

Because Food Matters...

A healthy environment directly impacts Food Lands and the availability of both wild and cultivated foods.

“Would love to see a community garden in the empty lot down below [the Bread of Life]”

“We aim for 100% local so we cook with what we get that day [Swept Away Inn].”

“It’s time to consider the flow of money.
We all eat. We must put the money in a different direction.”

“Poverty is huge issue...We need a thriving local food economy. Let’s train and employ people to be a part of it.”

The above quotes are from the Food Security Workshop and capture many of the big ideas from the day.

This report was compiled by Sarah Thomas on behalf of Alberni Valley Transition Town Society (AVTTS). Funded through the Community Food Action Initiative and Island Health Food Hub program. Thanks to everyone who helped with workshop coordination, presented projects, and participated in the discussion that fed into this report. Cover picture – art piece by Annie Merritt and Edward Johnson.

For more information or to contact AVTTS visit avtransitiontown.org or call 250 730-9110.

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1. Introduction to Alberni Valley Transition Town Society

Alberni Valley Transition Town Society (AVTTS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to a resilient low-carbon society. Through working groups and inter-agency collaboration, Alberni Valley Transition Town Society focuses on priority directions of (1) food security, (2) sustainable transportation (3) sustainable housing, (4) alternative/green energy, and (5) supporting other initiatives that contribute to similar goals.

The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society is a developing Food Hub in conjunction with Island Health. As a developing food hub, AVTTS is working to create partnerships and strengthen inter-agency collaboration to support initiatives and action towards greater food security in the Alberni-Clayoquot Region. Core functions of the hub are to build community awareness and knowledge about food and food systems, develop partnerships in the community and across the island and build capacity to increase food security.

In 2012, AVTTS developed a Community Food Assessment which serves as an inventory of where we are at with Food Security in the Valley. The present workshop launches off of this report and serves to consider where we want to go with Food Security in the Alberni Valley and how we are going to get there.

Other recent projects have included seed distribution and education at the Canada Day Parade and the Fall Fair, the development of a Seed Library at the Port Alberni Public Library, working with the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) and AV Times on a West Coast Growers Guide, and supporting the Alberni Valley Gleaning Program, School Gardens, and Family Farms Day.

Alberni Valley Transition Town Society Values

Awareness: To encourage and support education, research, and analysis concerning the challenges and implications posed by the reality of climate change and fossil fuel consumption.

Implementation: To work towards real action on community resiliency and sustainability through clear projects and working groups.

Collaboration: To work collaboratively and respectfully with the broader community and amongst our members.

Environmental Stewardship: To ensure that all actions seek to enhance the health of our water, air, and land, restoring our interconnection with the flora and fauna around us.

Food Security – When all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just.

2. Alberni Valley Food Security Workshop

The Alberni Valley Food Security Workshop served to build connections between local organisations and community partners who share an interest in improving Port Alberni’s ability to ensure good, healthy, culturally appropriate food for all.

On April 16th, 2015, forty-one people, representing over forty organizations, gathered at the Tseshaht Administration Building to discuss what a Food Secure Alberni Valley looks like and what it would take to achieve greater food security in the region. The conversation included representatives from organizations that provide food, farmers, farmers markets, The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and First Nations Government staff, the Port Alberni Food Security and Climate Change Committee, active community members, restaurants, representatives from Island Health, Eat West Coast, and more.

The agenda was as follows:

8:15am	Gathering with light breakfast
8:30am	Introduction by Dr. Geoff McKee, Medical Health Officer Resident, Island Health Visioning: What does a Food Secure Port Alberni look like?
9:30am	Presentations: Food Hub Projects and Directions
10:30am	Coffee Break
10:45pm	Discussion: Food security needs and priorities (learning from each other)
12:30pm	Light lunch

Annie Merritt and Edward Johnson did graphic facilitation and put art to the words, visions, and ideas that were discussed throughout the morning.

John Mayba introduced The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society and then presentations were given from:

- Edna Cox (AVTTS) – Community Food Assessment, Household Food Survey, and other Food Group projects
- Norine Messer – Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Food Network
- Helene Dufour (VIHA Community Nutritionist) presented on Comprehensive School Health and the Healthy Schools Initiative.



Figure 1: Thanks to many farmers and producers, good, local food was enjoyed.

2.2 World cafe Questions

What is the most important thing to me about food security?

What do you see as the strengths in the valley around food security? What is the most important thing we need to do to work together?

What needs to change in order for us to get there? What difficult conversations need to happen?

What is the most important thing to me about food security?

Sustainability

- Resilient systems of food productions
- Environmentally sustainable production
- Nutrient density
- Reducing waste/recycling waste/composting program

Availability

- Accessible, nutritious food for everyone; no one left out.
- Affordable for all.
- Preparation for global food disasters

It's a holistic concept

- Mental health issues due to food security/insecurity
- Increase mental health, increase happiness, increase quality of life, increase self-confidence
- Must alleviate poverty to be able to use food/cook
- Hard to eat healthy on low income diet
- Keeping the cultural integrity of the community
- Opportunities for exposure to something new
- Utilisation of appropriate species for changing conditions for planting and eating

Networking

- Humans supporting initiatives/projects

Local empowerment

- Survivability of individuals and community with a collective effort for at least a year
- Policies that support food security

Food sovereignty

Nutrition

Distribution

- Sharing between island communities of surplus foods, eg seeds, and of expertise.

Education

- of younger generations
- Education of politicians

- Community gardens for The Bread of Life and Kuu-us
- Community kitchens
- Learning to can and preserve foods
- Going door-to-door with seed packets, printed with how-to information.
- Encourage and educate for container gardening for those with limited space
- Older generation teaching younger (reconnecting old and young)
- Horticultural education
- Budget education for food start young
- That people are given the knowledge
- Every school needs a garden. Summer crops could go to food kitchen.
- Everyone has something to teach
- Food skills a journey – learning, teaching
- Culinary training/access to kitchens (especially low income)

Empowering alternative food systems

- Processing/saving food
- Preserving season
- Successful gleaning program
- Food is everywhere – wild and edible landscaping
- Too much food waste – is there a way to preserve and share?

That it exists for ALL

- Fair/equal distribution of food
- Adequate supply/production

Backyard gardening

- Container planning – teach on smaller basis
- Flexible and adaptable growing abilities for changing conditions

Diverse mix of farmers

What do you see as the strengths in the Valley around food security? What is the most important thing we need to do to work together?

Strengths

1. Good land base
 - a. Lots of inexpensive (compared to the rest of the island) land
 - b. Additional agriculture land that could be used
 - c. Lots of underused ag land
 - d. Blackberries/natural resources
2. Accessibility of resources – ocean, land, climate, location
 - a. Hot summers
 - b. So much waste=resources
 - c. Ideal climate, quite diverse, drier
 - d. Suitable climate/soils for growing

3. Strength of the community (volunteers)
 - a. Community spirit; existing partnerships
 - b. Energetic people
 - c. Generous, caring, resilient community – past success over adversity
 - d. Good volunteer base
 - e. Seniors with fridges/freezers/yards/knowledge/desire to be involved and helping and connected and time
4. Local knowledge
 - a. Knowledge and experience about growing, preserving, etc.
 - b. Diversity of viewpoints and strengths
5. Demand for local food
 - a. More and more people want local food.
6. Municipal and regional support for local agriculture
 - a. Supportive city council
7. Many successes already achieved
 - a. Agriculture plan
 - b. Existing programs – hot lunch, gleaning, other?

Need to do

Collaborative effort for public outreach/education

Contest for kids/involve children/ask children

Fund/increase funding for existing programs

Support families in accessing healthy foods

Delegation to council – acknowledge reality of current food crisis

Bring issue to UBCM

Involve politicians in programs

Mass delegation/celebration of food

Large network – branded regionally in support of food security

City – food security webpage

Website list of community projects/volunteer opportunities

Address food waste

Create support systems for people including elderly, poor, disabled, marginalized youth

Need leader for food security

Edible landscaping, Education, water conservation

Environmental stewardship

Partnerships

- Connect and communicate

Action plan with funded implementation

Need larger organisation with paid coordinator to move things forward

Need more government involvement

Need to get message out to larger community. Events.

Eat healthy be healthy perspective
Food security is seen as just targeting the poor
Utilize resources you have bring community together and don't give up. Money will follow
If road block, find another path
Once established people can't say no.
Need to rehire the workers for the agricultural plan
Approach banks/businesses. Real estate foundation. Vancity.
Proposal writing committee
To get them on board with what is happening
Government support for young farmers
Food charter
Number of groups interested and involved
Find consistency in the food available. Healthy food should not be a "treat" but a continuity of care.

Working together

We need to fund farmers to farm all that land
New crop of volunteers are needed
Work with ADSS to organize volunteers
Get organizations all on the same page working together
Farmers entitled to a profit
Don't duplicate services
Taking emotions out of the game
Education of the public for true cost of production and quality
Integrate what works

Most important thing:

More workshops like these
CELEBRATE the successes
Focus on what's going right, not on what's wrong
Post info about successes in vacant store-front windows
Begin a round table
Identify each other's/each organizations' strengths and share these
Have one strong Farmers Market
Hold Seedy Saturday earlier in the year and at a central, not far out, location
Catch 22: vendors want lots of buyers; buyers want a variety of vendors
Music is an asset at Farmers Markets
Door-to-door selling from a truck: "a healthy version of the ice-cream truck"

What needs to change in order for us to get there? What difficult conversations need to happen?

Why are most people not supporting local producers?

How can we change attitudes so entrenched?

How can we shift people's financial priorities? (cellphones instead of good quality food).

Government Policy

Change policy to allow more extensive urban agriculture (farms) and urban markets

Try to get local food into grocery stores

Regulatory issues for farm-to-table

Local/provincial/federal support for transition to local agriculture

Productive office in gov't for "Food security and agriculture". Look for models internationally

Perception of barriers which may not exist

Difficult conversations with government

Environmental Degradation and Climate Change

Invasive species on and around your property

Addressing the future impacts of climate change on food system

Water security

Land Availability

Land accessibility and young farmers to farm it

Accessing unused local land

Land bank for lease to new farmers

Funding

Funding for farms and market enterprises

Need community endowment with large amount of funds

Increased subsidies for local production

Funding for projects that don't necessarily produce profits but produce value for people and health

A depressed economy, poverty, convenience and time pressure are factors.

Education

Transformational society shift – society and community

Community Priorities need to change – education.

Shift in paradigm about waste – make it a resource

Educate people as to true cost of globally produced vs local food (environmental impact, social cost, carbon cost).

Paradigm shift >> people and health NOT profits

Public – pay more for local food. Use visuals.

Self-awareness of the need to change is a priority.

Education about food issues is crucial.

Greater effort to encourage people to grow their own food and harvest fruit that is available

Collaboration

Need government, teachers, youth together. School board.

Large community gathering where all aspects of community represented.

Focus on converting talk into action

Need people who have clear presentations to approach all levels of government.

Follow through from meeting/networks

Conversation with school board – funding shifts

Conversation with all levels of gov't - Invite more politicians to round tables.

Markets

One big thriving farmers market – overcome old grievances. Funding common ground.

A centrally located market open all week. Include local seafood (link with local first nations fisheries?)

Establish a local seafood market or on beat sales

Resolve the issue of the farmers market(s)

Infrastructure/Resources

Need to take advantage of infrastructure that already exists

Recycling food waste more immediately

including community gardens/land sharing/leasing etc

Get more people involved and keep getting more people involved.

Leaders and volunteers are ageing and tiring.

Health

Talk about individual health

Community programs to preserve/store to donate foods – increased coupon program – give out coupons/not money, or give to groups for distribution

Looking at liability – who is liable, gov't or other program to cover liability for food security programs

Change will happen as the reality of drought, high food prices, water issues, foreign purchase of farmland force awareness.

2.3 Partnerships coming out of the workshop

- 1) Intra-agency synergies across departments that people didn't previously know existed.
- 2) New farm/restaurant connections leading to new market connections.
- 3) A community of low income people in town who have an interest in growing food learnt about and began using the seed lending library
- 4) People from school meal programs were able to meet with school garden proponents and discuss possible collaborations.



3. Next Steps

AVTTS plans to pursue the development of a Food Action Roundtable and will be in touch about further next steps. Many other directions were also discussed in conversation at the Workshop. Individual responses from the final session of the workshop are included below:

Where Do We Go From Here?

What actions (including collaborations or conversations) would you like to engage in after this event?

A coordinating, planning body to assess how we are doing and to speed up progress on goals

A mass delegation to City Council

An all-week market

Convince farmers to grow more

Lobby governments for sustainable agriculture

Water for irrigation needed at reasonable cost

Blue Dot initiative to bring municipal legislation

Young Agrarians assistance needed

Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and food box programs

Food coupons which anyone can buy (from Helene) to remove stigma and stimulate sales

Slow food



4. Conclusion

First and foremost, the goal of building connections between local organizations and community advocates who share an interest in improving Port Alberni's ability to ensure good, healthy, culturally appropriate food for all was certainly met. Significant inter-agency conversation took place allowing information to be shared and new collaborations to begin. There is strong interest in continuing the conversation in some way in order to further collaboration to support food initiatives in the Valley.

The workshop saw representatives from a range of agencies that provide food, mingling with farmers, restaurant managers, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District staff, First Nations government staff, health officials, non-profit members, and community advocates representing various food related committees in the city.

One of the outcomes of the workshop was a beautiful graphic representation of the visions, values, and inter-relationship of food security that comprised the discussions of the day. Conference organizers plan to scan the art piece so that it can be more easily shared and then use the piece at future community events and roundtable discussions.

One major direction that was discussed was the feasibility of a Food Action Roundtable for the Alberni-Valley which would be a forum for regular conversation and further collaboration. One concern which came up is the number of groups already working on different aspects of food security and the fact that many people are already involved in a number of initiatives so time is stretched. Despite this there is significant interest in some sort of 'leadership team' to continue this work and bridge some of the gaps that presently exist. Such a Roundtable could potentially also function as the food working table for the Alberni-Clayoquot Health Network. Another possibility would be to host an annual Food Security workshop which could perhaps tie into an ACRD workshop such as the "Outstanding in Your Field" event that was held later in April this year. Regardless, the work must continue.

Alberni Valley Transition Town Society is taking the lead on this and is exploring these possibilities. We plan to pursue the development of a Food Action Roundtable and will be in touch as that proceeds.

Appendix 1: Workshop Agenda



Alberni Valley
Transition Town Society

Food Security Workshop

April 16th, 2015 – Agenda

8:15 am – Gathering and light breakfast

8:30 am – Welcome & Context

9:00 am – Visioning – What does your food secure Alberni Valley look like?

9:30 am – Presentations – Food Hub projects and directions

Edna Cox – Alberni Valley Community Food Assessment

Norine Messer – Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Food Network

Helene Dufour – Healthy schools initiative

10:30 am – Break

10:45 am – Small group discussion – Where do we go from here?

12:00 – Reporting back and Summary

12:20 – Next steps and Priorities

12:30 – light lunch

Appendix 2: Participant Response Form



Alberni Valley
Transition Town Society

Name/Organization: _____

Alberni Valley Food Security Workshop

Participant Response Form

How could the work of Transition Towns Food Hub link with / support the work you are doing?

What other specific aspects of food security should be addressed?

Who else should be involved?

Participant Response Form Responses

How could the work of Transition Towns Food Hub link with / support the work you are doing?

Linking

Linking us to local food to use in our restaurant. To bring slow real food back into our daily meals by getting to know our local farmers.

I would like to be able to share what I cook with other people in Port Alberni but don't know how to do that.

post info to your list

tell people about market/workshops

keep the conversation going!

networking and making community connections

Education/Skill training

work with giving information to our client base on how to garden and raise plants into food group to teach kids (canning food and cooking)

educate me regarding what is happening in our community and how I can be involved

We are starting a community garden. We'd need help educating our people

Funding

funding needed through School District for community schools in order to run programs in Port Alberni and West Coast

donation of greens, etc for salads for students

help to find us benefactors and people who will donate to program.

Volunteers/Physical support

attend workshops

come to markets

send volunteers our way to help

any volunteers who wish to work on the farm

Lobbying

Joint delegation to city council stressing Crisis

support landfill biodegradable waste being made into compost

Project Coordination

Connect one garden at a time - large piece of land or small. Then the ripple effect could take place 2015-2016 Use the new gd. 6's at wood, howitt, Alberni, Maquinna. 2016-2017 Use the new grade 7s

To be involved with our comprehensive school Health approach with school district and the health network

food box in local stores to help families in need

partnerships to teach families how to garden and grow their own food and why

What other specific aspects of food security should be addressed?

Production capacity

- more food growers needed
- what are the top ten most nutritious foods we can grow?
- food storage: Fee-free water for urban farming with climate smart agriculture
- water shortage this growing season and onward
- how we can scale up local production?

Availability

- Emergency food sources: sunchokes
- share the food. I have too much and others have too little.
- need a 2 year supply of food now!
- more wild/Indigenous foods
- Fisheries
- access to healthy food for low income pregnant moms

Affordability

- could farmers (that are doing well in other communities (Kamloops etc)) donate seed etc to towns that are struggling?
- funding
- food insecurity - how to make local food more affordable and accessible
- a local money program that allows goods and services to be bought, sold, and traded internally

Collaboration

- less paper work for people to get supports and information (please take this into consideration when planning registration process)
- climate action education and dealing with the trauma of that reality
- education around container gardening for people living in apartments, duplexes
- food culture in schools

Who else should be involved?

Eaters

Everyone

consumers

youth

- High School Students need to help respond in crisis

low income parents

Governments

Mayor and/or City Council

- could city allow use of land to grow vegetables that could be donated back to Breakfast Clubs, Bread of Life, churches (that provide hampers), lunch programs in schools...

Federal and Provincial government

- need to step up to the plate and subsidize local food production
- for more food growers

MLA in regards to discussion of BC funding

Department of Fisheries and Oceans

Member of Parliament (MP)

First Nations Governments

First Nations Bands

Fisheries

Health and Service Agencies

Paul Hasselback - social determinants of health, Port Alberni is very challenged in this regard.

ACAWS (they work with women and the mothers who mainly cook the food for their families.

Mental Health

Health Network

Basic Income Network

BCIN

RCMP (and other emergency services) in the inevitable climate-caused global food crisis they will have the job of keeping all hell from breaking out

Schools

School District (SD 70)

more schools (for training and hands on effect to bring the info with the family)

Farmers and Businesses

Farmers need a basic income

farmers etc

local market people

stores etc

business who may be interested in providing funding

fundes (to supply more equipment and supplies)

Appendix 3: Organizations Represented

ALBERNI VALLEY FOOD SECURITY WORKSHOP APRIL 16, 2015
Attendees – Organizations Represented
ACRD
ACRD Agriculture support workers
ADSS Breakfast Program
Agricultural Development Committee
Alberni Valley Gleaning Program
Avalon Farm
Barclay Hotel
Bread of Life
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
Canadian Mental Health Association Healthy Harvest Farm
Eat West Coast
Eden Tree Farm
Bob's Place (Farm)
Farmers Institute
Friendship Centre
Friendship Centre Family and Health Services
Hupacasath First Nation
Huu-ay-at
Integrated Health Network
Island Health
Leda Organic farm
Mirable Urban Farm
Neighbour Link Read and Feed
Our Local Markets
Port Alberni Food Security and Climate Change Committee
Shelter (Friendship Lodge)
Sunset Market
Swept Away Inn
Transition Towns Food Hub
Tseshah First Nation
Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Food Network
Vancouver Island Grain and Milling
Women's Food and Water initiative
Young Professionals Alberni Valley

Appendix 4: Food Sources

Local Food for Breakfast and Lunch

Thanks to all of the people who grew, raised, milled, and cooked our food!

Coleman Meadows Farm

6670 Coleman Road
Dyson Family

*Vegetables and fruits in season, hay,
Water buffalo meats and cheese.*



Bob's Place

Spirit Square Farmers Market
Bob Haynes



Organically raised chicken, turkey, pork, lamb, eggs

Avalon Farm

8286 Faber Rd. Port Alberni
Cathy and Kerry MacDonald

Certified Organic blueberries, garlic, hay



Vancouver Island Grain and Milling

3000 Mozart Rd. Port Alberni
Wayne and Carrie Smith

*Freshly milled certified organic whole grains, cereals
and flour, beef, chicken, hay*



Eden Tree Farm and Gardening

6220 Karen Place, Port Alberni
Heather Shobe

Organic plants, produce, lamb, wool, herbs, preserves



CMHA Healthy Harvest

Beaver Creek Road Port Alberni
Anna Lewis and Charles Thomas

*Vegetables, fruit, garlic, herbs, in season.
Seasonal vegetable box program.*



Collins Farm

5955 Hector Road Port Alberni
Bob and Ann Collins

*Grass-fed beef, free-range eggs, seasonal vegetables,
berries, maple syrup, baking, jams, jellies*



Leda Organic Farm

Biodynamically managed Farm and Eco-Forest

4361 Batty Road Port Alberni
Gary and Jacquie Swann



Starla Watts



Farmer Bill's Country Market, Pete's Mountain Meats, Sheri Wong, Lee Farm, Mr. Irg

Appendix 5: Resource List

This resource list includes items that came up throughout the workshop indicating places where people can get more information about gardening and wild harvesting or learn skills to begin, or adjust, their own garden.

City of Port Alberni Website	http://www.portalberni.ca/urban-agriculture	Information about City bylaws and directions with regard to Urban Agriculture.
Dry Creek Community Garden	4 th and Napier (beside the Friendship Centre)	Garden plots available.
Leda Organic Farm	4361 Batty Road. 250-723-7692.	Tuesday skills training Free. Drop in or call ahead.
Mirable Urban Farm	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mirabel-URBAN-FARM-Market/395222720666737	Urban Gardening Workshops (drought adaptations, mulching, hugelkultur, bioavailable soil).
Plant Knowledge Cards	http://www.indigenousfoodsvi.ca/pacific-northwest-plant-knowledge-cards/	Information about indigenous foods local to the Pacific Northwest.
Parks and Recreation	http://www.portalberni.ca/healthy-living-guide-0	Edible Plant Workshops and gardening tips.
Port Alberni Public Library	4245 Wallace St	Gardening and seed saving books. Seed Library.
West Coast Growers Guide	Available at locations around town	Planting calendar, farm listings, gardening tips, and more.