marginalized communities? For FSC, this perspective is channeled through an explicit and specific support for young or novice producers and processors, as well as for new Canadians (RAD 2020, 13).

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## Access to Local Food in Francophone Canada

These different findings support the statement that historical sociopolitical dynamics such as racism, social exclusion and colonialism are major determinants in modern challenges related to food. In fact, the precarious and unfavourable living conditions in which racialized, marginalized and immigrant communities may find themselves (financial precarity, social exclusion, urban density, etc.) expose them to greater health and social risks. These issues constitute a major barrier for the equilibrium, well-being and flourishing of communities in all their diversity, especially in terms of access to healthy food and high-quality health care.

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# Key Concepts in Sustainable Food Systems

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In this second section, we return to the key concepts of sustainable food systems: food self-sufficiency, food security and food sovereignty. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped demonstrate the importance of the safety and protection of essential workers in the fields of health, social services and food. From the first lockdown, Guillaume Hébert has encouraged decision-makers to reinforce supply chains for food, pharmaceuticals, and other essential goods, and to support and develop local organic agriculture to reduce our dependence on international trade and ensure Québec's food security (IRISd 2020). The definitions of these three key concepts are useful in revealing the nuances and current issues in sustainable food, which are accentuated by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, terminological and conceptual convergence and divergence between these concepts will elucidate the logic and challenges facing local and sustainable food systems in Francophone Canada for racialized, marginalized and immigrant communities.

## Food Self-Sufficiency

Food self-sufficiency is a concept that prioritizes sufficient food production within a community or country such that external imports are not needed (Postolle and Bendjebbar 2012, 319). This concept is frequently referenced in debates on food yet is rarely defined with specific parameters. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations states that food self-sufficiency corresponds with a country's ability to meet its food needs from its own domestic production (FAO 1999). However, certain elements of this definition remain ambiguous. For example, Jennifer Clapp (2017) points out that the relationship between the ability to meet needs and potential exports of production surpluses is unclear. Omitting a consideration of international trade dynamics when defining food self-sufficiency makes it difficult to develop realistic and sustainable food policies. Indeed, the neoliberal shift in the 1990s had undeniable effects on domestic food production at a global scale through the regionalization of agro-alimentary production. The concept of food self-sufficiency in relation

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to relocalizing production must, as a rule, be accompanied by a better understanding of international trade dynamics and their effects on the population, both at a production and consumption level. Food self-sufficiency in and of itself does not guarantee a country or a community's food security, although the two concepts are interdependent. The concept seems to be outmoded in current perspectives on the food sector. However, it seems relevant to question it in the context of a health crisis, when debates often turn to relocalizing food production.

### **Food Security**

Food insecurity describes limited and uncertain access to a nutritious and balanced diet, or the incapability to meet one's food needs according to acceptable norms (Anderson, 1990). Patterson et al. (2020, 1) add that food insecurity is an inadequately researched social determinant for public health that has lasting effects on vulnerable and marginalized populations. In contrast, the objective of food security is ensuring that all human beings, at all times, have physical and economic access to adequate, healthy and nutritious food that meets their basic energetic needs and dietary preferences to lead a healthy and active life (FAO 1996). According to Patterson et al. (2020, 1), public health research has historically studied food insecurity using distinct criteria, concentrating on individual status and social factors such as race, gender or sexual orientation in order to recognize inequality and social dynamics of oppression in food systems. However, these approaches fail to adequately represent the complex relationship individuals and social groups have to food, especially in light of systemic issues and dynamics that racialized, marginalized and immigrant communities face. In this view, the concept of food sovereignty consolidates food self-sufficiency and food security, by reframing the issues of food and agriculture in an equity-based political project developed from the perspective of peasant and farmer movements in the early 1990s.

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## Food Sovereignty

« Vía Campesina’s alternative to neo-liberalism is food sovereignty, based on a model of peasant agriculture, genuine agrarian reform, fair trade, respect for peasant rights, full and representative participation of women, and social justice » (La Vía Campesina 2004, 46–47).



The concept of food sovereignty was first seen in 1996 in the final declaration of the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum, peripheral to the World Food Summit. Food sovereignty can be understood as the unalienable right of individuals and communities to develop their own food systems on their land and according to their own models (Borras Jr. 2004, 10). It is considered to be an alternative agricultural and commercial model that can fight against poverty within vulnerable groups. This political concept seeks to mobilize and harness the power of populations to implement agricultural policies and practices that will benefit them first. In Canada, the notion of food sovereignty specifically frames issues around the fight for recognition of the rights of Indigenous communities and the fight against racism and systemic discrimination in a context of settler colonialism. Kepkiewicz and Dale (2018, 2) add that Indigenous food systems in Canada shine a light on the need for profound transformations in social relationships to the land and to food and agricultural practices drawn from colonial heritage in favour of Indigenous understandings, practices and causes.

The next section will address the real-life conditions and means to implement in order to develop a decolonial approach in the field of sustainable food in Québec and Francophone Canada. This complex and fluid process raises a number of issues related to local and sustainable food, in particular, potentially replicating colonialism in forms that are pernicious and difficult to detect, but also due to a variety of conceptions and uses around the relationship to land and private property.

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# Decolonial Approaches to Sustainable Food Systems

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Decolonial thought embodies the understanding of different rationales that have long been denied by colonial thought, both as they relate to practices and to knowledge and discourse. Due to this plurality, decolonial thinking recognizes the devastating effects political, economic, legal, social, material and philosophical positions have when they frame certain identities or peoples as inferior. In Canada specifically, the judicial and political framework, and several explicit laws have historically targeted Indigenous communities, such as the residential school program, which operated until 1996. This has had a direct and lasting effect on Indigenous identity and cultural practices (CVR 2015). The underlying colonial logic behind the implementation, imposition and maintained existence of residential schools had been used to justify the assimilation and forced separation of families and adoption of the lifestyle of white communities, characterized by certain linguistic, cultural and social norms and practices (CVR 2015, 92). A thorough study carried out by the First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study<sup>6</sup> demonstrated that 48% of households on reserves experience food insecurity. Colonization, difficulty accessing healthy foods and environmental destruction have had lasting effects on these communities. We consider it crucial to recognize the generational trauma stemming from colonial logic, and this logic's influence on Québec and Canada's food systems. This commemorative step is critical to creating material and philosophical conditions for a more just and equitable future in the domain of sustainable foods.

## A Complex and Fluid Process

Decolonization is a complex, dynamic and contradictory process whose orientations are circumscribed in time and space (Bohunicky 2020, 13). This process contributes to a collective creation of new possibilities for which the terms, use and vision have yet to be determined. Decolonizing frames the end of colonialism as a rebirth of new perspectives that transcend colonial frameworks and are characterized by radical experimentation. Tuck and Yang (2012)

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<sup>6</sup>[http://www.fnfnes.ca/docs/EANEPN\\_Re%CC%81sume%CC%81\\_2019\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.fnfnes.ca/docs/EANEPN_Re%CC%81sume%CC%81_2019_FINAL.pdf)

add that this process is primarily focused on the reclamation of land and lifestyles for and by Indigenous populations, all while guarding against the insidious temptation to homogenize concepts and, even unintentionally, reproduce colonialist dynamics. Bohunicky (2020) consolidates this argument by demonstrating that the historical colonial positionality of individuals and groups cannot be left out of the intensive and painful work of the decolonization process, which necessarily bumps against comfort zones, feelings of guilt, confessions and some forms of hypocrisy. This reflexive perspective must accompany the transformation of social dynamics and relationships with Indigenous communities and the creation of a radical philosophy founded on a new vision of the world, characterized by new ways of doing and thinking. In fact, decolonization supports the liberation of peoples through self-determination of knowledge, practices, philosophies and identities defined by their cultures, norms and traditions. A decolonial perspective therefore requires a profound epistemological break with the status quo, especially in the field of sustainable food.

## **Decolonial Issues in Sustainable Food Systems**

Critical perspectives in the domain of sustainable food fluidly frame reflections on the fight against racism and white supremacy, but all too often neglect the process of decolonization. Yet studies in Canada reveal a socio-historical influence of settler colonial history that directly affects Indigenous communities' relationship to the land and food systems: "Settler colonialism indeed appears to be a 'blind spot' [...], resulting in food movements not only limiting their own capacities to achieve their goals but unintentionally reproducing the oppressive power relations they seek to challenge" (Bohunicky 2020, 13). For example, food practices and norms imposed inside residential schools for Indigenous children have had lasting effects on the living conditions of these survivors. Deliberate under-funding from the federal government affected access to healthy food from residential school kitchens and had effects on Indigenous children's growth with repercussions into adulthood including severe obesity, malnutrition, illnesses, excessive consumption of processed foods, etc. Kepkiewicz et al. (2015) further highlight the paradoxical impact of some initiatives that simply reproduce oppressive systems of power rather than dismantling them, by commodifying the vulnerability of Indigenous communities and detracting from their agency. Grey and Newman (2018), for their part, question the appropriation of Indigenous eating and culinary practices by neoliberal multicultural food policies. They propose that resistance and emancipation practices of Indigenous communities be included in the definition of food sovereignty by developing the

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concept of "culinary colonialism." These two trends fit into a larger process of recognition and reclamation of Indigenous rights in modern legal and political frameworks to transcend Canada and other countries' settler colonialist heritage.

## Private Property in Decolonization Processes

Sustainable food and food sovereignty movements in Northern countries face a number of critiques, in particular on the issue of private property. Deconstructing the concept of private property in the context of producing sustainable food systems poses a major challenge, despite arguments around soil depletion, land appropriation, financial speculation, price increases and Indigenous ancestral rights. Bohunicky (2020, 13) clarifies that this blind spot has a direct effect on the legitimacy and credibility of sustainable food approaches and movements in their support and alliance with Indigenous communities in relation to the vision and reclamation of land by First Nations:

« Further critiques of more reformist food sovereignty visions include narrow conceptualizations of rights (as opposed to responsibilities), agriculture, and sovereignty as well disregard for Indigenous food practices, relations, epistemologies, ontologies, and experiences of colonization [...]. These critiques signify that Indigenous Peoples in the global north are not seeing their visions reflected in today's broader movement (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014) and that important work is to be done to unsettle food movements and make way for Indigenous visions of food sovereignty (Coté, 2016; Grey & Patel, 2015). » (Bohunicky 2020, 13).



# Sustainable Food Systems and Critical Race Theory

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## Taking an Intersectional Approach to Sustainable Food Systems

The fight against racism, discrimination and white supremacy have framed the orientation of critical approaches to sustainable food systems for the past three decades, in the wake of neoliberal shifts that have a major impact on populations' food systems. Previous sections demonstrated the necessity for an epistemological break and profound changes to sustainable food practices and philosophies. Sbicca (2021, 115) adds that this requires a careful consideration of the intersections between social relationships (gender, race, class), heteronormativity and the racialization of international trade on food systems and agricultural industries, especially in social sciences research (anthropology, geography, sociology, etc.). Building on findings from Julia Posca (IRISb 2020) as mentioned in the introduction, it is particularly important in this situation to pay close attention—in Québec, Canada and elsewhere—to issues of immigration, systemic racism, precarity, and living and working conditions for employees in the agro-alimentary industry (in particular violence against women in the workplace), as well as the use of, and exposure of workers to, pesticides. Sbicca (2021, 115) supports the idea that the precarious living conditions for workers that identify with racialized and immigrant communities, as well as the marginalization of these communities' food practices and consumption, remains poorly understood by critical approaches to sustainable food systems, especially when developing intersectional approaches: "For example, the deportability of undocumented Latinx farmworkers threatens the stability of employment in a way that is different than the pressures women farmers face navigating male-dominated agriculture."

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## **Race, Class, Gender and Food**

Intersectionality encapsulates feminist, antiracist and decolonial reflections and struggles by developing a theoretical and political framework and analytical grid that support an analysis of social relationships to gender, race and class (Combahee 1982). In the domain of sustainable food systems, this approach helps distinguish how dynamics of domination, oppression and othering are applied within food systems and agricultural industries and measures their impacts on individuals and social groups, in particular those within Indigenous, racialized and immigrant communities. Psyche Williams-Forsen and Abby Wilkerson (2011, 15) encourage the development of an intersectional approach within critical approaches to sustainable food systems with the goal of better representing modern issues affecting the domain from an antiracist and decolonial perspective. This paradigm shift will, in the long term, allow the field of sustainable food to overcome the stigmatization and marginalization of Indigenous, racialized and immigrant communities' food practices and consumption, and will address the recurring issue of precarious living conditions for workers in these communities within the food and agricultural industries. Following Tuck and Yang (2012), they reiterate the importance of guarding against the persistent and pernicious reproduction of colonialism and white social norms that can subtly revive patterns of exclusion, violence and domination related to social dynamics of race, class and gender.

## **The Rich Culinary Heritage of Indigenous, Racialized and Immigrant Communities**

A decolonial and intersectional approach to ways of thinking about food places value on the food philosophies, practices, tastes and needs of diverse local populations within a given region. This means that these multiple communities should be encouraged to create and/or consolidate their ties to modern food practices as well as to ancestral knowledge stemming from "non-Western" culinary, gastronomic and agricultural heritage. Decolonizing our understanding of food promotes a political posture where cultural knowledge as well as food and agricultural practices held and applied by Indigenous, racialized and immigrant communities are perceived as a rich heritage for the community in all its diversity. In other words, decolonization and the application of an intersectional approach to sustainable food systems does not necessarily indicate a return to traditional or historical food practices, but

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the creation of new philosophies and food practices, both at the production and consumption levels, with a particular emphasis on supporting and showing solidarity to Indigenous, Black, racialized and immigrant communities.

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# Local and Sustainable Food Systems in Francophone Canada

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The previous sections served to lay the foundations of a decolonial and antiracist approach for this report on *Access to Local Food in Francophone Canada*. We saw that reflecting on our food practices and vision of food systems should encourage an epistemological break with the status quo and help produce a radical new philosophy founded on a new vision of food, characterized by new ways of doing and thinking: local, sustainable and inclusive. Educational spaces that account for our own biases and stereotypes towards other cultures would help build ties between different practices and multiple identities, all while supporting the production, transformation, distribution and consumption of healthy foods. Sustainable food is characterized by its cross-cutting relationship to social, ethical, ecological, economic and health issues. It should also support actions and initiatives that work towards a healthy diet, food sovereignty and food justice.

In this section, we present different initiatives that contribute to developing sustainable and inclusive food systems in Québec and within Francophone spaces in Canada. We propose three categories for the listed initiatives: 1) initiatives from Indigenous communities, 2) inter-cultural initiatives and 3) antiracist initiatives. These three categories help highlight the unique qualities of sustainable food issues within First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and territories as they relate to approaches that promote food sovereignty and security in Black, racialized and marginalized communities, even though, as we note, these initiatives are interlinked across categories. The initiatives listed here represent a non-exhaustive portrait of the sustainable food projects in Québec and in Francophone spaces across Canada.

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## Initiatives from First Nations and Inuit Communities and Territories

The first initiative we mention is in Québec, an agricultural and community garden project in Opitciwan that aims "to improve and develop healthy eating and lifestyle choices amongst community members, end food insecurity, and create economic benefits in the community."<sup>7</sup> The project includes a commercial aspect and a community aspect, having acquired two large-scale greenhouses to be used in fruit and vegetable production and distribution. Surpluses are then sold outside of the community. The next project, involving traditional Indigenous knowledge and food security, was developed with the CEGEP de Victoriaville's Centre for Social Innovation in Agriculture, the Chisasibi Business Services Center and the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay.<sup>8</sup> The objectives of this project were to identify and implement innovative solutions to collect and share traditional knowledge from Indigenous elders on traditional food practices from a food-security perspective and according to the notion of an encyclopedia of intangible heritage from Cree communities. Lastly, Kahtehrón:ni Stacey, a Kanién'keha (Mohawk) community member from Kahnawake, launched an online grocery store, Kaienthókwen,<sup>9</sup> meaning "the harvest." This initiative celebrates the production and consumption of food products grown and sold by Indigenous peoples of North America.

## Inter-cultural Initiatives: Promoting Knowledge and Practices and the Risk of Food Gentrification

We have also listed different initiatives in Québec that take an inter-cultural approach, meaning one which values the knowledge and ethnocultural practices of diverse communities in terms of food. For example, Hamidou Horticulture in Verdun (QC) produces and sells ethnic, heirloom and Indigenous vegetable seedlings for immigrants and their descendants, people curious to discover new plants and flavours, and community and urban agriculture projects that want to grow local, foreign and heirloom plants.<sup>10</sup> Another project, the Marché du Château in Châteauguay (QC) is an inclusive local grocery store that fosters cultural exchanges with the objective of promoting cultural dialogue, inclusion and openness.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Food'Elles<sup>12</sup> is

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<sup>7</sup> [https://cdepnqj.org/notre\\_blogue/un-projet-en-agriculture-se-developpe-a-opitciwan/](https://cdepnqj.org/notre_blogue/un-projet-en-agriculture-se-developpe-a-opitciwan/)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cisainnovation.com/projet/savoirs-traditionnels-autochtones-et-securite-alimentaire>

<sup>9</sup> Radio-Canada. 2020. "Une femme de Kahnawake lance une épicerie d'aliments produits par des Autochtones", radio-canada.ca, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1754940/souverainete-alimentaire-autochtone-entreprise-nourriture-mohawk>

<sup>10</sup> <https://hamidou-horticulture.square.site/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Lemarcheduchateauepicerieenvrac>

<sup>12</sup> <https://food-elles.ca/>

a community organization led by immigrant women who manage a catering service and different food-related activities that celebrate the culinary traditions and practices of immigrant and racialized populations. The last initiative in this category, Intégration Nutrition, is a community project that strives to provide newly arrived Canadians and cultural communities with educational information on nutrition and healthy eating.<sup>13</sup>

It remains important to be aware of potential biases in initiatives that celebrate the food practices of ethnocultural communities, as we have seen in the previous sections. In this regard, food gentrification, meaning the appropriation of food practices and knowledge from racial and ethnocultural minorities, a concept that closely resembles culinary colonialism identified by Grey and Newman (2018), can be a vector to increasing social, spatial, economic and identity-based inequality. Creating spaces to learn about food and celebrate culinary practices without consulting the racialized and marginalized communities to whom those practices belong could accentuate their marginalization in the context of gentrification in geographic areas, characterized by a revitalization of parks, the construction of condominiums, the arrival of new grocery stores and other businesses, the closing of local traditional businesses and increases in rent.

## Antiracist Initiatives

The principles of equity, inclusion and diversity should be considered concomitantly and be integrated into food and agricultural practices. Food justice is above all a question of racial justice. As we saw in the previous sections, dominant food systems were heavily influenced by colonialism, patriarchy, dispossession, racial discrimination, exploitation of the working class, etc. The initiatives listed in this section take a political position that supports food sovereignty and/or have developed an explicit approach in favour of spatial and food justice to radically transform food systems.

The first initiative we'll mention in this category is Jardins Lakou,<sup>14</sup> a project located in Dunham (QC) with the objective of cultivating vegetables here in Québec that are generally imported from great distances. While one underlying goal of the project is to encourage Quebecers with Afro-Caribbean heritage to reconnect with their roots, the project also seeks to encourage popular education through food practices and to create a healing space on the land between racialized and Indigenous communities so that they can reclaim their shared histories. For its part, the Jardin d'Edem<sup>15</sup> is a project that cultivates organic vegetables originating in Africa in Farnham (QC), such

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<sup>13</sup><https://www.lapresse.ca/vivre/gourmand/cuisine/201806/14/01-5185762-alimentation-et-immigration-revolution-dans-lassiette.php>

<sup>14</sup><https://www.jardinslakou.ca/index.html>

<sup>15</sup><https://www.aujardinededem.com/>

as gombo (okra), African eggplant and spinach, hot peppers, tossa jute and African sorrel. Edem Amegbo, the project's produce farmer, wanted to develop his expertise in cultivating African vegetables to benefit African families in Québec. The Jardins Épicés<sup>16</sup> project is another initiative that shares similarities with the Jardins Lakou and the Jardin d'Edem in that it promotes the cultivation of vegetables and herbs from Latin America. Sylvia Meriles, an agrologist by training, worked in horticulture and on various development projects with Indigenous communities in Bolivia prior to arriving in Québec and founding the Jardins Épicés.<sup>17</sup> The next project, Food for All,<sup>18</sup> is an initiative from Solidarity Across Borders in Montréal that seeks to increase access to food for racialized and immigrant populations, in particular those without legal status. The project argues that food racism has measurable effects on racialized and marginalized populations as it operates from a dominant view of cultural and food-related norms and practices that discriminates against certain food systems and certain foods, which are labelled unhealthy. The last initiative in this category, "L'environnement c'est intersectionnel," is a project developed by Lourderie Jean, an ecofeminist activist from Montréal. The project's goal is to use workshops and an antiracist, decolonial and anti-oppressive approach to instruct and build knowledge about environmental issues. Workshop attendees, people working in the food sector, would learn about the lived experience of people of colour with regard to environmental issues (pollution, processed foods, etc.).

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<sup>16</sup><https://lesjardinsepices.com/>

<sup>17</sup><https://devenirentrepreneur.com/fr/articles/histoires-entrepreneurs/jardins-epices-microferme-aux-grandes-valeurs>

<sup>18</sup><https://www.solidarityacrossborders.org/en/food-for-all-committee>

# Conclusion

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The foundations of a sustainable and inclusive food system in Francophone Canada must necessarily adopt an intersectional and decolonial approach. Currently, there is a lack of knowledge and projects addressing these issues in Québec and elsewhere in Canada. In this report, we listed various initiatives working towards this goal, but this effort must be continued.

Sustainable food systems are supported by public health, democracy, inclusion and collectivity, beyond the quality and accessibility of food products. On a larger scale, actors from the community, entrepreneurial, institutional and health sectors should commit to building an inclusive and sustainable network that prioritizes expertise on a local level. Sustainable food systems are also a key element to creating the material and intangible conditions for a more just and equitable future, in particular for Indigenous, Black, racialized, and immigrant communities. FSC commits to recognizing Canada's colonial history and its long-term effects on populations. This commemorative step is crucial if we wish to rethink sustainable and local food systems.

Food Secure Canada also recognizes the existence of dynamics of oppression and systemic obstacles to racialized and Indigenous peoples' full equality, which have been accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis and climate change. The following recommendations seek to reinforce the vision of sustainable development that follows a more inclusive, ecofeminist, antiracist and decolonial path.

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# Recommendations

- Determine a shared vision of sustainable food and shared objectives, including antiracism, eco-feminism and food justice. FSC commits its members and partners to mobilize for the recognition of a systemic perspective to a decolonial approach and to antiracism regarding issues of sustainable food.
- Decompartmentalize the domain of food to understand and discover, using the Canadian Food Guide, the reasons why certain food products from Indigenous, Black, racialized and immigrant communities are not valued.
- Support a Francophone and Québec Forum on the intersections of the needs and aspirations of racialized, First Nations and Inuit communities relating to their food needs.
- Encourage research and initiatives relating to food justice
- Provide concrete resources on inclusivity principles to different actors in the food sector who work with diverse communities. Sustainable initiatives contribute to implementing structures that help collaboration from and the inclusion of different stakeholders.
- Facilitate access for all, including racialized and Indigenous populations, to sustainable food by supporting new collective, local and equitable initiatives
  - 1 Develop agricultural and collective cooking workshops and initiatives using a popular education approach
  - 2 Support and consolidate local initiatives led by and for racialized and Indigenous populations with a discourse that supports healthy food habits within athletic, educational and environmental spaces.
- Encourage philanthropic support and funding practices that prioritize initiatives developed by Indigenous, Black, racialized and immigrant community members.

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