



## INTRODUCTION

The theme of the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Gathering of the BC Food Systems Network was *The Power of Food Systems: Forging Strong Relationships*. While the focus on building relationships emerged in the wake of Cathleen Kneen's departure as the Network's Executive Director, the intention was to highlight the strength of the Network as well as the important role that food plays in fostering a diversity of relationships.

The Gathering took place, as it always has, mid-September on the banks of the Shuswap Lake at the Sorrento Centre. Over one hundred participants were welcomed by the Lake Secwepemc people. This year, respectful of our member's busy schedules, we cut our time back by a half day, leaving less time for such activities as the introductory circle. In years past, the Gathering opened with a round of introductions. The intention was to work towards eliminating hierarchy and to showcase the value of each participant. This year, a contact sheet was distributed with participants' names, biographies and contact information. As well, we hosted an informal introductory circle on the eve of the Gathering.

## PLENARY

Building on the theme of the Gathering, this year's opening plenary addressed the subject of *Healing Relationships Within Food Systems*. Trudy Jack spoke passionately about the interconnectedness of our world. She highlighted the significant role that food plays for our bodies, our spirits and our communities. Speaking from her experience as an Indigenous spiritual woman, Trudy shared lessons she has learned on her journey and reminded us all of our deep interdependent connections with the earth. Harmony Barrer shared knowledge she had gained working with the Village Builders Convergence and illuminated the important role that space and place plays in healing and in building community. To conclude, Cliff Stainsby focussed on the urgent need to begin healing our relationships with the earth given the reality of climate change. He explained that conventional agriculture has contributed significantly to global climate change but local food systems can – indeed must – play a larger role as we enter a period of unprecedented climatic variability.

## DISCUSSIONS AND OUTCOME

At previous Gatherings, attendees participated in member-led workshops, roundtables and presentations that lasted, on average, one and a half hours. This year we offered a day of these short workshops but complement them with a series of day-long workshops. The intention was to provide members with an adequate amount of time to share information, to discuss and, if appropriate, to develop action plans.

The first day of shorter workshops offered a diversity of choice: everything from traditional skills, to starting a perishable food recovery program to hip hop lessons. On the second day, four all-day workshops were offered. The workshops were relatively informal and participants were free to come and go from workshops.

What follows is a list of the Gathering's workshops with a short summary and the name(s) of the individual(s) who led them. Notes have been collected for many of the workshops and have been posted



on the BC Food Systems Network website (www.fooddemocracy.org). Workshops that have notes available have been marked with an asterisk (\*).

### **Round 1: Friday September 14<sup>th</sup> 10:30-12:00**

<b>The Power of Food Systems to Heal</b>  <i>Tara Todesco</i> <i>Jennifer McMullen</i>	This workshop will examine the power of food and agriculture to heal. It will discuss issues concerning working with adults who have brain injury and the role that food plays in healing. It will highlight the Seeds of Change project, developed in 2005, that used agriculture as a method of healing and rehabilitation for adults with acquired brain injury.
<b>Community Gardens</b>  <i>Ruth Mellor</i>	In this workshop, Ruth Mellor, chair of Central Okanagan Community Gardens, will discuss opportunities, strategies and the ins and outs of community gardens. including how to set up a multi-plot community garden
<b>Living off the Land</b> <i>Minnis Kenoras</i>	In this workshop, Secwepemc Elder Minnie Kenoras will talk about living off the land.
<b>(r)Evolution: A 'Zine Workshop</b>  <i>Jamila Ali</i> <i>Jessica Duncan</i>	At last year's gathering youth and the young at heart came together to create an alternative 'zine (pronounced zeen). They called it (r)Evolution. This collage of pictures, words and personal declarations captured the emotions and thoughts of gathering participants in a fun, creative and inclusive way. This year's workshop will once again revisit the ins and outs of 'zine-making and encourage participants to not only contribute to the second BCFSN 'zine but also to create their own alternative publications!

### **Round 2: Friday September 14<sup>th</sup> 1:30-3:00**

<b>Reflection on BC's Food Policy Councils*</b>  <i>Janine de la Salle,</i> <i>Herb Barbolet</i>	Food Policy Councils are forming across BC as groups realize their greater influence, and ultimate impact, when coordinated. Presenters will provide an overview of the state of the FPCs, variety of models, typical activities, and their challenges and successes implementing programs and policy solutions. Presenters from Victoria, Kamloops, and potentially Vancouver.
<b>Agriculture, Climate Change and Peak Oil</b>  <i>Steve Baker</i>	This presentation will review the need to increase food production and food security in the face of large scale threats of global climate change and the peaking in world oil production. New insecurities will change the climate and energy landscapes we have become so accustomed to and dependent on in the last half century. Industrial Agriculture will be hit very hard by these two phenomena, with major decreases in crop production likely. Additionally the ability to transport food across long distances will also be impaired by higher oil prices and unforeseen shortages. The ability for a region to sustain itself and remain food secure will be dependent on a large increase in local food production.



<b>Food, Body and Spirit</b>  <i>Trudy Jack</i>	This workshop explores how everything is connected and how we can help ourselves and learn how to be more effective as human beings in this beautiful world of ours. Trudy will share her experiences looking after herself as a native spiritual woman before and after she knew this was her journey.
<b>Yoga</b>  <i>Kate Hughes</i>	

### **Round 3: Friday September 14<sup>th</sup> 3:30-5:00**

<b>Towards BCFSN Policies*</b> <i>Jen Cody, Linda Geggie</i>	In this workshop, we will discuss the next steps towards BC Food Systems Network policies.
<b>Farm Co-ops: Lessons from Horse Lake Community Farm Co-op*</b> <i>Trish Chung</i>	This workshop will be review the experiences of the Horse Lake Community Farm Co-op (HLCFC). It will cover issues such as: setting up the co-op, selling shares, buying the land, farming, conservation, mapping and business plan.
<b>Perishable Food Recovery*</b> <i>Marg Spina</i>	Kamloops FoodShare has successfully started up a perishable food recovery program. This session showcase their experiences. They will also be hosting a conference in October, so this will be an introduction for communities interested in learning about FoodShare.
<b>'Find Your Voice: Get Heard'</b> <i>Curtis Clearwater, Allan Jaimeson</i>	Young leaders will share creative strategies for getting your voice heard. They will be focusing on hip hop and other forms of expression!

### **Saturday (all day)**

<b>Indigenous Food Sovereignty - Building Relationships and Coalitions*</b>  <i>Working Group on Indigenous</i>	1. What is Indigenous food sovereignty? An overview of current situations, concerns and issues in B.C. (Informational) Objective: Review definitions of food sovereignty that have been developed in various forums. Provide an overview of the impacts of colonization on indigenous food sovereignty.  2. Indigenous Food Sovereignty - Whose responsibility is it? (Roundtable discussion)
---	--



<p><i>Food Sovereignty</i></p>	<p>Objective: Describe roles, responsibilities and relationships between grassroots Indigenous peoples, tribal governments, and non-indigenous government, NGO's, and advocates</p> <p>3. Building IFS coalitions - Working cross culturally between the WGIFS, the BCFSN board and membership. (Roundtable discussion)          Objective: Identify culturally sensitive principles, guidelines and best practices.</p> <p>4. Expansion of the Non Timber Forest Products Industry in Indigenous land and food systems. (Presentation and discussion)          Objective: Discuss the current situations, concerns, risks and benefits related to the expansion of NTFP's in B.C. Discuss the various ways in which the expansion impacts Indigenous Food Sovereignty.</p> <p>5. Political Lobbying and advocacy (Panel presentation and discussion)          Objective: Identify some provincial policies that negatively impact indigenous food sovereignty, as well as some practical ways in which non-indigenous advocates can work to influence policy changes.</p>
<p><b>Action Towards Supporting a Local Food System*</b></p> <p><i>Abra Brynne,</i></p>	<p>At last year's gathering we discussed how the food security/food policy climate is ripe for change but there was no clear direction with respect to "the who" and "the how." Across the Province, people are becoming increasingly aware and supportive of local, alternative agriculture and at the same time farmers are facing increased regulatory restrictions that in many cases makes farming in a sustainable way illegal. In this workshop we will review the reality of farming and processing food locally. We will then break into small industry-specific working groups to develop action plans. In these groups we will also try to answer the questions "how we are going to achieve sustainable, local food systems?" and "how are we going to change restrictive regulatory and socio-economic?" At the end we will come back together as a group and share our strategies for change.</p>
<p><b>Show Me the Money</b></p> <p><i>MaryAnne Arcand</i></p>	<p>"Show Me the Money" is a highly energetic and motivational look at how to get long-term support for your project, fundraising, promotion, planning, communication, needs assessment and all the basics you need to make your project long-lasting, effective and high-profile. MaryAnne Arcand has raised over \$7 million for non-profits over the last ten years, and she's prepared to share all her secrets. WARNING: taking this workshop will give you an irresistible urge to go out and raise money!</p>
<p><b>Farm to Fork</b></p> <p><i>Patrick Steiner, Paddy Doherty, Heidi Fink</i></p>	<p>This workshop will start with a visit to Sorrento's Farmers' Market. The group will then head to Stellar Seeds and participate in a hands-on seed saving workshop, led by Patrick Steiner. After lunch, there will be discussion around the recent rise in interest surrounding local and organic food, focusing on opportunities and challenges to farmers and food sovereignty activists. As well, Paddy Doherty will provide information about the new national organic standards. The group will then head over to Notch Hill Organic farms for a tour and an opportunity to talk to the farmers and gain insight into the realities of</p>



	organic farming. Following this, the group will meet up with Chef Heidi Fink to prepare a series of appetizers that will be shared later in the evening with the entire gathering.
--	--

## EVALUATION

Overall, participants were satisfied with the Gathering and many spoke to the quality of the meals and the beauty and appropriateness of the location. Some found the daylong workshops too long but more indicated that it was important to take the time to work through some of the larger issues we are facing across the province.

Most people agreed that the BCFSN is effective in its networking and that Network's priority over the next year should be to continue sharing information and supporting its members. There was a noticeable split with respect to the Network's role when it comes to advocacy. Some members wrote that the Network should pursue more advocacy and lobbying work while others were keen to ensure that the Network remained politically autonomous and consequently more open and accessible to all people working on issues of community food security. The Board of Directors will be meeting four times before the next Gathering and will be discussing these issues.

## MOVING FORWARD: NEXT STEPS AND NETWORK PRIORITIES

According to the evaluation forms, members intend on using the information and ideas shared at the Gathering to enhance the food security work that they been doing in their communities. It is anticipated that new ideas and project ideas will continue to be shared through the Network's listserv.

With respect to action, one of the workshop groups developed a letter addressing continued concerns surrounding the implementation of the Meat Inspection Regulation. The letter built on two letters that had already been released by the network.

A small working group came together after the Gathering to finalise the letter and to coordinate an "Action Kit" for members. A draft of the letter was circulated to the membership and was approved to be sent on to the Premier and appropriate Ministers by Jen Cody, chair of the BC Food Systems Network. All letters and information concerning the Meat Inspection Regulation are available on the BC Food Systems Network website under "What's New."

A network is only as strong as its membership. In the past, there has been significant reliance on a small number of individual members to move things forward but we are learning that to be successful it is important that more members take on pieces of the work. Not only will this keep the network strong but also, it will foster by in from the general membership.