

BC Food Systems Network 17th Annual Gathering



June 25th to 28th, 2015
Camp Friendship, Prince George, BC

Final Report

Enormous thanks to all of the people and organizations that made this annual event possible, especially our event sponsors:

vancouver
foundation



Vancity



Theme and Organization of Gathering:

Every year the BC Food Systems Network (BCFSN) gathers to network, learn and celebrate the diverse and empowering food work happening across BC, nationally and internationally. This year marks the 17th annual Gathering. The network is grateful to have been welcomed into the Dakelh traditional territories by Lheidli T'enneh Elders, Eddie and Robert Frederick, who opened the Gathering by sharing the cultural significance of the lake where the Gathering was located. This helped to ground those present in the histories and rich food lands that have sustained the Dakelh people for thousands of years.

The 2015 Gathering was located at Camp Friendship, deep in the forest beside Tsitniz Lake just outside Prince George, BC. This is the most northern location for a BCFSN Gathering thus far. All who attended were happy to finally see the Gathering travel north. The remote location of the Gathering was very relaxing and offered a unique opportunity to be out of range of cell phones and internet. Participants were happy for the opportunity to be present and focused. Many also took advantage of opportunities to swim and paddle around the lake in Canoes. The Prince George Friendship Centre and Home Sweet Home Catering provided delicious locally sourced food throughout the weekend.

The theme of this year's Gathering was "Gathering and Growing Together". The Gathering Working Group chose this theme to represent the growth in the BC food movement that includes both indigenous food systems and sustainable models of agriculture. The theme also represents the powerful networks gathering and growing around BC that sustain the food movement locally, regionally and provincially. The theme was woven throughout the Gathering workshops and presentations.

The 2015 Gathering started on the Thursday with a meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty followed by a welcome reception and dinner. The next two days were full of workshops, presentations, hands-on food activities and networking opportunities (see below). One of the highlights of the Gathering was the youth participation. A group of youth from the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood of East Vancouver attended the Gathering to present on the food actions they have taken in their neighbourhood. They also added much wisdom and fresh energy to the workshops and presentations they attended. On Sunday, the Gathering wrapped up with the Annual General Meeting of the BCFSN and a closing circle.



Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS)

The 9th Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty started with setting the spiritual intention for the meeting and the Gathering with an opening prayer, smudge, and food offering. The Gathering was welcomed to the Lheidli T'enneh territories as detailed above. Dawn Morrison, Director WGIFS then opened the day by sharing the history of the WGIFS and how its analysis and intra-action with the topic has deepened over the years. Following, was a discussion on the principles that guide the way food sovereignty is expressed in Indigenous communities, and the limits of the English language in translating the language and culture of the 27 nations Indigenous communities, nations and tribes whom are the original inhabitants of what is known to the settlers as BC.

Dawn sought guidance from the WGIFS on the key duties of the Director of the WGIFS moving forward in a new paid position as an employee of the BCFSN. Dawn then shared the past year's activities and the current projects of the WGIFS including:

- Revitalizing Traditional Trade Networks: Decolonizing Research and Relationships Research Project
- United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization International Expert Seminar - Cultural Diversity, Food Systems and Traditional Livelihoods in Cuzco, Peru in November of 2014
- Wild Salmon Convergence (October 2014)
- Wild Salmon Caravan (May 10 – 14, 2015)
- Wild Salmon Convergence of 2015
- Wild Salmon Caravan 2016
- Working group members then had a sharing circle and highlighted Community and regional projects and activities.

After lunch there were presentations and a discussion on "Cultural Interface Where Indigenous and Sustainable Agri-Food Systems Intra-act". Co-facilitators, Dawn Morrison and Heather Pritchard each shared a presentation on key points of entry towards better understanding the ways in which the Indigenous food system and sustainable agri-food system are being expressed and the ways in which their realities are entangled. They then lead a discussion that was carried through into the BCFSN Gathering the next day.

The WGIFS Annual Meeting wrapped up with a closing circle before joining others for dinner and the opening of the BCFSN Annual Gathering. Contact Dawn Morrison at dawn@bcfsn.org for information.



Workshop Session Descriptions

Friday June 26th, 2015

MORNING PLENARY

Gathering and Growing Together Towards Good Food Solutions for BC

Brent Mansfield - BCFSN

BCFSN's Interim Director Brent Mansfield presented an overview of some of the activities of the BCFSN in the past year. This included a focus on the development and initiation of the Good Food Solutions for BC project, an integrated initiative to collect, share and support implementation and scaling (out, up and deep) of innovative food system practices and policy through multi-sectoral engagement, research, public education and policy engagement. Criteria for selecting priority areas were highlighted, including:

- Alignment with the work of BCFSN members, research, government and CSO partners
- Identified as strategic priority by multi-stakeholder processes and key partners
- Opportunity to advance policy and the direction of implementation of government strategies

Based on this the following Good Food Solutions for BC draft priority areas were shared, and all at the Gathering were encouraged to consider and give feedback on these, as well as think about and capture how these priority areas were being explored through workshops and conversations throughout the Gathering:

- Foodland and water
- Support for new and existing farmers and food enterprises
- Local food system infrastructure and capacity
- Institutional food procurement
- Food and income insecurity
- Community food hubs
- School food programs
- Indigenous food sovereignty priorities:
 - Food lands / bio-cultural heritage areas
 - Wild salmon
 - Traditional trading and sharing networks

WORKSHOPS

Wild Salmon Caravan: Let's make it the next Mardi Gras of BC

Dawn Morrison, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Dawn shared the activities and actions around the first annual Wild Salmon Caravan and shared opportunities to be involved in the future. Appreciate and inquire into the keystone role that wild salmon play in the land and food system. Raise awareness of the issues, concerns, situations and strategies for building capacity to form alliances and link coalitions and campaigns for saving wild salmon from further industrial harm and endangerment. Recruit and promote local and regional community coordinators to become involved in the Caravan.

Food Networks Panel

Loraina Stephen, Northern Health / HEAL

Brent Mansfield, BC Food Systems Network

Norine Messer, Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Foods Network

Michelle Roberge and Maya Sullivan, Nechako Valley Food Network

An energetic panel of leaders from provincial, regional, and local food networks from across BC highlighted their networks, their missions, models, resources, activities and potential for collective

impact. These presentations were followed by a lively discussion about the power of networks and collective action.

Food, Farms, Fish and Finance: Radical and Practical Investment Ideas to Transform Our Sustainable Food Systems

Christie Young, FarmStart

New artisans, social entrepreneurs and co-operatives are building out the spaces across local sustainable food value chains: from new farmers, local processors, diversifying distributors and supply chain actors, to new retailers and restaurants, technology and marketplace platforms. These entrepreneurs are employing scrappy, creative and thoughtful strategies to deal with the challenges and crisis points they face in relation to financing and investment. However, if we continue to expect these enterprises to carry all the risk, regulatory challenges, and costs involved in sustainable, local food production, their competitive viability will continue to be unfairly compromised, and we will see slow growth and many failures.

As Woody Tasch of Slow Money proposes, we need to find new financial vehicles that "bring money back down to earth" and to allow us "invest as if food, farms and fertility matter." We must find way to share the risks and returns of healthy, local food systems equitably.

From investing in the regeneration of our soils and the long-term stewardship of our productive farmlands, to increasing seed, venture, and patient operating capital for enterprises, to building the capacity and resilience of the sector, we will identify real, delicious and profitable investment opportunities and explore ways in which citizens, governments, and impact investors can and must intervene and invest differently to seed and support the transformation of the food system.

Launching the Real Food Challenge in BC: Gathering Wisdom for a Bright Future

Celia White, Meal Exchange

Celia shared the opportunity to join the Meal Exchange Network in fine-tuning the definition for Real Food - a province-wide standard based on ecologically-sound agriculture, social justice, animal welfare, and community-based economies. The Real Food Challenge will launch in the winter of 2015/2016 at universities across British Columbia, and will pose a challenge for all universities to purchase 20% Real Food by 2020. Representatives from the Meal Exchange came to the Gathering looking for wisdom, experience and creativity in finalizing their definition of Real Food.

Foodland Conservation & Access: Exploring A Local Government Foodland Trust

Linda Geggie, Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR)

Jessica Dennis, University of British Columbia

Farm and food land in many regions of BC, including the Capital Regional District (CRD), is increasingly under pressure from competing interests and the resulting rising cost of land is leading to farmland that is unaffordable to farmers. Local governments have the potential to play an important role in farmland protection, regulating agricultural land uses, and supporting access for farmers and growers. A local government food land trust is one potential mechanism for furthering access to public lands for food growing and farming. Two of the municipalities in the CRD passed a council directive in 2014 to explore a farmland trust and land acquisition fund and the CRD's current draft Regional Sustainability Strategy has a directive to implement a farmland trust. CR-FAIR is a non-profit organization that works to strengthen regional food security and sustainable local agriculture in the CRD. CR-FAIR launched a Farm and Foodland Trust project in collaboration with the UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems and Farm Folk City Folk, and with support from the municipality of Saanich and District of North Saanich. The project team has conducted background research, interviews and consultations with a diversity of stakeholders over the past 6 months to explore models and mechanisms available to municipalities and/or the CRD to support the utilization of publicly owned lands for food growing and farming.

Using the CRD as a case study, this session explored the potential of a local government farmland trust approach, as one part of a diversified strategy, for advancing increased utilization and access to farm and food lands for both commercial and non-commercial food growing in BC.

Canning Workshop: Preserving Rescued Produce

Tara Immell, Simon Fraser University

Environmental Health Officers, Northern Health

This session was a hands-on canning workshop. Participants learned how to can rescued produce and made strawberry jam. Discovery Organics donated cases of strawberries that they were no longer able to sell. Participants also discussed food waste using case studies from Greater Vancouver, to understand each tier of the food waste pyramid. Preservation alternatives beyond canning were also explored. For example, turning 50 surplus zucchinis into 1,000 frozen muffins, drying zucchini chips for snacks or canning grated zucchini with tomatoes to make salsa. All participants were able to take home a jar of jam.

Food is Medicine: Traditional Food Gathering and Preserving Project

Ramona Lewis, Okanagan Indian Band Health Department

To get back to the land to gather and preserve traditional foods is an innovative way to get the community members actively involved in healthy eating and physical activity. It gives participants a holistic approach to wellbeing - mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

Mentally (Learning): You are reviving and passing on the traditions of our ancestors, being proud of our traditions/culture and teachings of gathering and preserving techniques.

Emotionally (Connection): You are connected to your family, friends, elders, youth, children and community. We use food to gather our people together for feasts, celebrations and ceremonies. When we are out on the land we are all equal, we share what we gather.

Physically (Healthy): You are getting exercise by hiking up the mountains and picking berries, hunting, fishing, digging roots, and eating the nutritious healthy foods. It feels so good when we are up the mountain in fresh air and peacefulness.

Spiritually (Respect): You respect, pray and give thanks to the land, plants, and animals for providing you with this food. You learn from your elders of the stories and songs and teachings of how the plants and animals have given up their lives for us so we can continue to exist on the land.

When you're sitting next to your grandma picking berries, it doesn't seem like work at the time for some, however it is very important work that must continue each year. Today we are dependent on grocery stores, restaurants and fast food, and because of that, we're not as healthy as we were long ago when we gathered and preserved our own food. When we reconnect with past practices we can reclaim our roles and responsibilities as providers for ourselves, families and community, knowing that traditional foods gathering and preserving techniques have and always will play a major role in our overall health and wellbeing. Ramona Lewis shared stories, videos and pictures of the Okanagan Traditional Food Gathering and Preserving Project and the impact it had on her and her community.

Local Action to Bring Food into the Conversation Leading Up to the Federal Election

Diana Bronson, Food Secure Canada

Food Secure Canada has launched a national campaign to encourage Canadians to bring food into the conversations leading up to the federal election. Despite the fact that it is foundational to our daily lives, food is not considered a critical election issue, even with the food crisis in the north, a crisis of farm succession, and high rates of food insecurity facing us. Participants talked about what they can do in their communities to get food in the election conversation, to educate candidates, and foster engaged food citizens.

Mobilizing Community Food Hubs in BC

Diane Collis, Janine de la Salle and Aart Schuurman Hess; Greater Vancouver Food Bank

Brent Mansfield, BC Food Systems Network

Community food hubs (CFHs) are an emerging area of social service and community development. The Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) is one of many organizations developing tools and strategies for shifting away from the short-term emergency food system into developing long-term strategies for community health and wellness. The facilitators shared personal learnings to date on shifting the GVFB food depots to hubs and developing CFH and youth food action initiatives around BC. This was an

interactive and heartfelt session around the fire that broadened understanding of the diversity of strategies being used to implement CFHs and inspire awareness of food issues.

Saturday, June 27th, 2015

MORNING PLENARY

Good Food Solutions for Northern BC Panel

Loraina Stephen, Population Health Dietician, Northern Health Authority

David Connell, Associate Professor, University of Northern British Columbia

Jillian Merrick, Project Coordinator, Beyond the Market; Prince George City Council

Jeannie Parnell, Stellat'en First Nation

The second morning plenary focused on the 'good food solutions' for Northern BC. Part of the idea was that, as the BCFSN moves its Annual Gathering around the province, it is important to give attendees a sense of the food systems issues in the different regions we are in. The four presenters shared their different perspectives, through generally responding to the following questions:

- What do others not from the North need to know about food systems in the region?
- What food systems challenges are most pressing?
- What opportunities do you see to increase collaboration to support more healthy, just and sustainable food systems in Northern BC?

WORKSHOPS

The ALR in a Land Use Planning Framework

Joan Sawicki

David Connell, University of Northern British Columbia

This session focused on the importance of engaging in land use planning in protecting food land in BC. It provided an overview look at the ALR as a land-use planning tool, from its beginnings and through the waves of provincial planning processes over its 40-year history. There have been substantial changes to provincial policies over the past year and new issues keep arising. More than ever, local governments can influence the outcomes. Insights were shared from work David recently completed to assess the state of agricultural land use planning for farmland protection in northern BC (more can be found here: <http://blogs.unbc.ca/agplanning/northern-bc-project/>). The possibility of an interactive ALR Map to monitor changes to the agricultural land use decisions was also briefly discussed.

Consultation and Consensus: The Growing Power of the Indigenous Maya

Iyra Stewart

Through Ira's sharing of inspiring stories of innovation and political will in Guatemala participants got a look at the process of transforming society from Indigenous perspective and what it can mean for Indigenous food security. Iyra lead a discussion around the impact of development, on indigenous food systems and the demand for constitutional change and recognition of territorial autonomy. The discussion highlighted impacts of Canadian mining interests in other countries.

Cultural Interface where Indigenous and Sustainable Agri-Food Systems Intra-act

Co-facilitators: Dawn Morrison, Director - Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Heather Pritchard, Farm Folk City Folk

Dawn and Heather worked to identify key points of entry into a journey of better understanding the ways in which the indigenous food system and sustainable agri-food system are being expressed and the ways in which their realities are entangled, i.e. land and water strategies, characteristics of bio-cultural heritage, paradigm, model of economy. They each did short presentations and then lead a discussion that kept participants engaged into the next session and throughout much of the day.

The subsequent discussion focused on identifying key points of intersections within the cultural interface where Indigenous meets sustainable agri-food system and the ways in which they intra-act

either complementary or contentious, as well as identifying potential that exists within the gaps of knowledge and points of contention.

Youth Panel: Vibrant Community Action

Renfrew-Collingwood Food Matters Representing: Fresh Roots Urban Farm, Renfrew Collingwood Aboriginal Youth Canoe Club (CREW), Renfrew Collingwood Food Security Institute, Still Moon Arts Society, Windermere Organic Garden

The Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood (population 50,000) is located in East Vancouver on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. Before colonial settlement, the area's lakes and forests provided abundant food for indigenous people. It is said that people from as far away as Vancouver Island would arrive in their canoes to hunt and gather food. In the 1860s, the Royal Engineers (under Richard Moody) laid claim to a lake that sat between what are now Kingsway and Vanness Avenues. Moody and other early European settlers drained the lake and used the fertile soil to turn the area into productive agricultural land.

The community's history and future are linked to transformations in the local food system and shifts in population dynamics. Today, Renfrew-Collingwood is a multi-ethnic neighbourhood where approximately 30% of our neighbours live at or below the poverty line. Since the late 1970s there has been a dramatic increase in residents speaking English as a second language, signalling rapid social change as immigrants from around the world settle in the community; 1.2% of residents identify as Aboriginal. 2006 Census data also indicates that Renfrew-Collingwood is home to a higher proportion of single parents, children, and seniors than the City of Vancouver as a whole. It is one of five Vancouver neighbourhoods with the greatest density of food bank users, and emerging research on Vancouver schools has identified alarming trends in food insecurity among local school age children.

While social and economic inequalities make many of our neighbours more vulnerable to food insecurity, the community is also a centre of vibrant community action: It is home to a ground-breaking schoolyard garden and greenhouse, Canada's first modern schoolyard farm, Vancouver's oldest and most established neighbourhood food network, and Vancouver's last remaining uncovered stream. What does it mean to grow food in the city? To pull garbage out of a stream? To understand the cultural importance of gathering together around food? This incredibly motivated and knowledgeable youth panel shared their own stories of grassroots, neighbourhood-based food justice and environmental activism, and their thoughts on future directions.

Social Enterprises and Food Systems

Home Sweet Home, Prince George

The Home Sweet Home proprietors and our caterers took a group of participants down to the dock to share the story of their business and lead an informal discussion on social enterprises and how they can support local food systems.

Growing Farm to School in BC: A Look at Regional Hubs as a Model for Gathering Momentum

Vanessa Perrodou - Provincial Manager, Farm to School BC

Keira McPhee – Hub Animator, Kamloops, Farm to School BC

Established in 2007, Farm to School BC is a diverse and expanding provincial network that promotes, supports and links farm to school activity, policy and programs across the province. Farm to School programs bring healthy, local food into schools and provide hands-on learning opportunities that foster food literacy, all while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness.

Farm to School BC is currently inside of a two year project entitled "Growing Farm to School in BC", during which we will have funded 50 new Farm to School programs and three Farm to School Regional Hubs across the province. Vanessa and Keira gave an overview of Farm to School, speak briefly to the Farm to School Start-up Grant recipient plans and discuss our process, successes and challenges to date in building three Farm to School Regional Hubs in the Capital Regional District on Vancouver Island, within the Kamloops School District and in the Vancouver area. Participants will leave the presentation with next steps on how to begin the process of building a Farm to School program in their community,

as well as an understanding of the strategy Farm to School BC is using to scale up Farm to School activity at the local and provincial level.

Intro to Home Cheese-Making

Beatriz Ramos

Beatriz is a food scientist and home cheese-maker eager to share her cheese-making passion. She has been making cheese at home for over 5 years and has travelled around Spain, Mexico, USA and Canada learning about different cheese-making practices. In this workshop Beatriz covered the basic principles and chemistry of cheese making and made 3 simple cheeses (paneer, cottage, yogurt cheese). The workshop also covered how to make yogurt and soft goat cheeses. Everyone who participated received a handbook with all the recipes from the workshop so they could try to make cheese at home.

The Cost of a Dozen Eggs

Jillian Merrick, Beyond the Market

Business coach and advocate Jillian Merrick guided participants through her popular farm business exercise: a cost of production analysis for a dozen eggs. This type of exercise is essential to all farm enterprises that wish to be successful, but is so rarely practiced. Jillian illustrated that complex number crunching is really not so hard while teaching the true cost of food.

Sunday, June 27th, 2015

Annual General Meeting of BC Food Systems Network

Chaired by Abra Brynne

The following reports were given:

- Report from the Chair – Abra Brynne
- Report from the Director – Brent Mansfield
- Report on Finances and Fundraising – Brent Mansfield
- Report from the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty – Dawn Morrison

There was then a follow up discussion on the following motion from last year's AGM: "Therefore be it resolved that the BC Food Systems Network Society will enter into an agreement with Tides Canada Initiatives Society (TCI), a registered Canadian charity, to become a project of TCI and move all activities and work to this new project. Further, be it resolved that the BC Food Systems Network will continue to maintain its status as a society registered in BC, to be revisited at the next AGM." The decision was made to continue to maintain status as a society registered in BC, while not doing any activity, as part of the conditions of being a project of Tides Canada.

Three staff positions were announced:

- Director, Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty: Dawn Morrison, dawn@bcfsn.org
- Director, Engagement and Policy: Abra Brynne, abra@bcfsn.org
- Administrator and Communications Coordinator: Libby Beck, administrator@bcfsn.org

Finally, Steering Committee elections were held. The 2015/16 Steering Committee is:

- Diane Collis
- Heather Deegan
- Linda Geggie
- Colin Dring
- Carol Kergan
- Janine de la Salle
- Fiona Devereaux
- Lone Smith

- Amanda Barney
- Jeannie Parnell
- Leah Ramboly
- Additional indigenous representative (to be determined at a later date)

The Network acknowledged the contributions of the outgoing Steering Committee members (Rosemary Plummer, Herb Barbolet, Nicholas Scapillati and Jillian Merrick).

Closing Circle

Participants did a check out and shared some highlights and what they would be taking home from the Gathering. Then everyone took their bagged lunches and started their travels home.

The BC Food Systems Network, a project on Tides Canada's shared platform, works to create healthy, just and sustainable food systems in British Columbia by strengthening connections, nurturing capacity, and supporting joined-up food policy at all levels. BCFSN works in partnership with farmers and ranchers, fishers, First Nations, and people in communities working to rebuild their food systems from the ground up. www.bcfsn.org