



BC Food Systems Network
16th ANNUAL GATHERING

Final Report

June 26-29, 2014

Sorrento, BC



BC Food Systems Network

"We are also heading in the same direction, perhaps we should join hands and walk forward together."

Mike Arnouse, Secwepemc Elder

1 THEME AND ORGANIZATION OF THE GATHERING

Every year the BC Food Systems Network gathers together to celebrate the work that is being done in the BC food movement. This was our 16th Annual Gathering and the Network was pleased to be meeting in Sorrento for the first time since 2008. The Network is grateful to the Secwepemc people for welcoming us back into their territory, and for the presence of members of the Indigenous community at the Gathering, who came to share their wisdom and knowledge of the land, and participate in conversation with the Network about how we can work together to overcome barriers and achieve common goals.

The theme this year: "Revisiting our Roots: Honouring our Bio-Cultural Heritage", encouraged us to think about our cultural and organizational roots, as well as our connection with the land and resources that sustain us as a guide to our time together. Together we considered our heritage and explored its meaning and our responsibility to a place and its inhabitants.

This year the Network was thrilled that Brewster and Cathleen Kneen were able to participate. Without Cathleen's tireless efforts throughout the 1990s the Network would not exist and without Brewster, our policy analysis would lack context. In the 1970s Brewster began to deconstruct food systems in his writing: his books include *From Land to Mouth*, *Invisible Giant* (about Cargill), and *Farmageddon* (about biotechnology). Between them they have published the Ramshorn newsletter for over 30 years.

Sorrento Centre provided a peaceful and welcoming space for the 150 individuals attended the Gathering, including 20 children and youth. The staff and accommodations were outstanding and the meals reflected our shared philosophy of sustainability and appreciation of locally sourced food. Sorrento Centre operates a working fruit and vegetable farm that produces food for Sorrento Centre guests and the local community. The farmers grow diversified crops using all natural methods of production, and is an expression of Sorrento Centre's commitment to stewarding the natural harmony of Creation.

The Gathering began with the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty Meeting on Thursday, followed by a welcome reception. The following two days were packed full of diverse presentations and workshops, interspersed with opportunities for networking and informal information sharing. On Saturday morning the Network gathered for its Annual General Meeting, and that evening we celebrated with a Feast and dance. Sunday the Network came together for a closing plenary discussion – a time of listening, learning and healing; recognizing the work that had been done together and acknowledging the challenges that still lay ahead.

2 WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY MEETING

The Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty celebrated its 8th annual meeting at the 2014 BC Food Systems Network Gathering. Following the theme of Revitalizing Grease Trails (traditional trade networks), the daylong meeting brought together a group of 48 dedicated Elders, cultural teachers, academics, Indigenous harvesters (hunters, fishers and gatherers), and WGIFS members to discuss research, protocols, action, policy and strategies to promote and support more sharing, trading and giving of Indigenous foods in the present day.

As a key strategy for achieving Indigenous food sovereignty and honouring our bio-cultural heritage “on the ground”, the energy, ideas and input of participants led into an expanded discussion in a session titled: Cross Cultural Reflections for Decolonizing Research and Relationships with the BCFSN – Understanding Oneself in Reflection of Another. The expanded discussion provided the time and space to identify key points for entering into a journey of deeper understanding on how non-Indigenous friends, allies and supporters from within the BCFSN can support Indigenous communities in realizing traditional trade practices and strategies and how the Indigenous bio-cultural heritage is being expressed within the land and food system.

In light of the Year of Truth and Reconciliation that has been proclaimed by the federal government and City of Vancouver, the cross cultural discussion was inspirational in the ways it provided the time and space to explore some key points that will shed light on the how to move beyond an ag-centric focus to reconcile and promote Indigenous bio-cultural heritage. In addition to sharing knowledge, values, vision and concerns over oppressive policy issues, the session provided the time and space to reach deeper understanding of the cultural protocols and ways the Indigenous paradigm and priorities can inform the work within the BCFSN, as well as enable the WGIFS to promote and facilitate more giving, sharing and trading of traditional foods.

Some key points that were identified include:

- Land – identify ways to go beyond the ag-centric focus in oppressive land policies to recognize, value and include the complex system of Indigenous bio-cultural heritage in land and food system research, action and policy ...i.e. strategies such as food land trusts vs. farmland trusts, mapping out Indigenous bio-cultural heritage areas in relation to Agricultural Land Reserve to better understand how they interface.
- Cultural interface – Identifying points of intersection between how the Indigenous food system and a more sustainable model of agriculture are being expressed and how they intra-act (complementary or contentious)? Increase awareness and provide a framework for transcending dualism and appreciating and inquiring ways in which “we are all interconnected” through the land and food system. Shedding light on key points of entry into a deeper cross cultural understanding.
- Language and terminology – developing a common language and terminology for communicating across cultures (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). Researching and revitalizing Chinook jargon (intertribal trade language).
- Cultural concept of time – realizing challenges associated with balancing the time to appreciate the richness of high context inherent in Indigenous cultures and communication patterns in a

lower context communication pattern that applies a more fact oriented mechanistic concept of measuring time in minutes, hours, days etc.

- Model of economy – identify ways that an Indigenous giving economy can transcend the mechanistic production model of economy by reclaiming the spirit and relationships between Indigenous peoples and the land, plants and animals that are not represented in a mathematical formula for production.

3 BCFSN POLICY WORKING GROUP

The BCFSN has always viewed the Agricultural Land Reserve as a cornerstone policy for sustainable food systems in BC. In September 2013 we developed an ALR campaign and ran it until the end of May 2014, after the provincial government passed the *Agricultural Land Commission Amendment Act*. From January-April 2014 our efforts were channeled through the Farmland Vitality Project which was sponsored by the Real Estate Foundation of BC and private donors. We have just compiled our report on the project.

During the BCFSN Gathering the Food Policy Working Group had several opportunities to report on and evaluate their work over the past year, and determine the Network's priorities for the year to come.

In particular the group:

1. Held a workshop to review the subcommittee work on the ALR ([link to notes](#))
2. Held committee meetings with key individuals to plan for next steps on the ALR regulation development
3. Undertook discussions on how to integrate and elevate indigenous perspective into our policy work and in particular practically look at the Farmlands Trust initiative as an opening to look more broadly at all foodlands, including the bio cultural lands important to Indigenous food ways. There was agreement of the redevelopment of the Good Food Solutions project with this lens as well.
4. Reported out at the Annual General Meeting our Activities over the year and outlined key directions for the coming year, including inviting input into these from network members
5. Surveyed members regarding priority policy areas for the network.

The following priorities for the Network arose from action items from the ALR Session and activities of the BCFSN Policy Working Group:

1. Take proactive steps to deepen conversations around how the network can broaden the focus from farmland to foodlands and towards co-existence
 - a. Expand focus from agricultural land protection to include protection/recognition of land rights (and food and culture) of indigenous peoples.
 - b. Beware of neo-colonialism embedded in discourse of agricultural land protection and reserves – need to understand the historical (and continued) role agricultural land distribution played in land dispossession.

2. Continue to strengthen and grow the relationships and support network that was developed through ALR campaign outreach – expand and mobilize
3. Continuation of intelligence role, information gathering and distribution, policy analysis and creation of templates for presentations/actions for others to use
4. Release a statement or some further analysis on the passing of Bill 24 and what is coming next (people felt there was a gap once the Bill passed) and provide a follow up report to partners in the campaign
5. Send a letter of congratulations to the Tsilhqot'in Nation on behalf of the BCFSN network
6. Next steps and approach for moving forward need to be decided on by the network – there were differing views to be considered:
 - a. Participate in the political/legislative process in order to have voice heard and advocate for changes in ALR that support farming and foodlands
 - b. Do not participate in the political/legal process – dangerous to oppose a change and then participate in that change – there are other approaches to action
7. Regardless of approach – ensure consultation and dialogue with First Nations as network moves forward

4 SESSION SUMMARIES

A total of twenty four individual sessions took place over two days, representing a wide range of activities being undertaken throughout the province. The following section provides a brief summary of each session, with a link to more detailed session notes and/or presentations wherever possible (indicated by underline).

Investigating Wider Access and Inclusion in BC's Food System

Kelly Hodgins (University of Guelph) presented the preliminary results from a master's research project investigating food hubs, social enterprises and farmers' markets in BC and their ability to include low-income consumers.

Rethinking Breastfeeding as a Food Security Initiative: Strategies to Help Us Get the Best Results

Karen Graham and Rhonda Jules explored topics including the benefits of breastfeeding; breastfeeding as a food security initiative and ways to better support moms to breastfeed. They also looked at the findings from the Breastfeeding Sharing table (Aboriginal Food Forum, February 19th) and discussed the Breastfeeding Art Expo – a community art and health project.

Southwest BC Bioregional Food Systems Design and Planning Project – Update and Roundtable

Discussion

Dawn Morrison updated the Network on the Southwest BC Bio-Regional Food System Design Project led by the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen University. The project aims to explore the feasibility and potential of a regional food system for southwest BC and will describe the potential environmental, economic and community impacts and benefits of such a system. The research team shared progress to date, key findings on the state of the Southwest BC Food System, and next steps for the project including opportunities for stakeholder engagement.

GE Awareness Panel Discussion

Abra Brynne, Carol Kergan, Trish Kelly and Vanessa Goodall discussed how individuals, local governments, and the private sector are working to raise awareness and address concerns about GE crops and foods. Topics included commodity specific GE campaigns, the development of GE free procurement policies, and the forthcoming glyphosate testing campaign.

Sorrento Centre Farm Tour and Discussion

Dave Wides, resident farmer at the Sorrento Centre led the group on a tour of the working fruit and vegetable farm. The farm produces food for Sorrento Centre guests and the local community and is an expression of Sorrento Centre's commitment to stewarding the natural harmony of Creation.

You are What you Eat: Getting a Taste for Food Democracy

This interactive session, led by Dr. Jenny Horn from the Centre for Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Security at Vancouver Island University, explored our understanding of Food Systems, Food Security, Food Literacy, Food Sovereignty, and, ultimately, Food Democracy.

The BC Seed Movement Roundtable Discussion

This roundtable discussion, facilitated by Heather Pritchard from FarmFolk CityFolk, explored different approaches to seed sovereignty in BC. Community capacity is supported through seed education, seedy Saturdays, seed libraries, seed banks, variety trials, seed research and seed advocacy (bill C18, GMO's).

Urban Agriculture Taking Root in Communities!

Laura Kalina shared the experience of the Kamloops Food Policy Council and it's evolution over the last 2 decades from Community Gardens/Kitchens to working at the municipal level in the development of the Urban Agriculture and Food Systems Strategy Plan.

Cross Cultural Reflections for Decolonizing Research and Relationships within the BCFSN – Understanding Oneself in Reflection of Another

Dawn Morrison provided a summary of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty meeting. As a reflection of the relationship with the BCFSN, the summary shed light on the key highlights of the Decolonizing Relationships and Research: Revitalizing Grease Trails Research Strategy and Protocol Workshop. The discussion provided an opportunity for network members to better understand and observe cultural protocols of local Indigenous communities, and deepen the ecological and cultural sensitivity to our relationships to one another and the land, plants and animals that provide our food.

Notch Hill Organic Farm and Nursery Tour

The tour was led by Sarah Bradshaw and observed the production of food crop seeds and propagation of berry bushes. Seed saving and the preservation of regional varieties is crucial to a diverse gene pool of food crops. The propagation of indigenous food plants is needed to restore areas to pre-agricultural interference.

Marketing your farm using Soil Mate...and other online tools

Drew Vincent from Soil Mate showed participants how to create free farm profiles on what is North America's fastest growing Direct Farm marketing tool. The workshop also looked at the other marketing options such social media, email marketing, other directories and ecommerce.

Farmland Trusts and Land Access in BC

The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and Farm Folk City Folk are collaborating on a project to explore and develop a provincial framework for a farmland trust. The Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC has supported this initiative through the evaluation of alternative models of land access including land trusts. Linda Geggie, Hannah Whitman, Heather Pritchard and J. Dennis described options for farmland protection and alternative access in BC.

Connecting School Communities to Family Farms through Farm to School

Vanessa Perrodou gave a presentation on Farm to School BC, a diverse and expanding provincial network that connect schools to nearby farmers, fishers, and harvesters, in order to bring locally grown, nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods into schools, and to increase local food literacy among children and school communities.

Calendario

Mary Stockdale and Cathy Stubington presented 'Calendario', a project that involves collecting and sharing, through community art projects, local knowledge about the seasonal rounds in nature, culture and agriculture.

Certified Organic Associations of BC Toolkit

This session, hosted by Jen Gamble and Cara Nunn, provided an introduction to COABC and new on-line toolkits designed to welcome new entrants to organic agriculture.

Seed Saving 101

Craig Evans led a hands-on workshop on seed saving. The workshop covered the fundamentals for saving seed, including isolation distances; minimum numbers for genetically robust seed, and growing, harvesting and cleaning techniques.

BCFSN Policy Working Group Review of Network's Campaign Efforts

This session was a time for reflection on work to date and strategy for work to come. What are the next steps the BCFSN should take with regard to farmland protection and related policies for the province? Discussion included: input on the new regulations; continuing to support other stakeholders, particularly farm organizations; refocusing our public education efforts; monitoring the effects of the new legislation and regulations, especially with local government; and developing sustainability-focused research and proposals for farmland protection that recognize indigenous land needs.

Landed Histories Approach

Michael Evans (UBC Okanagan) described this methodology for tracing political economy; “landed histories” reflect the colonial land types and the relationships through which people and ecologies grow food on particular farmscapes now and in the past.

Food Security and Community Economic Development

Dylan Houlihan from Urban Systems led a workshop that explored ways for local economic development and food security initiatives to work hand in hand to create vibrant communities, by increasing the amount of household food spending that stays in the local community.

Capacity Building within Community Food Action Initiatives (CFAI)

In Interior Health, the CFAI is part of a province-wide strategy to increase food security programs and encourage British Columbians to make healthy food choices. Presenter included Deanna Hurtsfield from the Kamloops Gleaning Abundance Program; Lee Reid from the Senior Environmental Economic Development Society in Nelson; Shannon Grey Duncan from the Cranbrook Food Action Committee, and Jessica Windle Windsight Kimberly Cranbrook

Revisiting our Roots: Celebrating BCFSN Achievements

Herb Barbolet hosted this Open Space session in an exploration of our history and sharing memories of the Network’s achievements and lessons learned over the past 16 years.

Temporary Foreign Agricultural Workers

Felix Martinez from the Agricultural Workers Alliance led a discussion about temporary foreign agricultural workers - often referred to as the invisibles. This session explored their situation, the challenges they face and possible solutions to help this ever growing seasonal population.

Seabird Island Traditional Foods Program

Sally Hope presented this session on the Seabird Island Traditional Foods Initiative, a collaborative strategy developed to assert cultural sustenance and resource use reliance as a component to sustaining a healthy community, physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally.

Crannog Ales Farm and Brewery Tour and Tasting

Rebecca Kneen hosted a tour of Crannóg Ales, Canada's first Certified Organic farmhouse microbrewery. Crannog Ales opened in 2000 and brews unfiltered, unpasteurized ales using only organic ingredients, some of which come from their own farm.

5 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BC FOOD SYSTEMS NETWORK

The Annual General Meeting was chaired by Abra Brynne and Brent Mansfield, who also delivered the report from the BCFSN Co-Chairs, which reviewed some of the activities and projects undertaken by the Board over the past year. The Network also received and accepted reports from the Treasurer, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Gathering Working Group, Policy Working Group, the Good Food Education Project, the Fundraising Coordinator and the Communications Coordinator.

A motion was then presented for the BCFSN to become a project of Tides Canada. This was followed by a discussion about the benefits of such an action as well as concerns about how this would affect the work currently being done by the Network. Todd Jacques from Tides was in attendance to answer questions and provide context. The Board recommended adoption of the resolution as a way of building administrative capacity to support major policy campaigns and easing workload for the Executive and some Working Group members without compromising the purpose and values of the organization.

As a project of Tides Canada the Network would receive administrative and strategic support. The BCFSN could maintain its non-profit society status indefinitely, but while it is a Tides project its operations as an independent entity would be suspended. The Network would acquire charitable status through Tides and would have to follow the rules around advocacy. As a Tides project, the BCFSN Board will become a Steering Committee with a maximum membership of twelve. However, Tides also allows a larger Advisory Committee with broader membership. The motion was carried.

The following members have agreed to stand for election to the new Steering Committee:

- Abra Brynne
- Brent Mansfield
- Linda Geggie
- Colin Dring
- Diane Collis
- Dawn Morrison
- Nicholas Scapillati
- Carol Kergan
- Rosemary Plummer
- Herb Barbolet

Finally, the Network acknowledged the contributions of the following outgoing board members, many of whom had served tirelessly for years, before the meeting was adjourned:

- Arzeena Hamir
- Jenny Horn
- Wanda Martin
- Erika Mundel
- Cheryl Thomas
- Sarah Carten
- Diana Collis
- Carla Lewis
- Rick McCutcheon
- Tasha Sutcliffe
- Aimee Watson
- Molly Wickham
- Hannah Wittman

6 PARTICIPANT EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNED

Feedback was received from participants through an evaluation form that was collected at the end of the Gathering. Responses were very positive, specifically with regard to providing opportunities for networking, which was also considered the most important evaluation measure. In general participants rated the overall quality of the event as 4.5 on a scale of five.

Participants also provided some feedback on areas that could be improved. Over the coming year the Gathering Working Group will consider ways of addressing the following specific suggestions:

- Fewer overlapping sessions, more plenaries
- More effort to engage those involved in food insecurity work (grassroots)
- Desire to improve diversity in representation
- Value of “hands on” group activities such as baking bread to ground us and build a sense of community
- More time for networking and processing the information being shared
- Relationships with Indigenous communities and keeping up our awareness of how things are perceived by indigenous people – keep this in mind while making our choices for location, etc.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The BC Food Systems Network is grateful to the following organizations and individuals for their generous financial support, without which the Annual Gathering would not be possible:

- Discovery Organics
- Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia
- United Food and Commercial Workers / Agricultural Workers Alliance
- Interior Health Authority
- First Nations Health Authority
- Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
- BC Government Employees Union
- Urban Systems
- Salmon Arm Savings and Credit Union
- Canadian Union of Public Employees BC Division

The Network would also like to gratefully acknowledge the following organizations for their contributions to the Gathering:

- Crannog Ales
- Soil Mate
- Left Coast Naturals
- Nature’s Path
- First Nations Agricultural Association
- Sorrento Centre – Farm
- Nature’s Fare Markets in Kamloops
- The Willows Natural Foods in Chase
- Nature's Bounty in Sorrento
- Adams Lake Indian Band
- Neskonlith Indian Band
- Simply Divine Coffee Shop in Chase
- Home Hardware in Chase

- Redhawk Acres at Lawika, Neskonlith Lake
- Bellringer Coffee Roasters in Kamloops
- Black Creek Ranch
- Gort's Gouda
- Summerhill Winery
- Kazy Farm Organics
- D Dutchman Dairy
- Happy Days Dairy
- Left Fields Farm
- Shuswap Coffee Company

8 PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND CLOSING COMMENTS

Many participants described this year's Gathering as transformative, and felt that a significant healing work had taken place between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. Indeed the sense of reunion, the significant indigenous presence, the location, weather and food made this an outstanding Gathering and a rich emotional experience.

The Network strives year round to sustain the capacity, knowledge and wisdom needed to provide for self-sufficiency and to enhance relationship with those who provide our food. We encourage everybody who participated to take the energy of this experience back to their home communities to enrich the work being done at the local level.

The following quotes were provided by Gathering participants:

"Coming at the same time as the Supreme Court of Canada's decision about aboriginal title for the Tsilhqot'in, our discussions at the Gathering about land - and in particular the teachings of Wolverine and the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Working Group - brought about an important shift in language and intention for the BCFSN. We resolved to shift from "farmland" to "foodlands" and to ask provincial land managers to keep this in mind and to think about, map, and set policy for food systems that include indigenous as well as settler foodways. I think we will look back at this as a pivotal moment.

"We are the experts. Those folks working in rural BC, indeed in rural Canada are standing up for the grass-roots approach. We see 'others' forming policies that are not for the good of the individuals, the grass roots folk, nor for the animals, birds and fish that are rely on the 'life-blood' - the water, the land - but we do understand as they are making Policies that enhance their particular interest group's needs.

We are grateful to all who joined us in Sorrento to share the knowledge, wisdom and values that exist within communities and bio-regional networks.

We hope that you will join us next year for the 17th Annual Gathering in the Prince George region.