



Roundtable: Civil Society Engagement in Participatory Food Systems Governance

**CAFS conference
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Carleton
UNIVERSITY




PlentyCanada



FSC
Food Secure Canada



**Food
Communities
Network**



Theme: Participatory food systems governance: What does it mean to CSOs and how do they engage?

Thematic Objective:

- To explore the meanings and perspectives of food systems governance as well as the strategies and tactics used to engage with food governance, from the standpoint of civil society organization (CSO) leaders across Canada and Indigenous territories involved in food systems governance activities.

Results:

CSOs had a broad, sophisticated understanding of food systems governance and diverse approaches

Emerging themes:

- Food Systems Governance as Multiple
- Confronting Power
- Community-Based Decision Making

“One of our lessons over the last few years is that it’s not a one size fits all, it’s an ecosystem.”

- Gisele Yasmeen, FSC

“Food systems governance...is [about] who’s participating, who’s making decisions, whose voices are being heard, who has power and who doesn’t.”

Ali English, EFAO



Theme: Enhancing food systems CSO action on food labour

Thematic Objective:

- Better understand the nature and reasons behind limited engagement of food systems CSOs in food labour; Identify both barriers and possible avenues for more meaningful engagement

Results and Discussion:


- High degree of individual sympathy and awareness, but has yet to translate into sustained organizational action; much of existing action from perspective of employers
- Possible discursive openings to build solidarity between farmers and workers
- Discursive openings must be accompanied by concrete action that acknowledges the structural challenges facing food and farm workers and a rebuilding of the collective organizing capacity of food system civil society actors.

“there’s definitely an awareness, but not great action.”

“labor is central, but I wouldn't say we actively work on labor issues”

“it's time for us to address it in a more systemic way, but it raises, of course, the question of the price of food. And [it's] very complicated as we build alliances with the farm organizations”

“[Governance] is an organizing tool. It's a way to also discuss who is disposable, and why, and how racialized that is, and how coercive that is among people that are so important and essential.”



Theme: Exploring Settler-Indigenous Engagement in Participatory Food Systems Governance

Thematic Research Q: How have CSOs engaged in partnership efforts between Indigenous and settler people/groups regarding food systems governance?

Results/Analysis

- Most: preliminary, internal, or stand-alone efforts; many expressed aspirations toward more engagement.
- Internal engagement (e.g., Board/advisor positions; providing opportunities for staff and member unlearning/learning)
- External engagement (e.g., collaborative initiatives, solidarity building, knowledge sharing, partnerships)

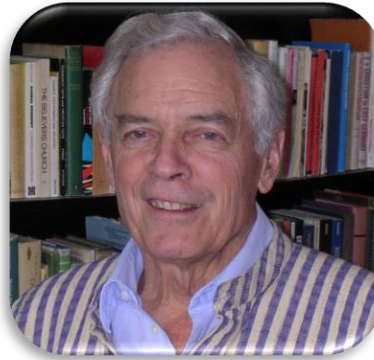
Preliminary conclusions:

Findings suggest a need for further funding and support for dedicated relationship building work.

“No matter how time-sensitive something is, if the relationship really isn't there, it can be difficult to generate the ability to work together even if an issue is shared.”

- Moe Garahan, Just Food

Theme: Learning from food movement elders and grand-folks



Brewster Kneen



Abra Brynne



Faris Ahmed



Mary Lou Morgan



Deb Barndt



Henry Lickers



Dan Longboat



Larry McDermott



Barbara Emanuel



Debbie Field



Mustafa Koç



Pat Mooney



Trevor Hancock



Interview

Wayne Roberts: Food Systems Thinker, Public Intellectual, “Actionist”

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Abstract

Wayne Roberts (1944–2021) was a food systems thinker, public intellectual, and “actionist.” This text was developed from a series of oral history interviews conducted between December 2020 and January 2021. It touches upon several of the key themes addressed during the interviews: adopting a food systems approach; employing the power of ideas; identifying solutions and being propositional; acknowledging progress for political credit; enhancing impact through media, old and new; working strategically to “seed” then “tip”; influencing government; and forming alliances with academics and other champions. In addition, we provide links to additional resources. In this article, which inaugurates the Interviews section of *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation*, we aim to do justice to the gift of Wayne’s experiences and knowledge by sharing a selection and synthesis of his words.

Keywords: Food policy; food policy councils; food systems