



**Revelstoke Food Network  
Presents  
Food for Thought  
~ Yesterday ~ Today ~ Tomorrow ~  
Community Food Forum  
March 29, 2008**

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## **Project Background:**

The action plan for food security began in Revelstoke in early 2007 after much research by the Program Coordinator for Community Connections Food Bank. Food security was also identified in the Official Community Plan and the new Community Development Action Plan as a result of discussions held with the consultants that were hired by the City of Revelstoke.

Several initial meetings were held with a variety of local community members and the original committee was formed in August, 2007. Work immediately began to identify the meaning of food security as it pertained to Revelstoke. Nine committee meetings were held between August, 2007 and March 2008 and many hours were devoted to research and discussion with other communities and their ideas about food security issues. An evening of discussion regarding food security was planned in November, 2007. Corky Evans was invited along with our local museum curator Cathy English to be our keynote speakers, however after much planning and advertising this event had to be cancelled due to the illness of one of the guest speakers. However our focus of hosting a food security event continued to be the highlight of our meetings and planning got underway in January.

## **Food Distribution:**

Revelstoke has two identified mainstream retail outlets and thirteen alternative retailers. Local products available include organic and non-organic produce, eggs, dairy products, non-dairy products, medicinal herbs and U-brew beer and wine services. There are several home based businesses that provide home baked bread, preserves, pastries and honey. The Revelstoke Farmer's Market is operational from May – October. During these months more than twenty vendors provide fresh vegetables, fruit, meat products from Salmon Arm, honey, preserved jams and home baked goods such as bread and pastries. One organic farmer from Mara also provides a winter market with seasonal vegetables and fruit.

## **Soup Kitchens**

There is one soup kitchen in Revelstoke, which operates from a local church every Monday; however this kitchen closes during the summer months. All churches in Revelstoke participate as the church "on call" each month for emergency food needs with the transient population.

## **Food Bank Programs**

Community Connections Food Bank operates weekly and provides milk, bread, fresh vegetables and fruit and many other extra food items as needed. Monthly food hampers specific to each family size are provided as well. Food is purchased through the two local grocery stores and the local PT Farm Market provides a large quantity of second grade vegetables and fruit every Friday. A local bakery donates extra bread and buns that include many healthy choices. The Food Bank coordinator is currently looking at the possibility of providing a Good Food Box program as well as an active food recovery program with the local grocery stores.

This program also provides the Baby Bundles program which provides nutritional support and items specifically for pregnant moms and families with babies less than one year old.

The Kids Snack program provides children with a bag of nutritious snacks to last for a week, including fruit juice, peanut free healthy granola bars, natural fruit leather bars, unsweetened applesauce and fruit cups and yogurt tubes.

The Community Garden provides community members with an opportunity to grow food together and learn about growing food. It has been running for two years and also provides one large plot is planted specifically for Food Bank use. During the summer months many community members also grow an extra row in their gardens for donation to the Food Bank.

The Community Kitchen is a group of individuals who meet regularly at Community Connections to cook healthy, nutritious meals, bake goods, or preserve foods. Everyone participates to the best of their ability in the menu selection, shopping, preparation and cooking.

### School Programs

All schools in Revelstoke have some type of food delivery service. The high school has a cafeteria that operates daily and also has emergency food supplies for those who do not bring or cannot afford to pay for lunch. Two of the four elementary schools participate with the fruit and vegetable programs and milk programs. Parents in all the schools provide a cupboard for emergency food needs and two of the four schools also provide an ongoing milk program.

### Seniors

The local seniors centre did offer a weekly breakfast program for a number of months but it has since been discontinued and this group is undergoing some major changes within their executive.

Moberly Park Manor provides assisted living care services to seniors and also provides the Meals on Wheels program. This service provides pre-made hot dinners every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to seniors who qualify and they are delivered directly to the client.

### Health Professionals

Interior Health based from the Penticton hospital provides frozen meals at a price of \$5.50 each and they can be pre-ordered by the case of 8 or 16. At this time, this service is not being well utilized.

Breastfeeding is also promoted and supported by Public Health Nursing on an ongoing basis and they also host a breast feeding event in conjunction with world breast feeding week.

## **Community Food Forum:**

**Food for Thought - Yesterday ~ Today ~ Tomorrow** was hosted by Community Connections and Community Food Action Initiative, in cooperation with Interior Health on March 29, 2008. This was a one day free event with lunch provided. Participants also received a folder of resource information.

Twenty two local community members, five local committee members and four guest speakers participated in this forum. This group was comprised of local business owners, representatives from North Columbia Environmental Society, teachers, social workers, a physician, organic farmers, seniors, a paramedic, yoga instructor and other interested community members.

The guest speakers included Cathy English, Revelstoke Museum Curator who spoke on the history of Revelstoke. Cathy spoke of food production in this region and how it is not the same local industry it once was. Cathy spoke of the more than 200 farms that were active in this area from the late 1800's – 1970. During the peak farming years Revelstoke had hundreds of acres of farmland throughout the area and farmers grew a wide variety of vegetables and fruit. This produce was sold to local community members, hotel owners and shipped out of town to other communities.

In addition to this, there were several dairies that not only sold their products locally but shipped to other communities as well. Many farms raised beef, pork, poultry and eggs that were used locally and also shipped out of town for sale.

Cathryn Wellner, Food & Health Project Manager of Interior Health acted as the facilitator and was also a guest speaker for this event. She spoke of the concerns of rising costs of food and the drop in nutritional value of many of our food items and the distance food must travel. She also presented a very informative power point presentation that was well received by all the participants. Cathryn spoke of the successes that other communities have experienced with their food security forums and what action plans have been taking place within the Interior Health region and provincially.

Hermann and Louis Bruns of Wild Flight Farm were the third guest speakers and spoke of their experiences and challenges in running their own organic farm which is located in Mara BC. Hermann and Louise have twenty acres and use 9 greenhouses, a four thousand square foot packing and storage facility and hire seven seasonal employees. They produce a year round supply of organic vegetables, much of which ends up in Revelstoke at our local farm market. Currently we have a farmers market that operates from seasonally from May – October. Hermann spoke of the value of having a year round market that would be a source of in season fresh fruits and vegetables.

## **Round Table Discussions:**

### Local Community Mapping

This project identifies all food sources within Revelstoke and includes grocery stores, small convenience stores and home based businesses. During group discussions participants indicated that they would like to see resources such as the Food Bank, Community Garden, catering groups and restaurants added to this map. One of the identified goals was to have this map available online or in print form. This information can be included on Community Connections website in the future.

### Project Ideas

A round table discussion was held and participants were encouraged to share any ideas that they may have. The following thoughts were shared:

- Co-op Farming
- Celebration of planting and harvesting
- Access to food
- Use of green space
- Public Awareness and education
- Resources – canning, baking, gardening, freezing and recipe sharing
- Composting
- School gardens, roof gardens
- Garden sharing and volunteer mentors
- Seed saving and sharing
- Wild crafting
- Garden tours
- Winter Farmers Markets
- Eat local challenge
- Festival with a local theme (suggestion to have plums theme)

### Brainstorm next steps

#### Education

- Use all media outlets, newspaper, television and radio
- Create a brochure
- Organize garden tours
- Promote use of Community Kitchens
- Plan an eat local workshop
- Promote use of seasonal root crops
- Utilize Farmer's Market for recipes of the week using local grown produce
- Encourage youth through local schools to plant mini gardens

#### Production

- Look at niche products (plums) to promote a festival of celebration
- Front lawn gardening as home based business
- Acquire land for co-op farming
- Greenhouses
- Promote garden share with those cannot garden due to age or illness
- Promote Farmer's Market to have year round markets not just seasonal
- Encourage City to plant trees with edible nuts
- Provide information on wild crafting, fishing and hunting

### Celebration and sharing

- Promote garden tours with local gardeners
- Organize a garden club
- Feature garden of the week with local media
- Seedy Saturday, sharing seeds and education of what to plan and when

### Potential Community Partners

- Revelstoke Times Review
- Revelstoke Cable TV
- EZ Rock Radio
- Farmer's Market
- Grocery Stores

### Barriers

- Lack of public knowledge regarding food security issues
- Dedicated person to seek ongoing funding and keep up the momentum
- Lack of volunteer time and energy

### Solutions

- Raise public awareness with articles in newspaper, on Community Connections website
- Present this workshop information to an upcoming City Council meeting
- Create an email group with workshop participants to share information

### **Closing Round Table:**

Each participant was asked the following questions:

Did you get what you came for?

What are you most excited about?

What are you willing to get involved with?

Everyone indicated that they were very impressed with this forum and many received more information than what they thought they would. Please see attached summary of the survey completed by the participants.

All participants want to volunteer with different areas such as garden tours, land use, publicity, and community gardening and expanding the farmers market.

### **Conclusion:**

The next phase of this project will be a follow up planning and prioritizing meeting which will take place with the committee members and goals will be determined and timelines determined to accomplish these tasks. Support for these issues was acknowledged at the forum and many people were willing to volunteer their time and act as a positive voice for food security in Revelstoke. An email contact list will be created to keep in touch with all participants. Several community members have already offered to participate in the garden tours and are willing to share their gardens and expert advice with others.

This was a very successful workshop and the committee members have made the commitment to continue working with Revelstoke Food Network as have many of the participants.