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## *Land Acknowledgement*

The Alberni Valley Food Security Society operates within the ancestral, unceded and traditional territory of the Hupačasath and Tseshaht First Nations. We seek to increase our understanding of Indigenous food systems and respectfully acknowledge the keepers of this land.

# From AVFSS

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As we welcome a new year, it's an opportune time to reflect on the Alberni Valley Food Security Society's (AVFSS) achievements in 2024. Thanks to our dedicated board, volunteers, tireless staff, and partners, this has been an inspiring year of continued growth and transformation for our organization. We have seen remarkable improvements and are poised to build upon these successes as we step into 2025.

Among the highlights of the past year were further developments at the Dry Creek Community Garden, the expansion of the Gleaning Project, and vibrant community events such as Family Farms Day, Seedy Saturday, and a lively Square Dance. These initiatives have significantly enhanced our community outreach and support for local agriculture. Our commitment to exploring opportunities for further impact remains steadfast as we move into the new year.

Looking forward, AVFSS is focused on aligning its initiatives with core values and principles. This strategic planning is crucial for effectively managing our growing influence and commitments.

These commitments underscore our dedication to enhancing community engagement and sustainability. We invite everyone to join us in our mission to build food security for all in the Alberni Valley. Thank you for your continued support, and together, let's forge a future filled with positive change.



In food and community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Byron Pugh". The signature is fluid and cursive.

*AVFSS President - Byron Pugh*

# Our Work

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## *Our Vision*

A Food Secure Alberni Valley: When all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable and culturally appropriate foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just.



**9680**

pounds of  
local fruit  
gleaned

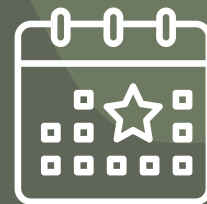


**475**

Seed packs  
distributed  
locally

**23**

participation  
in public  
events



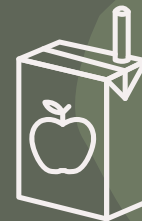
**31**

hours of  
educational  
opportunities  
offered



**Our  
Year**

**225**



litres of local  
apple juice  
produced



**98%**

of AVFSS  
funding is  
utilized locally

**562**

hours of  
volunteer  
work



**1,375**

new  
website  
visitors



# Grow Local

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*Candyse & Stephanie at the inaugural Pumpkinfest*



The Grow Local Initiative is a collaborative project designed to encourage backyard food production within the community. This initiative strives to foster gardening skills and curiosity through various programs and events. In 2024, the focus has been on expanding school gardens, conducting gardening workshops, and increasing public outreach to enhance community engagement and sustainability.

A significant component of the Grow Local Initiative is the rejuvenation of school gardens. Efforts have been concentrated on four schools: Francophone School, ADSS, Eighth Avenue, and EJ Dunn, with initial site visits conducted by key stakeholders. Professional development opportunities, such as the ProD Day event on April 19th, involved 22 teachers and included interactive sessions and networking.



*Teachers participating in the garden workshops at the district ProDay*



*Prune-Along Program*

AVFSS launched the Prune-Along program in 2024, aimed at teaching tree owners the fundamentals of tree care. This annual program will empower participants to acquire the skills needed to maintain their trees in a healthy and productive state for years to come.

# The Gleaning Project

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The Gleaning Project connects volunteers to pick fruit and property owners who have excess produce in the Alberni Valley. Harvests are shared between pickers, pick hosts and local organizations that facilitate food security programming.

The Gleaning Project showcased the vital role of gleaning to bolster food security within the community. In 2024, an impressive 9,680 pounds of fruit was picked. – a staggering 242% increase from 2023.



*Bronny leading a gleaning orientation*

Thank you to Bronny Currey who was our summer student and took on the coordination of the Gleaning Project this past season.

Community engagement was robust, with over 50 fruit picks. The annual Pruning Workshop and the newly launched Prune-Along Program enhanced local skills and knowledge. As we look to the future, the program anticipates a surplus, promising even greater contributions to the community, reinforcing the commitment to a sustainable, food-secure future.



# Dry Creek Community Garden

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*2024 Garden Manager,  
Candyse*

Dry Creek Community Garden (DCCG), established in 2013 by the Young Professionals of Alberni Valley, is a vibrant community space promoting interaction and environmental stewardship. Since late 2022, the Alberni Valley Food Security Society has managed the garden, emphasizing skill sharing and educational opportunities related to food and sustainability.



In the past year, DCCG hosted events like Pumpkinfest, Grow Local Workshops, and community work parties, enhancing community bonds and gardening participation. Operational improvements included a new raspberry trellis, a welcoming garden sign, extensive weeding, a revamped compost system, and the addition of blueberry plants in our communal bed.

Exciting developments are in store for the Dry Creek Community Garden. Although the current funding is not enough to cover all necessary materials for an expansion, this has sparked a passionate effort to seek additional sponsorship. These future enhancements will transform the garden into a larger hub of sustainability.

*Bronny & Jenna teamed up to  
install the new garden sign*



# Community Events

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## *Seedy Saturday 2024*



In November AVFSS brought back the annual gleaning square dance. It was a great time with some amazing local musicians and caller. People of all generations do-si doed and learnt some new skills.



## *Square Dance*

In 2024, AVFSS teamed up with the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District to host the 12th Annual Family Farms Day! This event allowed us to highlight some of our amazing farms and urban sites in the Valley, and we are thankful to the seven locations that welcomed the community and opened their doors.

This event offers a wonderful chance for people to engage with and support local agriculture while also finding inspiration for what they can cultivate in their own backyards.



## *Family Farm Day 2024*

# Sowing the Future for 2025

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The Alberni Valley Food Security Society (AVFSS) is embarking on an exciting strategic planning journey to align its initiatives with its fundamental values and principles, ensuring that every endeavour is impactful and meaningful. With a clear focus and purpose, AVFSS is preparing to make significant strides in enhancing food security within the community.

The Gleaning Project saw a threefold increase in the volume of fruit harvested this past year. This growth has underscored the necessity for AVFSS to explore the creation of shelf-stable products from excess fruit. We will prioritize this initiative to maximize the potential impact of the program.

Food literacy remains central to AVFSS's initiatives, and this year, the organization is excited to offer workshops on canning and creating nutritious meals on a budget. AVFSS is dedicated to thorough planning and resource allocation to ensure these initiatives achieve their full potential. These programs promise to equip community members with essential skills, empowering them to make informed food choices and embrace sustainable living.

Together, these commitments highlight AVFSS's dedication to fostering community engagement and sustainability. Through strategic planning and innovative projects, AVFSS is well-positioned to make a remarkable impact, nurturing a healthier and more connected community for years to come.

If you are interested in becoming a member this year, please contact us at [info@avfood.ca](mailto:info@avfood.ca). The membership fee is \$10 for individuals and \$20 for households, and your support directly contributes to the advancement of AVFSS.



*Let's share the bounty of food, skills and connection*

# Thank You

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The Alberni Valley Food Security Society sincerely thanks our amazing partners for their steadfast support. Your contributions have been essential to our operations and success in 2024. We are committed to serving our community and look forward to your continued support, which helps us create a lasting positive impact. Thank you for being a vital part of our mission!