



“It’s about more than food”:

Interim Report on the Stone Soup Project Community
Food Action Plan Assessment in Prince George BC

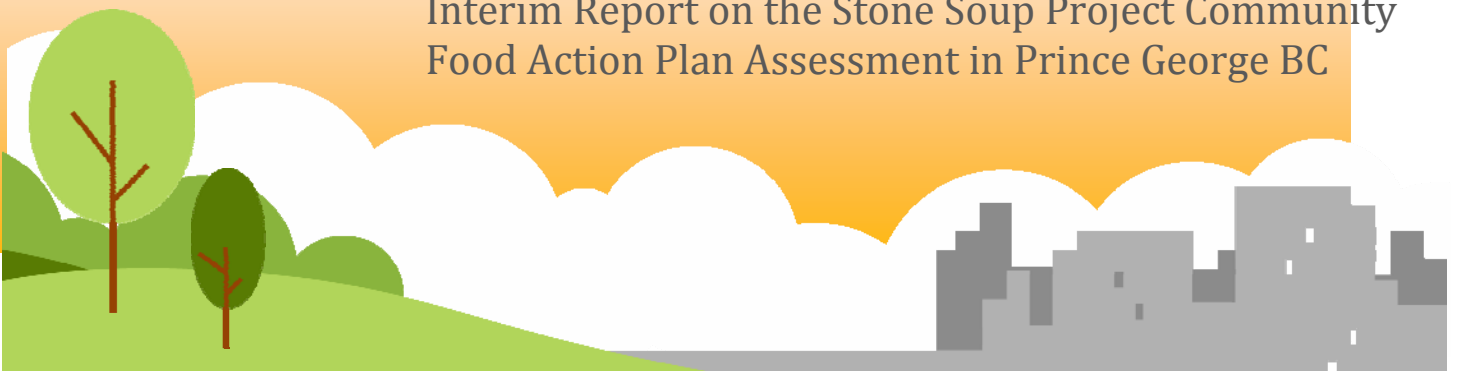




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around food in our community

"This changes every body. I see people here I used to see on the street. There, it wasn't good. You had a bad history. You couldn't trust anyone. But now it is different. Here we leave that baggage at the door. I feel safe. This is like home to me. The Stone Soup Community Kitchen has opened a million doors for me. I didn't know how to cook or do school. We have helped ourselves, and helped others. We have opened up a lot of hearts. Look at the lunch we hosted for the agencies. They were teary eyed. We have tore down walls. We tore down walls. We tore down our own walls in our own hearts. We tore down walls in other people's hearts. We can see each other." Stone Soup Community Kitchen Participants, Feb 2010



Executive Summary

The Stone Soup Project was a brand new community collaborative when the call for Community Food Action Proposals was issued by the Public Health Association of Canada in the fall of 2009. A successful application was submitted by three of the Stone Soup partners and supported by the members of the local coalition to begin a project that would further the objectives of the Stone Soup roundtable.

Since beginning the work of the funded late in October, the activities of the roundtable have focused, by necessity on the project. Participatory research to develop a Community Food Action Assessment has paralleled the development of a community kitchen delivered in the new Friendship Lodge's spacious and well equipped kitchen facilities open to other community groups and agencies.

This report presents the findings gathered from academic research and reports, work, the original and primary research carried out for this project and the learning from the community kitchen work to date. The project incorporated participatory approaches in the design and implementation of evaluation tools and an overall Action Research commitment to the work.

"Well, it is deeper than just providing food. It is about honour. The values in our culture and our communities and our families is that people must be fed. If we have a meeting and we expect a hundred we cook for one hundred and fifty. Hunger must be fed and it is honour and respect to feed people. To run out of food is a shameful thing. And the food is always used." Key Informant Interview, Feb 2010

Introduction: Prince George in Focus

The local context

Prince George is located almost at the exact geographic centre of the province in the midst of stunning natural beauty that attracts people wishing to combine work land family life with a wilderness and outdoor recreational foundation. The city and surrounding area is home to 83,225 people (census agglomeration) and 313,556 in the trading area. It is located at the junction of two major provincial highways (Highways 16 and 97) and is considered BC's northern transportation hub connecting roads north, south, east and west. Embedded within this picturesque natural landscape, the residents of this community share a proud history of long established First Nations history and land use, supplemented by a solid pioneer work ethic. Resource based extraction industries, especially mining and forestry, have been the foundation of the contemporary local economy.

In the last two decades, the city has begun to diversify from this economic base. Knowledge and research, health care, urban amenities and an active four-season lifestyle have begun to emerge as significant contributors to the local economy. There is a vibrant First Nations culture ready to welcome visitors and a growing arts sector.

The city also has a passion for a sustainable future. Recent work demonstrates the commitment to sustainability: Smart Growth on the Ground completed an intense year long design process for the downtown with a three day charette in the summer of 2009. This process included a consultation with homeless and street people that adapted the world café to the Medicine Wheel. This process and the results impressed all involved. (The SGOG report can be accessed at <http://www.sgog.bc.ca/content.asp?contentID=138>) The city also committed to facilitating **mypg**, an Integrated Community Sustainability Planning Process. Food security is a key component of sustainability planning and as such, the City partnered with other agencies to ensure diverse and specific dialogue on this topic. Phase One of the sustainability planning exercise focused on broad base public input concluded in mid-January. Themes arising from public feedback will inform scenario and strategy development workshops which form phase two of the sustainability planning exercise. Interim reports and related information can be viewed at www.mypg.ca The city also has a commitment to turn challenges and threats into opportunities. For example, the devastation of the forest by Mountain Pine Beetle has generated new industries. Small initiatives using beetle kill wood to produce art and craft objects, as well as furniture and flooring are in place. Beetle kill wood pellets are found to have higher energy. However, the forest industry has traditionally been a lucrative employer and has ensured the average income is higher than in other localities. Now, lower paying jobs are part of the economic landscape, and industries, such as call centers, are welcomed as employers even as the population decreases. The population base of Prince George has been declining over the last decade and this trend continued according to the 2006 Census data. The recent release of figures show that the overall population had decreased by a little over 5% between 1996 – 2006. The growth of seniors as a demographic also continued its trend of rising within the population base, increasing by an additional 2% compared to 2001. The population residing in Prince George over the age of 64 now stands at 9.4% of the population base. (CPAH Homelessness Framework, accessed at Shelternet)

"In effect, the population of Prince George is ageing and has less workforce availability and a higher percentage of at risk individuals."
CPAH Homelessness Framework

The Northern Health Authority states that: *“About 310,000 people live in Northern BC. By 2010, the population is expected to grow to just over 348,000. The North has the highest projected growth rate of seniors in BC, with a 48 per cent projected increase by 2010.”*¹ Longer and healthier life expectancy, the growth of Prince George services and desirability versus the rising costs of more traditional retirement destinations (such as Victoria and the Okanagan) suggest the percentage of the population of PG that will be senior by 2024 will be one in four.

“Right now, as of 2006 we have 27.3% of our population that is in the 45-64 age bracket. And 9.6% that are 65+. This is from the community fact sheet from the BC Government. If we think we have a problem now with finding affordable housing for seniors and accessible, affordable healthy food for seniors. What will the problems be like twenty-five years from now.” Interview, PG Senior

The predominance of seniors in the population will be reinforced by a strong decrease in the percentage of youth comprising the population, which reflects a national trend of less babies being born and smaller family units.

Table 1: Loss of youth population, Prince George		
Age group	Percentage of population	
	<i>1966</i>	<i>2006</i>
0-14	24.3	19.2
15-29	23.19	20.85

However, it is noteworthy that there is an increase in the percentage of youth in the Aboriginal population. The percentage of Aboriginal people, long recognized through research to be a particularly vulnerable sector of the population, continues to be higher than that of the provincial average. Northern Health reports that in the north *“13% of the population is Aboriginal, the highest in the province”*.¹ Census figures for the Prince George CA show a smaller percentage of Aboriginal, but the figures do demonstrate the fact that this population is growing as a percentage of the total population. From 1996 to 2001, the aboriginal population increased from 5.89% to 9.39%.”

The provincial context

In December 2009, the Dietitians of Canada, BC Region and the Community Nutritionists Council of BC published the report *Cost of Eating in BC: Low-income British Columbians can't afford healthy food*. In this report the challenges facing low income people living in BC are shown as complicated and worsened by living in northern BC. (See figure 1, below.) The dire straits of many people who are forced to exist on low quality and substandard food because of lack of financial resources are made even worse by the imposition of increased cost due to geographic location.

¹ Taken from Northern Health Authority web site link to Quick Facts www.northernhealth.ca/About/Quick_Facts/

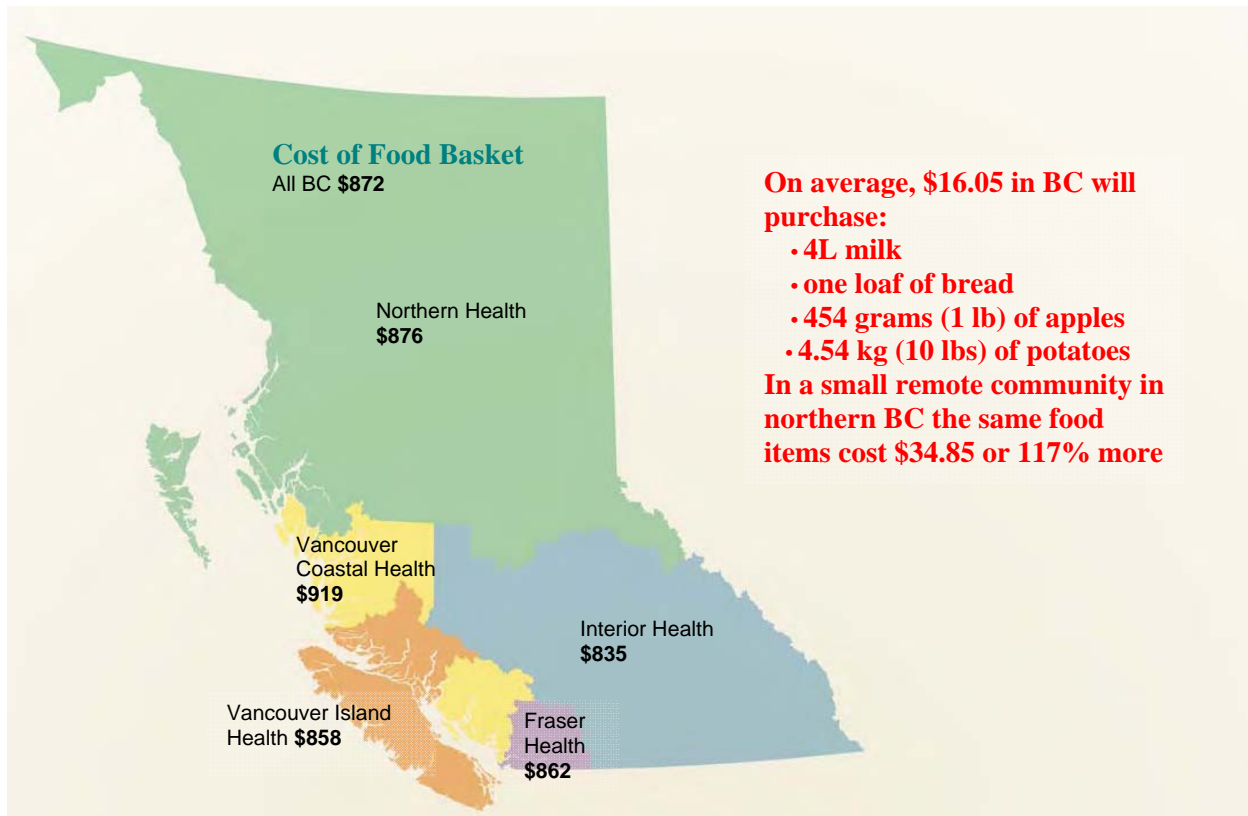


Figure 1: Cost of Eating in the Health Regions of BC, taken from, *Cost of Eating Report*, Dec 2009

In 2006 the location of grocery stores, household income and families with children under six was mapped. (See Figure 2 below). This mapping effort brought together a distinct neighborhood (the “Bowl”) high in children and looked at annual household income, the number of children under 6 years and the location of grocery stores and food initiatives including food banks, community gardens, weekly food basket depots, monthly good food box depots, community kitchens, and farmers’ markets).

The different shades of green illustrate a range of average annual household income for that EA (census data 1996); the black dots show the population of children under 6 years. The larger the dot, the more kids there are in that EA. The grocery stores (including Save-On Foods, Superstore, Extra Foods, and Shoppers Wholesale) are shown by a yellow triangle. The food initiatives are shown with a red star. Note that there are several stars in the downtown core - these are mostly food banks and program based community kitchens. The one star in the upper left hand corner of the downtown area actually represents 5 initiatives - they are all offered in the same building. School Meal Programs are differentiated by a blue flag. (Children First Prince George, *Asset Mapping*)

Prince George: Average Household Income, Population of Children Under 6, and Locations of Grocery Stores and Food Initiatives

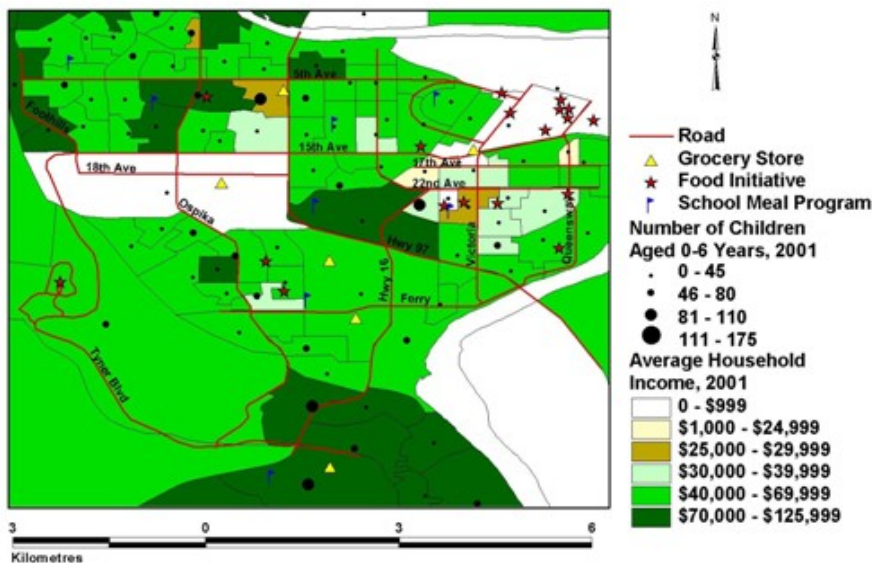


Figure 2: Average Household Income, Children, and Food

One response to improve access to food is to increase the flow of food from the lower mainland to the north. However, improving the quantity of food does not address cost at the purchase point, nor does this solution reflect a sustainable and environmentally responsible position. A new one year pilot initiative is underway that seeks to support local responses to improving food supplies: the Produce Availability in Remote Communities.² Initiative is a one-year Initiative launched on November 3, 2009.

The context of local food

In general our capacity to source local food is: underappreciated, under researched and underdeveloped. Key informant interviews reveal that much of the capacity to source food in the local region has been underestimated. The common assumptions about Prince George, framed by climate and geography, is that food self sufficiency is impossible, given the shortness of the growing season, a presumed shortage of agricultural land, and the predominance of resource extraction industries in the

² Produce Availability in Remote Communities Initiative is a one-year Initiative launched on November 3, 2009 by the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands together with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, the Aboriginal Agriculture Education Society of BC, and the BC Paediatric Society. It is made up of three components:

- **Component #1:** grants for community gardens in remote First Nations communities. The grants will be available through the Aboriginal Agriculture Education Society of BC/ First Nations Agriculture Association
- **Component #2:** improving the availability of produce in remote communities by increasing the efficiency of purchasing produce, perhaps through group buying.
- **Component #3:** improving the availability of produce in remote communities by increasing the efficiency of transporting produce.

economic landscape are challenged by local activists and advocates of local food. Of course, the other issue is that much of the discussion about food security focuses on the production of food and eludes the questions of access. A concept of food justice embraces both the producers who are often impoverished and becoming extinct as well as the people who cannot afford to buy food, local or otherwise.



Photo 1: Goats at a local small farm, Prince George

Food justice

It is clear that a systematic investment of research and resources could reverse the pessimism regarding local food sources and level the playing field for consumers. While complete local food sourcing is not possible, while local appetites want strawberries in winter and cheap bananas year round, there is clearly a new and emerging interest in supporting local food producers and increasing local access to healthy and affordable local food that rewards local food producers. Further, the local university is committed to supporting local food with research that is exploring – for example – the use of anaerobic digesters to support greenhouses and members of the forest industry call for innovative use of pine beetle kill to heat greenhouses.

A common perception is that the Prince George area is not conducive to agriculture because of poor soil and climatic conditions. Yet, most of the producers we spoke with consider their soil to be productive or are able to improve soil conditions or extend their growing seasons through a variety of management techniques. One advantage of the cooler climate is fewer pests and less need for pesticides. (Connell, 2007, p.11)

The expansion of the local farmers' market over the past several years, from 60 markets in 2003 to over 100 in the province by 2007 (Connell, 2007) is also indicative of the growth of a still small but highly committed and aware local food consumer. The Farmers Market in Prince George has grown steadily, since its modest start in 1997, and is currently very busy in its weekly summer market and has recently extended to include an indoor monthly winter market. Local food available includes locally produced honey, vegetables, meat and dairy and prepared foods. The economic impact of the former's market on the local economy was calculated at over \$750,000 a year. (Connell, 2007, p. 17). (Note: Dr. Connell argues persuasively through his extensive research in this area that local food is both a spur for, and a support to, smart planning and sustainable community development.) A recent and successful program of allotting farmer's market coupons to low income families so they can purchase food at the market has benefited both producers and low income families. Each farmer's market in the province that participates is paired with a local service agency providing food and cooking skills. However, this program is in danger of losing its provincial funding. See: the BC Farmer's Market Web site for information on this: <http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/fmncp/index.htm>

Community Food Security

The local Stone Soup research elements from the principles of the community food security principles as articulated by the Community Food Security Coalition. These principles lay the foundation for the holistic and integrated approach to complex issues underlying lack of food security, including *Low Income Food Needs, Food System Problems, Respect for Community Based Approaches; Self-Reliance/Empowerment, Support and Enhancement to Local Agriculture as well as multi - sectoral and Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Adapted from Community Food Security Coalition http://www.foodsecurity.org/views_cfs_faq.html We found examples of how these principles look when articulated and practiced in the local context of people living with the most intense food insecurity.

Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

--Mike Hamm and Anne Bellows

We are seeing families who have work and resources but their resources just aren't enough. They spend their money on the cheaper and more filling food and they can't afford the more expensive fruits and vegetables, so they are supplementing their diets with these hampers. There are no restrictions on who can get these. And they are quite substantial, can last a family of four up to four or five days. We are prepping over 100 of these healthy hampers twice a week. They also include eggs butter peanut butter. (Interview, emergency meals and hamper service)

Local context: homelessness and poverty

A Homeless Count, conducted in Prince George by Community Partners Addressing Homelessness (CPAH) in May 2008 interviewed a total of 375 individuals without homes. All agree that the number of interviewees was not indicative of the number of homeless in the city. NDP MLA David Chdunovsky estimates 1,050 are homeless in Prince George, a 2007 figure he argues includes couch surfers and those who camp in the bush during summer months.

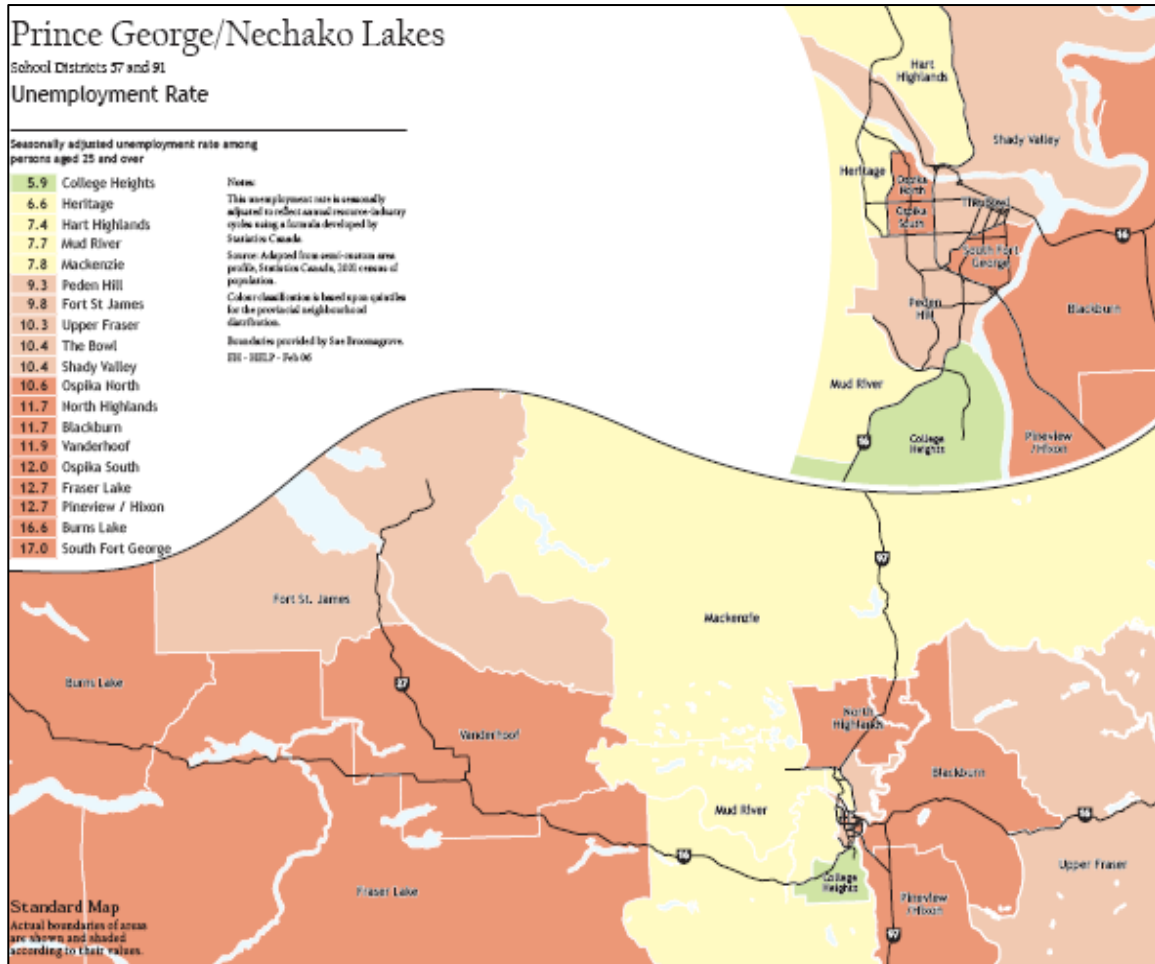
In addition to the people living in the most dire straits of poverty are those who may have a home but whose income and capacity to purchase good food is severely limited. Many working families are accessing food banks and soup kitchens in order to supplement their pantries and make "both ends meet". (Interview)

"There are 600 children in this school district who go to school hungry every day. That is more than the number of people living in the Downtown East side the most visible indicator of poverty we have. Our children have become invisible victims." (Interview)³

³ The Childhood Development index tool, used by the *BC Child Development Atlas*, has going to school hungry as one of the sub themes under Physical health and well being. See: *Creating Communities for Young Children, a tool*

A further indication of the extent of the poverty in the city is the number of local community and government agencies devoted to attempting to meet the range of needs. A preliminary Community Inventory (attached as separate document) records not only the various agencies and organizations meeting food needs in Prince George but the growth and extent of the work they are undertaking.

Unemployment and welfare rates tend to reflect the local economic climate. Figure 2, below from the Community Asset Mapping of Children First, illustrates the vulnerability of children to parental unemployment.



This early childhood development project work highlights some of the invisible victims of food insecurity: children.

However, people living with low income can and do change their eating habits when provided with the support to do so. The BC Farmer’s Market Association introduced a nutrition coupon program that

kit for change by the Human Early Learning partnership, p. 12.
<http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/EDI/documents/HELP-Toolkit.pdf> .

linked a local farmer's market with a local service agency that provided food and cooking support to low income families.

Products purchased by type



Figure 3: Results for the BC Farmer's market Association Nutrition Coupon Program from BC Farmers' Market Nutrition & Coupon Project 2008 Project Summary & Evaluation Findings, accessed at: http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/fmncp/pdf/fmncp08_evalsummary.pdf

The report concluded that coupon recipients and their families were eating differently: "96% reported that eating fresh food was important to them; 80% reported that eating locally produced food was important to them; and 91% felt the project has improved access to fresh, local farm products for families." Farmers' Market Nutrition & Coupon Project 2008 Project Summary & Evaluation Findings, pg. 5.

The Stone Soup Project

The Stone Soup project decided to focus on the most poor, and food deprived in the city. Our reasoning was that if we could identify the barriers and needs for food access for those most divorced from affordable, safe and secure access to food, we would be able to speak to the community at large. This “canary in the coal mine” also reflected the Stone Soup partners’ belief that the “marginalized” populations in our community have many keen insights to offer to community planning but are rarely consulted or involved in planning exercises.

“If you don’t laugh you have no joy to share.” Community Kitchen Participant

This also allowed the coalition to simultaneously improve food access for this group while collecting the information and data necessary to building a community food action plan – an action research project.

Figure

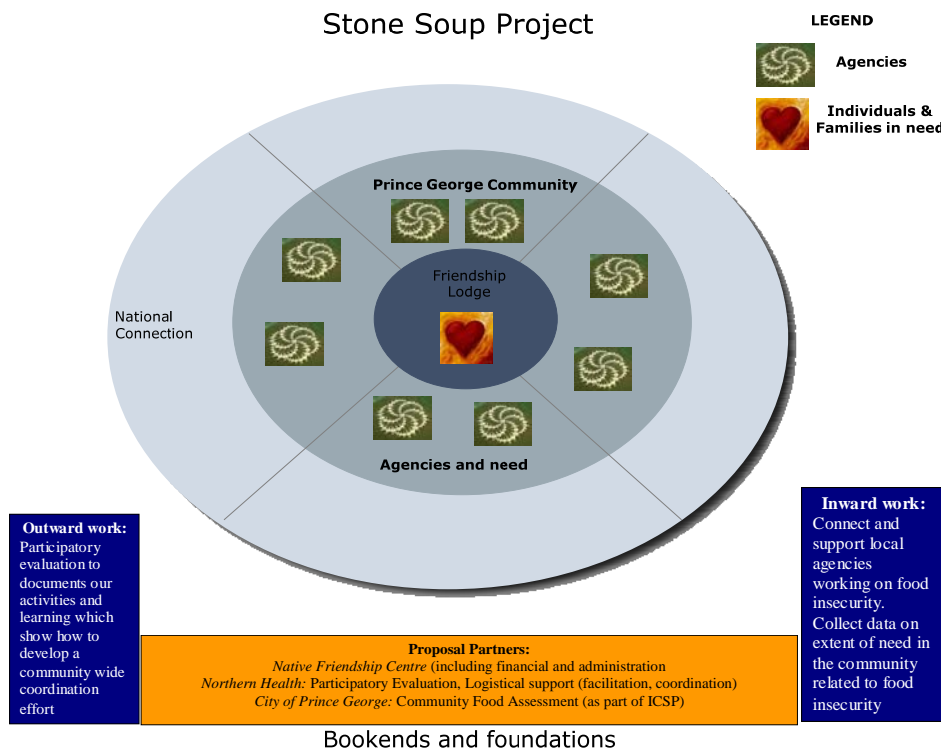


Figure 4: The Stone Soup Table Structure

The Stone Soup Coalition, colloquially referred to as the Stone Soup Table , also reflects an emerging need (discussed more fully in results below) and desire to work more collectively as the demand for services and the human need increases so substantially in the community.

There is also an interest in expanding the understanding of food beyond the farm gate. Many Aboriginal voices are pointing out the abundance of wild food and that care and attention to the environment is needed to protect and enhance these sources of traditional foods. Food sovereignty is becoming a preferred term to food security because it encompasses a broader understanding of the role of culture and justice than simple security of access. Interest in locally produced and healthy food is growing, and the broad appeal of – for example - Michael Pollan’s rules for eating well (such as: don’t eat something your grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food or ingredients a third grader cannot pronounce) indicate a shift in thinking and attitudes that requires local food producers, local food champions, health professionals, politicians, social justice advocates and others be ready to respond effectively in ways that continue to support this promising climate.

The other pressure underlying the desire to work together is, of course, the sheer pressure of numbers. Food insecurity is, sadly, a growth industry.

“When we first started our emergency food resource program as a distinct funded and staffed program we did 40 hampers a month. Now, last week, eight years later, we packed up 230. And the budget has not increased. We have had to find ways to cut back costs without hacking items from the hampers. We have had to be creative. For example, by packing bulk peanut butter with the help of the smokehouse kitchen staff we can save \$7,000.” Interview, emergency food service Coordinator

Methodology

The research methodology for this community needs assessment was primarily qualitative as these were the most appropriate methods to work with key stakeholders. Secondary research included review of existing materials including reports, media coverage, and statistical data. A participatory / action research approach was the foundation for the work. That is, a major tool for alleviating community food insecurity was developed and delivered and reviewed as part of the overall assessment.

Table 1 below lists the tools used to carry out the original qualitative research.

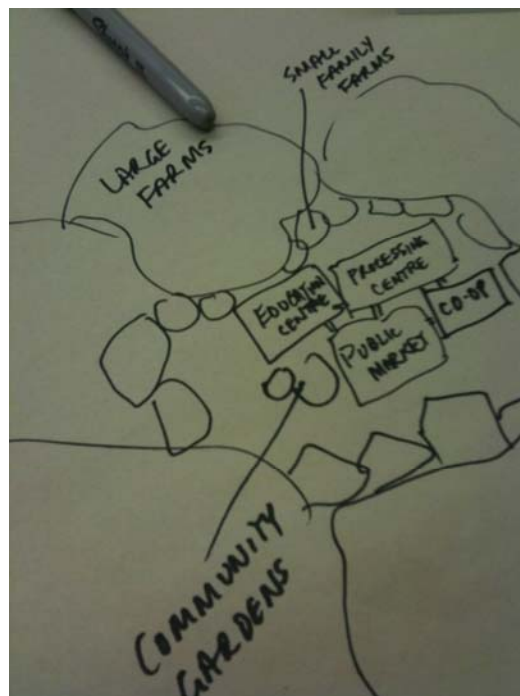


Table 1: Methods and audiences

Method	Audience / Focus
Reflective interviews(weekly; most significant change approach)	Community kitchen Coordinator: insights of significant changes and assessment of impact/needs
mypg Community Consultation	Focus groups (kitchen table talks) and surveys with general public (n=1300)
World Café Community Consultation with Dr. Kent Mullinix (<i>see appendix 2 for invitational poster</i>)	Open invitation to the public; cross section of community members interested in food security (n=54)
Focus group questions at luncheon catered and hosted by stone Soup participants	Stone soup partner agency staff and participants (n=23)
Stone Soup Bowl Survey (<i>see appendix 3 for a copy</i>)	Patrons and clients of emergency food services in Prince George (phase 1: n=100);
Stone soup participants story tool See Appendix 4)	Participants of the Stone Soup Community kitchen (designed and collected)
Focus group and interviews	Staff, advocates, and other interested parties (<i>please note, references to individuals are presented only with general terms in order to preserve confidentiality, a frequently difficult task in smaller communities.</i>)

As can be seen in table 1, some of the research tools were designed and implemented by people actually living with food insecurity. Others were the result of community collaboration. For example, the World café with Dr. Kent Mullinex arose because the City of Prince George’s Communities in Bloom Committee had arranged for him to visit Prince George and speak at a public forum at UNBC on Jan21st (see Appendix 2.) The stone soup bowl survey was designed in consultation with frontline staff. (See Appendix 3.) The Story Tool was designed by the participants at the Stone Soup Community Kitchen. (See Appendix 4)

Reflective Interviews

A weekly meeting with the Stone Soup Community Kitchen Coordinator provided an opportunity to debrief and plan but also to record the most significant changes merging as the work progressed. Most Significant Change is an effective complement to evaluation projects by providing opportunities for those most closely engaged in what work to reflect and record the changes they are observing as the project unfolds. The data collected over time provides a systematic, transparent and accurate collection of important data that might otherwise be overlooked. (For more in reflective interviewing and interviewing in general see Kathleen Raulston’s work *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*)

MyPG consultations

myPG is the first community sustainability plan for Prince George – a broad, long-term plan developed and carried out by the whole community. It is a first step in Prince George’s journey to becoming a sustainable community. The city’s involvement with Stone Soup was a mutually reciprocal process. The Stone Soup project would gather food insecurity data for submission to the mypg process; the city would share any food security related data that came in through the wider net. This complementary approach was built on and further enhanced a pre-existing strong working relationship that cuts across a number of mutual interest areas. The food security area of sustainability we created together will be a component of the community’s sustainability plan.” (To read more on this consultation process please visit: <http://www.mypg.ca/about/Pages/WhatIsanICSP.aspx>)

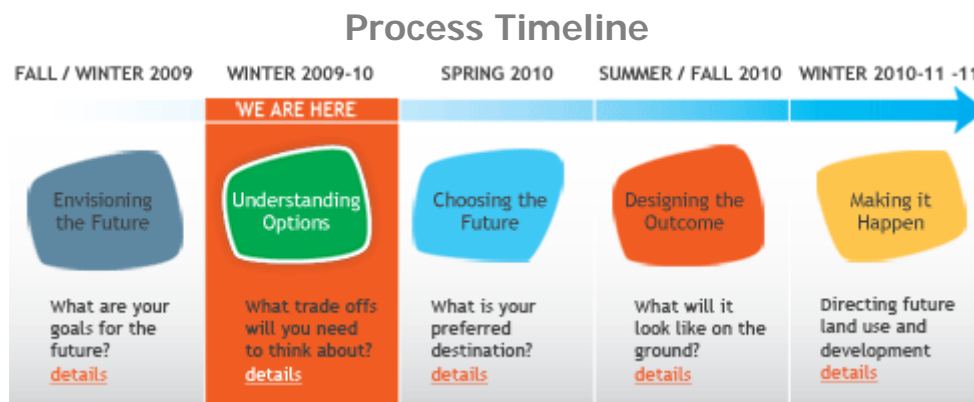


Figure 5: mypg process timeline

World Café

World Café is a valuable and effective community consultation method that allows groups of people who are strangers to each other and come from diverse backgrounds to find depth and meaning in sharing experiences. (For more on World café visit: www.theworldcafe.com) A full and detailed report of the world Café event is available (attached separately). The 4 hour event was well attended and a rich diversity of insightful opinion was apparent.

Innovative tools

The Stone Soup Story tool was designed by the participants during their focus group. They wanted something that would allow them to tell their stories because they believed people needed to hear their stories to understand how they came to be at the Stone Soup Community Kitchen. When one asked, “how will we do that?”, another replied: “open your heart and let it flow”. The group designed the three questions to follow that instruction and a hand written form was created, photocopied and distributed.



Photo 2: A farmer and a nutritionist at the World Café, important steps on of the food security spectrum

Findings

The findings presented below (in Section A) summarize the key themes that emerged from reflective interviews, focus group questions at the luncheon catered and hosted by Stone Soup participants, responses to the Stone Soup Bowl Survey, Stone Soup participant stories as well as focus groups and individual interviews. . As not all sources of data collection are complete, this is a necessarily preliminary analysis of the qualitative data only. The quantitative research is still on going. The research methodology associated with the myPG and World Café community consultations , was different by design. The findings associated with this research component of the Stone Soup Project are outlined in Section B

Section A: The Stone Soup Lessons

Building a language and culture of food

(Community Food Action principle: Low Income Food Needs)

One of the barriers identified by the project to date has been the lack of a language and culture of food. People who have struggled with substance abuse or homelessness or poverty or discrimination find their capacity to work with food is minimal. The challenge for those working with people whose relationships are so non existent is how to find ways to introduce food preparation and serving.

I have learned to be so alert and observant. If I say do you want a recipe card and they say no, I have to identify why they say “no”, is it because they can’t read or write? I have to be able to identify these things so I can figure out what to do next and plan for later. I am always looking forward. I know how important the one on one is too. This one guy I was working with was able to tell me he had a brain injury. I told him I was so glad because now we could figure out how to work with that. So, I said what you want to get out of this lesson. And he said soup. I asked what you eat mostly. He said Kraft dinner. I explained that there were ways of making Kraft dinner more healthy/nutritious, and he appeared interested, wanting to know how. I told him tuna or salmon is good. He wanted salmon, because he is First Nations – so it’s about working with what they want. He went on to tell me he would like to learn to do more with pasta. Reflective Dialogue #1

Aboriginal people whose family and community lives were decimated by tools of colonialism, such as residential school not only lost connection with traditional foods and cooking but found no way to learn about mainstream foods in a healthy way.

If we took from the land, or hunted we gave back. The land was honoured and central. Gathering was done thoughtfully and skillfully for the subsistence of the family and community. Tobacco for example, was used as the gift. Men who did the hunting did it for all of the families. There has been a huge shift from honour, responsibility and no hunger to speed and taste eaten in front of the tv. There are so many issues around this. We don’t take time, or savour our food, the harm to our digestion. Our people are taking comfort in food form but lost the medicine of

cooking and preparing food as good medicine, meals where we stop and invite our ancestors to dine with us. These are the rituals that give comfort. Food can be positive or negative. It is what we surround the food with that makes the difference. (Dialogue Interview Executive Director, local agency)

There is a perception that programs like this create dependency and that people aren't grateful. But is not the reality for the majority of participants accessing the programs. If people have grown up eating fish sticks and Kraft dinner, they can't make the connection between the green pepper they see and the green paper in chunks in a Greek salad. We need to be teaching our children and having meals with them., creating an understanding of what nutrition is, especially in a time when diabetes and obesity are running rampant in our communities.

Even though I don't feel knowledgeable, just looking through the Cost of Eating Report, it is all about what you are supposed to buy; this is what you are supposed to get. The piece that is missing is what do you do with it when you get it. I thought I did good food instruction. I had everyone with their knife and cutting board and a green pepper and I said, "Now we are going to cut the green pepper into bite sized pieces." Now this is a group that doesn't buy fresh fruit or fresh vegetables very often. But there was one guy who was clearly puzzled and not understanding the instructions. But I thought I was good at finding the right level to communicate with everyone where they really are at. So I asked him "what don't you understand?" and he said "cut into bite sized pieces." And I said, "Well you take the knife and cut it up into bite sized pieces." He looked back and said very seriously "But my mouth is bigger than yours." It is kind of funny but also sad. If you have never prepared food there is so much that people don't know that we don't know they don't know. Reflective Interview #2

People who live in poverty find their food choices so constrained that they do not know how to buy or prepare foods.

I don't think people go to local food sources, they don't think about food that way. They have to be more practical. Transportation is such a huge issue/concern. I did an informal poll – out of 7 respondents 4 went to the 7/11; 2 went to Save On and 1 went to Superstore. The major reason for the 7/11 is that it is within walking distance. Even though they know it costs more, they choose it because it easier to get to, easy to carry, easy to prepare. So, it has to be quick and easy at every step. But they tell me, they want to get the skills. They want to be able to prepare more than Kraft dinner. (Reflective Dialogue #1 Dec 2009)

There are very real barriers to food access for seniors. A lot is due to lack of income and lack of transportation. Many don't drive. Take myself as an example. I am 60, I take the bus. So I am limited to what I can carry. I don't have mobility issues. I can walk fine. I don't use a cane but I look at some heavier items and think, I need that but I can't carry it. I am very aware of how far I have to carry my shopping bags and the three flights of stairs I have to carry them up when I reach home. What if I had to struggle with a cane on top of all that? I am making choices not based on what I need but on what I can carry. Then there is the question of income. Most seniors

have very limited income and food is very expensive. So you are making choices that are not healthy in the long run. But you don't really have a choice. (Senior interview #1)

We are seeing families who have work and resources but their resources just aren't enough. They spend their money of the cheaper and more filling food and they can't afford the more expensive fruits and vegetables, so they are supplementing their diets with these hampers. There are no restrictions on who can get these. And they are quite substantial, can last a family of 4 up to 4 or five days. We are prepping over 100 of these healthy hampers twice a week. They also include eggs butter peanut butter when we can Interview, Manager Emergency food service

As time has passed in the Stone Soup Community Kitchen the participants have begun to take more "risks"; that is, they have become much more adventurous with their food choices. . Now, each week tackles the cuisine of a different country, a far cry from what can I add to Kraft dinner. They are planning in the collective authorship of a picture based recipe book that includes stories and quotes and which they would like to offer as a fundraiser to bring in more funds to sustain the kitchen.

We need more learning experiences and opportunities. Most of us didn't do well in school as youth or teenagers. Maybe we were rebels. But here we are as adults, learning. We need more learning experiences in addition to food. We rejected learning as youth now here we are as adults finally learning. Focus Group Participants Stone Soup Community Kitchen

Food as a gathering place for change

(Community Food Action principle: [Respect for community based approaches](#))

Working around food becomes a catalyst for individual and collective change.

Food is about people, the programs emerge from the people, it is the interaction between staff and people together, the laughing, the sharing that changes happen. They are so keen to get the different skills sets. I see them cooperate and help each other in the kitchen. They know each other well. I see them explain things to the one who can't read, and delegate chores when they recognize that someone may not be able to complete a task, or become embarrassed because they lack a skill. (Reflective dialogue #1 Dec. 2009)

The group has begun to take ownership of the kitchen:

It is the confidence when they move around the kitchen. When they first start coming, they are quiet and sit [try to keep out of the way- yes] But then they begin to move around, they start to ask questions. At first they need and want to be told what to do next. But I only ever answer their questions with a question: What do we do next? I respond what do you want to do next? They ask "can we taste it now? And I say do you want to taste it now. I know I am doing my job when they say, I think we are going to do a taste test now." It is about them taking ownership. I start to forget things on purpose. Like the cutting board. And one will say, "I know where they are." And go and get it. So,. I don't just have everything out for them. You can see them walk into the

kitchen and move around from stove to sink to cutting board. “Yeah, to see someone say, I know where that is and they go and get the cutting board, and they get the right one. I have green for vegetables, white for onions and red for meat. And not only will they get the right one; but if they need say, the white one and it’s being used, they wait. This is so huge and wonderful. They get it; they get the principles and the concepts, they know what they can and can’t do and use even if they can’t read or whatever.” Interviewer: They are going to be better cooks than the average housewife! Reflective dialogue #1

The participation rate is increasing and they are feeling good about themselves. With the increase in their control over the group there is a growing sense of adventure. They want to try more things. We sit at the table and they go through the cookbooks and I ask what can you do on your own at home, on your budget, what would you like? In the group they get to try what they wouldn’t dare try alone and what they couldn’t afford to try – they can’t risk the loss of money and food. In groups they can try those risks because it is our dime. Reflective Dialogue #2

These may seem like “baby steps” but for those whose understanding of, and relationship to food was very constrained, they are the baby steps of giants.

Learning trust

(Community Food Action principle: Self-reliance/empowerment)

There is often a perception that food programs create dependency and undermine self reliance. The reality is very different:

We have learned: team work, leadership, cooperation. Nobody has these out on the streets. You have to depend on your self, fend for yourself. You don’t ever ask anyone for help, for anything. It is not safe asking for help. Not safe asking from anybody. We have learned to trust Participant, Stone Soup Community Kitchen.

It is about more than food. We have learnt communication. We have fun. We have leftovers [laughter]. We have fun with each other. We can pass on stuff. We listen to each others stories, while we’re chopping vegetables, or cooking, or what ever. We listen, Everyone has a story and we hear each other’s stories. There is that chance to listen while cooking. If a person is a little short one week we can help out, we can get a little extra for him to take home, so he doesn’t go hungry. Focus Group Participants Stone Soup Community Kitchen

People don’t know how to share at the beginning, like that example from an early community kitchen where one person used all the ingredients for their lasagna and left nothing for anyone else to cook. At the Stone Soup lunch, there were people there that I have seen around for years, yet I have never heard their stories, It brought to me to tears to hear their stories, to hear what

they live with and carry. It was in the community kitchen, taking time over vegetable preparation for them to earn to trust and share their stories. (Dialogue Interview Program Manager, local agency)

When it works well it works well, like the Building Bocks Community Kitchen is on Welfare Wednesday. Other programs have problems keeping their participants on that day because they have so much to do, getting their cheques, paying debts, getting food. But at the BB community kitchen they are all there, in spite of these extra obstacles they want to be there. They are breaking the cycle, they are getting stability and structure. It's not just the food. They could be getting their cheques and buying frozen fish sticks. But they come for something else. One person said: "I don't know you could have so much fun without drinking." These are the powerful teaching moments. (Dialogue Interview Program Manager, local agency)

I see the communication between the members is improving and the last meeting was the best yet. They are bringing the group together more. The menu planning sessions are now happening on the Wednesday, the day before the cooking session. We were used to planning for the month but that wasn't working so well. As participation in the weekly menu planning sessions increases the complaints have gone way down. They are showing more concern for each other's welfare and more connectedness. They are aware of where each other is at, and what they have got, or haven't in their cupboards. Reflective dialogue #2

This may be the most important and most unexpected outcome of the work. We had not understood fully the complex dynamics of street life and how these would impact relationships and communication in the kitchen. To see the genuine friendships and mutual support that has emerged is not only truly heartwarming, it is a concrete supprot to learning and working with food.

Building demand for local and healthy: Food as medicine

(Community Food Action principle: *support and enhancement to local agriculture*)

There is a perception that programs like this create dependency and that people aren't grateful. But is not the reality for the majority of participants accessing the programs... Food is medicine. People need to learn about prepping food not just for a career but for themselves and their families and communities. We see meetings and we put out cantaloupe and people won't touch it. They go for the doughnuts because they recognise them. . (Dialogue Interview Executive Director, local agency)

Fighting a growth industry

(Community Food Action principle: *Food system problems*)

While agribusiness continues to undermine the place of local farmers and food producers, local hunger is increasing:

The need is increasing. We see a lot of initiatives emerging in response: community kitchens, community gardens, we have even expanded our definition of emergency resources to include

things, like glasses, prescriptions, travel to funerals or family emergencies. (Dialogue Interview Executive Director, local agency)

The reality is, that in the non profit sector, even the staff themselves are not far away from the food insecure people they serve:

We even have staff here in our agency who are in food insecure situations. They never learned about food. They had parents who went through residential school so they lost the example of healthy parenting, of the traditional role of food in the community and family. Their parents didn't grow up in a family, feeding and cooking and eating together or saw nutrition as love and care. My mother taught me but she didn't have a mother who taught her. When people get together, that is the most important thing, for learning together. It is most valuable, to be part of a program, doing something together. For example,, the hoarding, as they gain and grow they get embarrassed by that and realize they are not being inclusive. The group awareness grows. Food is linked to the earth, to respect for the earth. Now we have food that is full of sugar or salt to mask and disguise what it is. People eat it for that taste. If people are hungry they are not gonging to crave salad, or go for that first.

Educating taste

(Community Food Action principle: Increasing access and affordability while satisfying producers needs)

There is a vast an untapped local market. Many people living in food insecure circumstances – when given the chance – embrace healthy local foods. This is possible when time is taken to introduce foods in ways that help people relearn old ways or adopt new ones.

“When people get together, that is the most important thing, for learning together. It is most valuable, to be part of a program, doing something together. For example, the hoarding, as they gain and grow they get embarrassed by that and realize they are not being inclusive. The group awareness grows. Food is linked to the earth, to respect for the earth. Now we have food that is full of sugar or salt to mask and disguise what it is. People eat it for that taste. If people are hungry they are not gonging to crave salad, or go for that first. “

“We are seeing families who have work and resources but their resources just aren't enough. They spend their money of the cheaper and more filling food and they can't afford the more expensive fruits and vegetables, so they are supplementing their diets with these hampers. There are no restrictions on who can get these. And they are quite substantial, can last a family of 4 up to 4 or five days. We are prepping over 100 of these healthy hampers twice a week. They also include eggs butter peanut butter when we can.” Interview, Manager Emergency food service

There are things they just don't get or understand like grains and whole grains. We have an opportunity here that we are missing. For example, the American food pyramid has "know your farmer, know your food all over it." They have people walking up the side of the pyramid showing the key need for exercise. We don't know or share what we can get locally. We need to include traditional foods, like my mother's soap berry jelly that she would serve with roast, with venison. We need to use more of what people are used to, and to use the language of the local people. Like what we called wild grapes, I don't know what they are supposed to be called. How can we use local wild produce to get added vitamins in our diets? Canada changed the pyramid for a rainbow but it is not helpful for teaching clients. We need something more foundational. Especially, if we can reach kids who will in turn teach their parents. I also see that people aren't so crazy about the desserts; they love the fruit and the yogurts and yet they can't afford them.

Reflective Dialogue #3

People who access emergency food services also express desires for better food. When asked what could be better about their food people responded: *: we need more bannock and wild meat; If it was cheaper; More fresh fruits; more chicken; recipes.* (Stone Soup Bowl surveys)

Working together

(Community Food Action principle: multi sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches)

Multi-sectoral collaboration is a fancy term for something many agencies and organizations have begun to do from necessity.

We are partnering with other social agencies, to help coordinate, share costs, expand reach of resources. We are building good working relationships. (Dialogue Interview Executive Director, local agency)

It is also true that as the agencies begin to work together, this creates a "multi-sectoral opportunity for clients of the various agencies.

You can now see parents with their kids gardening. There are child sized shovels and gardening tools, and babies in carriers. There are berry patches for example along the slough, taking walks there and learning about native plants. There is a temptation to split everyone up. It is so much better to keep everyone together. We have youth recognized as high risk, who are couch surfing or living in crack houses getting their hands in the dirt. They get respect for food, for the earth, for each other. The garden has Elders and they have raised beds, people from the legion, for the Dakleh, the Metis Association. There is a women's group. There are more agencies and they come back year after year. The seniors suffering from dementia, they come back year after year and they remember me. We work as a group if though we seem to be so unconnected. We have found ways of working together that have just emerged. Nobody says this is my vision and imposes it on everyone else. We have developed a way of bringing everyone together that crosses ages, ethnicities and issues that has developed over time because we share common visions. (Dialogue Interview Executive Director, local agency)

One of the nice points to emerge from the stone soup bowl surveys was the expression of gratitude and appreciation,; *People running places are very hospitable and caring; [The] welcoming feeling, the elder presence and having an identity when walking in the door .”* (Stone Soup Bowl Surveys)

Centrality of food to change

(Community Food Action principle: Continue to organize and engage constituents)

Uniting around food has an immense power to reach the so-called hard to reach

When people are hungry they do not have the energy to think of much else, let alone participate fully in programs or services available. The connection between hunger and capacity has long been recognized by service providers on the front line, as one interviewee discussed in talking about the origins of the food programs at their agency.

One of the things our program really revolved around welfare Wednesday, that week really negatively impacted the service. The day before welfare Wednesday, that is the welfare cheque issue day, was very hard. One of these Wednesdays I was eating my own lunch at my desk, and then stepped down the hall to the Concept Ed coffee room. I watched a guy put 6-8 spoons of sugar in his coffee and pile an inch thick of “white death [coffee whitener] into his coffee. I said “A good thing you don’t have diabetes.” He said. I don’t usually take this much sugar, but we are keeping the food at home for the kids.” We ended up having an amazing conversation with all the participants there. They had not talked of it before because of the shame and embarrassment they felt. I was honoured that they spoke of this with me.

Welfare Wednesday ends at 2pm. So the next day I had a conversation with the staff. The people were coming to us for help but circumstances were holding them back. When they are hungry they can’t concentrate, they can’t learn. Some are not coming because they are hungry. They are in soup lines to get food. So, the Monday Tuesday of Welfare week, staff would take turns to bring a soup or chili or something filling and other staff would bring fruit. They saw it was a real barrier and they wanted to address the issues. After a while it got a bit much and a bit expensive to meet the need. And there were some difficulties. Some people, it was almost ugly, almost fighting over the food. There was friction and conflict. And only to be expected, when people are hungry and insecure, they are driven. Interview, Executive Director, Local Service Agency.

.Food becomes a leveling place. And new protocols around rejecting violence; fear and mistrust can be achieved because hunger can contribute to conflict and other unhappy behaviours..

Nobody talks bout the role of hunger in youth addiction issues. How many times did I do drugs not cause I wanted to get high but because I wanted to not feel hungry. Ex street youth, now in college

Interestingly, it also has the power to move and engage those who work for and with them.

At the Stone Soup lunch, there were people there that I have seen around for years, yet I have never heard their stories, It brought t me to tears to hear their stories, to hear what they live with and carry. It was in the community kitchen, taking time over vegetable preparation for them to earn to trust and share their stories. Dialogue Interview, Program Manager, Local Service Agency.

Stone Soup Community Kitchen were also very clear on the nature of reporting to Ottawa:

They need to hear our stories. That's what makes the difference. Stone Soup Community Kitchen participants

The Broader Public Input

The success of myPG, the City's first sustainability plan, depends on engaging a wide range of community members and their ideas. Planning together for a more sustainable future means discussing complicated issues – including food security. And, to do this efficiently and effectively, the right “engagement tool” needs to be developed. Accordingly, a workbook designed to enable Prince George residents to host a **Kitchen Table Talk** with people in their community circle, was developed and widely available during the first consultation period which extended from October 26, 2009 to January 14, 2010. The workbook posed a number of questions including:

1. Imagine the best possible future for Prince George, looking ahead 25 to 50 years. A lot of positive things have happened and you are so proud to live here. Think about what it's like in that ideal future in terms of the people in the community, the nature that surrounds it, and the economy. Take 5 minutes to dream about this a little, then provide 5 short descriptions of “your vision”.
2. What are the top changes that would need to happen to make this ideal future come to life? Name the top 5.
3. What are you doing now that is already helping to make these changes happen and what else could you do to help achieve this vision of the future? List 5 actions.

While the compilation and analysis of the vast quantity of data collected during the engagement period is still in progress, early themes regarding food sustainability have begun to emerge. Comments such as

those noted below prompted the City of Prince George to join with the Stone Soup Project to host a special community dialogue session focused on the topic of food security and sustainability.

“We need to achieve food security in face of high oil prices.”

“Better access to local, organic foods.”

“I want a 7-days a week 500% locally grown food market where people have the opportunity to buy healthy produce for their families at an affordable price. (As imported food prices will be increasing as we reach peak oil.)”

“Our PG will have a plan to ensure secure food, water, and air quality, as well as address solid waste issues through a recycling program.”

“Our PG will be encouraging a local economy where a larger percent of food is grown and consumed locally.

Strong community agriculture/food systems: enhanced farmers markets, community gardens, composting, recycling.”

Utilizing the World Café model as a means to “put conversations to work”, we hosted more than 50 people in a daylong session devoted to the topic of food security and sustainability. We were fortunate to be in a position to access the expertise of Dr. Kurt Mullinix (Institute for Sustainable Horticulture, Kwantlen Polytechnic University) who was invited to Prince George by the Communities in Bloom Committee to deliver a number of public presentations.

Dr. Mullinix opened the World Café with a short but inspiring address that highlighted some key challenges facing communities in BC as we continue to depend on a oil-driven agricultural system that is unsustainable as world oil reserves are being tapped out. One of his key messages that communities such as our own often have many advantages for making positive changes that are denied to bigger urban centres and he expressed his appreciation and delight for the opportunity to visit our community and share his current work and broad knowledge of food systems. He also mentioned some of the more subtle changes that have marked agriculture’s decline from a centre of community sustainability to a business that is exacting a huge environmental price. For example, he says the research shows that the practice of agriculture used to be a net energy gain and now current practices are a significant net energy drain on what remains of globally available oil. He wants to see us return to a form of agriculture that employs people rather than puts them out of work that connects entire communities directly to their own food production with municipally supported agriculture that is integrated throughout and around the community. Currently the majority of our food is produced far from the populations that consume the food and community based agriculture designs are being developed that will become models for future communities where agriculture is integral to the fabric and everyday life of the community. Agriculture and food are central to our sense of community and place, critical to our economic well being and crucial for social, cultural and healthy physical development.

One of the major supports for the successes at the meeting was found in the methodology chosen for the consultation. The World Café instils a process that accommodates difference and supports mutual engagement. (se Worldcafe.com for more details on this deceptively simple process.) The tables are all decorated with flip chart papers as “tablecloth”; there are many different kinds of markers, modeling

clay, toys and other items to encourage kinaesthetic learning. Participants are encouraged to play with the toys while talking, and / o r use the markers, colours of clay to record and illustrate their thinking, thoughts and ideas. These ad hoc data capturing instruments are collected at the end of the session and transcribed as part of the data and photographed. This “at the table movement” is further reinforced by the physical moves the participants make from table to table. The journey of thinking and traveling together and the informality of the café style tables all interact to improve conversation and the exchange of ideas.

The three tables were hosted by a facilitator and the discussions and conversations recorded on flip charts and by note takers. Each table hosted the 2 questions in round one a visioning question (the same at every table) and a second question (different at every table) After completing round one, each table moved on to the next table to tackle the next questions.

The vision question was: ***Imagine we have achieved a sustainable food secure prince George. Think about what it's like in that future in terms of how we live as a community, our relationship with the environment around us, and the work people are able to do in an agricultural and social economy. They were instructed to take 5 minutes to dream about this a little, and then provide 5 short descriptions of their visions (less than 10 words each).*** Then, each group answered the table specific question (as outlined below). After twenty minutes the groups circulated onto the next table and answered the specific question at that table. The final round saw the facilitators and transcribers present their summary analysis of the answers to the vision question and the answers to their table top question.



Photo 3 : Working Lunch as the World Cafe

Table specific questions:

1. **What are the top actions that would need to happen to make this ideal future come to life?**
2. **What are you doing now that is already helping and what else could be done?**
3. **How would we measure progress toward our vision?**

These questions were purposefully designed to not only elicit important feedback that would inform the development of a Community Food Action Plan but to enrich the data set serving as the foundation for creation of an integrated community sustainability plan. Not surprisingly, key themes which mirror the Community Food Action Principles (as was the case with other Stone Soup Project research methodologies) emerged as the diverse audience provided their responses to the questions posed for their consideration.

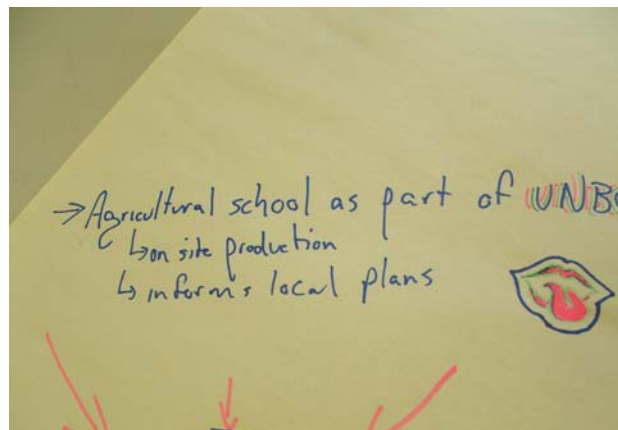
These themes in response to how Prince George residents envision a sustainable food secure Prince George are overviewed below.

Local Solutions, Local Leadership

(Community Food Action principle: support and enhancement to local agriculture)

This theme called for a strong involvement, support and integration of the local food supply into the fabric of the local landscape. This was seen as crucial to reality of building towards a vision of a sustainable food secure in Prince George. Global actions taken locally, local leadership and increased self reliance were also seen as key to this part of the vision.

Family plots are part of urban planning. There is cross generational communication and learning. People, the public take their role as food citizens seriously.



The definition of good food includes support for the locally available wild foods that are native to the area. Increasing consumer access through local food institutions and retail markets, means there is a year round attractive and accessible Farmer's Market, open more than once a week with smaller 'mobile' markets moving around the community to different sites. There is year round availability and access to local foods through local grocery stores, so as to provide consumers with the choice of buying locally. Food coops and links with the region and there are jump start programs that help ease people into agriculture.

The local university and college have established and support an agricultural program that support research, education and expansion of local agriculture, including practicum on farm placements, while local high schools include introduction to agriculture and opportunities to grow and process food. Of particular interest was the success of bringing local agriculture (and what crops) closer to the city and enhancing the quantity and quality of arable land. Further, the use of local products for innovative

solutions to heating greenhouses (such as beetle kill which traps a high level of energy) was something the local university research led.

The outcomes of climate change have affected Prince George in a way that has promoted local agriculture. PG could be a leader in how local communities can respond to challenges and change in positive ways and increase food supply in effective and sustainable ways, ways that utilize the local grass roots and low tech answers. Prince George also has a role in leading the understanding of bioregional sustainability.

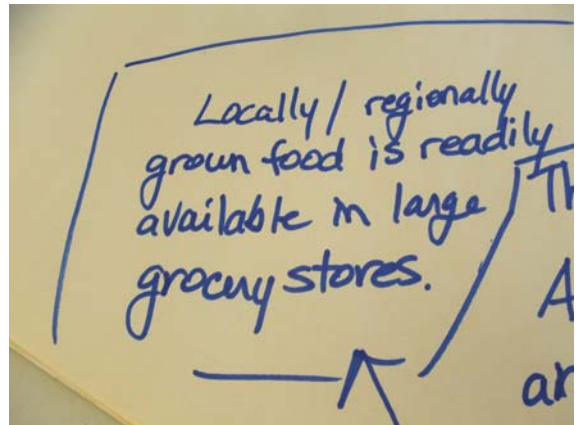
As a result of the above more people and families are involved in growing their own foods. Greenhouses, residential and commercial also support local food access. Root cellars, bees, dairy are all common and accessible. Like U-brews; U-can businesses help people can their own produce. Other cooperative relations – like tool and equipment exchanges exist

"We have research and education on how to grow, gather and prepare local foods, and records of historical plants native to our area. Educational tools on preparing locally successful crops and what to do with seasonal local produce (i.e. recipes) are developed. Such things as a "U-Grow, U-Cook and U-Can" groups are in much demand in our area."

Changes in Attitudes/Practices – Agriculture

(Community Food Action principle: multi sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches)

There many fears that we are losing traditional agricultural practices right at the time when we may need them most, especially once the current generation of farmers retire. Ensuring knowledge and skills live on is crucial. Innovation among our local food producers and a new willingness for collaboration among industries, such as forestry and agriculture, rather than opposition is required. For example: the excess heat from forestry is used to heat green houses which will save money and pro-long the growing season for the foods in the greenhouses. Seasonal social celebrations show the value of and respect for farmers and food producers. We have established equitable means for trading for what we can not grow ourselves.

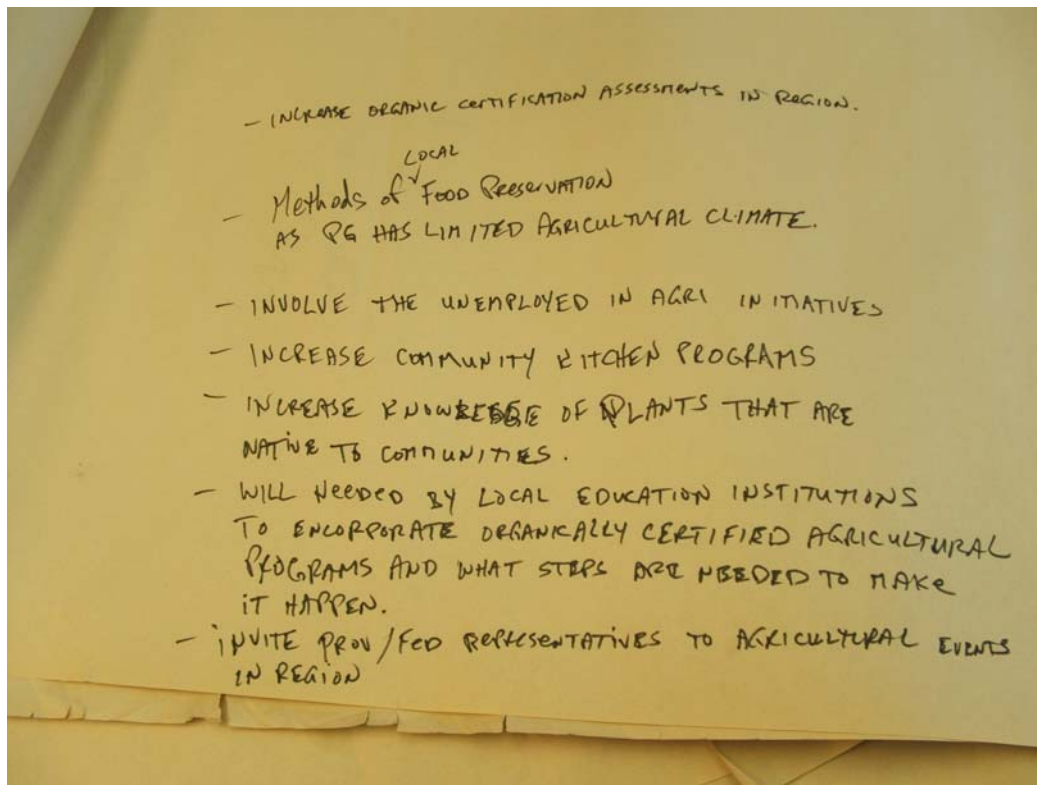


Changes in Attitudes/Practices – Government

(Community Food Action principle: Food system problems)

Have reduced multinational food control and government regulation of what we eat (how it is processed, where it comes from, etc.), and we have established policies and laws that favour and enhance with municipal, ministerial and financial support. Public takes on the role of food citizens and the agro food system make sure readily available food is labeled as "local and sustainable" so that consumers can exercise choice. The creation of jobs in creative partnership initiatives between different groups and individuals helped guarantee the success of this "ideal future". People who want to work and learn do so with farmers who can't afford to pay for extra work. The political will to support local

agriculture and research including Ministry of Agriculture provision of education to farmers, and the agricultural research station) all have political and local support including municipal policy that supports economic development and the businesses that drive local food productions. A regional/political food policy council is able to apply political pressure at higher levels and ensure full support to communities and local agricultural producers.



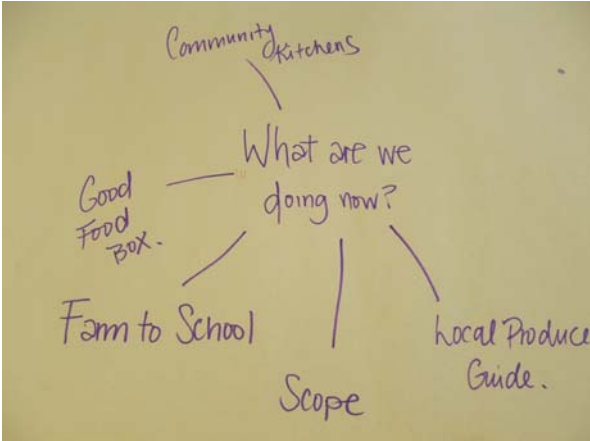
When envisioning a sustainable future, it is also important to ask what the community is doing to organize and engage its constituents (Community Food Principle). To that end, the World Café provided participants with the opportunity to share important initiatives that are helping to move the community toward a desired state. And as evident from the table below, we have lots to be proud of. These successes need to be considered as we develop our unique approach to food sustainability.

Table 2

Table 1: Current successful actions		
Action	Illustrates	Notes
Community gardens (permanent and temporary)	Growing local interest in growing; use of public and private lands	
The university, and colleges with their students and research expertise; contributions such as practicum; college culinary program; PIRG and compost program; Master's Gardner's program.	Opportunity to link young eager minds with knowledge and experience of community; UNBC has recently met (~15 profs) to discuss local agriculture. Diversity of backgrounds represented on the board. Community colleges-have kitchens that may not necessarily be used at night.....could use this resource for cooking, canning etc. Workshops?	<i>Need some organization to link these resources to community needs and community volunteers to the university and college</i> <i>Expand on local food sourcing for UNBC food.</i> <i>Need research: adaptive/eco-region appropriate species</i>
Farmer's Market	Steady growth indicate growing consumer market	
Good food Box		
REAPS- an organic garden	Serves as an educational outreach tool. They offer workshops and skills for food production	
David Douglas Botanical Society: display garden up at UNBC.	Local capacity, interest and expertise	
Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (mypg and Smart growth)	Municipal commitment to, interest in sustainable future and citizen involvement	<i>City is supporting development for the public market downtown. Need to continue to support this so that it is included in the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP).</i>
Private farm tours	Local potential for tourism as anew driver and support	<i>Farm tour brochures or Magazines? We need leadership in developing this to market agriculture in PG area.</i>
Educational seminars (e.g. Kent's presentation at the University and today); Seasonal dinners and educating local chefs and community	Drive and hunger for knowledge, for opportunities to come together as a community to address issues	<i>We could need to increase the number of seminars / workshops and to have a better system for communicating what events are happening. This is especially needed for events happening at the university so that there is a better linkage with the city / community.</i>
Green Chef " "green restaurant" initiative (e.g. Cimo's).	Cutting edge – not just the Food network and Jamie Oliver but PG as a leader	

Seedy Saturday-February 20 th , 2010-01-22	Increasing in popularity; grassroots engaged with seed saving and sharing	
Food Skills for Family program: food distribution program by the Carrier Sekani (CSFS) and BCHLA; other emergency food resources for the hungry	Recognizes the many and challenging barriers to food faced by those who live life hungry; PG has reputation for volunteerism and charitable impulses as good as, if not better than, bigger centres.	Move from charity to justice; drive to look at root causes to poverty and hunger; not just filling empty stomachs
Farm to school	PG was a leader in this initiative which has gone provincial	<i>***Farm-to-school.....could provide a market....operating a full capacity we might not even have enough farmers to support; Need farm to hospital</i>
Ft. St. John.....greenhouse farm-to-school program-first in BC or Area? This is accompanied by a culinary program with high school students.	Ingenuity and risk taking of the north, the can do will do, have done attitude	
Vanderhoof-they are taking school kids to farms: Project Agriculture: 1 week long	. Kids growing up on farms don't usually participate. It helps to entrench in peoples mind what agriculture is or means	Build awareness from when kids are young.....something we can take away? Replicate?
Pilot that demonstrated to the market place that we can supply large markets (grocery stores) with locally grown products-from a local farmer.	Local capacity – if the market is there we can grow it	
Land use inventory of Fraser-Fort George.....FFGRD...a GIS project.	Skills and interest of Regional District, a key partner	
Community (emergency) food distribution programs-such as shelters and food line(hampers	Could look at locally sourcing food for hampers and food lines in the food distribution system. Linking people to work together on this-social enterprise-i.e.. Non-profit societies.	
“Stone Soup” Coalition and Project	Demonstrates community agencies can collaborate together and share support and resources	
Min. Of Ag.....“Taking Stock” booklet-self assessment resource available for farmers	What provincial resources can offer to support local endeavours	
BC Farmers Market food coupon program with funding from Min. Of Employment.... This has been good for needy families who like to shop at the farmers market	Local Farmers Markets benefiting from innovative provincial support; local people often excluded gaining access to local fresh produce	<i>could be cut this year.</i>
OBAC: Omineca Beetle Action Coalition: agricultural strategy	Concerted and intelligent work on variety of sectors	<i>...can find this online.</i>
Old Towne: a food store that does sell local produce	Consumer interest in local produce	
HEAL: local- and regional food systems network has regional-interactive virtual, online map that	Resurrect the PG Food Policy Council	

would house video, pictures, and information		
Smithers: low-cost food outlet that takes food products that are not necessarily ideal but still good. High Roads services society does this.	Shows full circle care - They also employ people with disabilities..... A lot of low-income families access this. Could have food as well as food preparation workshops at this venue. Replicate this?	<i>Social-enterprise in addition to a community kitchen.</i>



Preliminary Conclusions

At this stage there are only tentative and hesitant conclusions. In this interim report it is clear that a participatory approach to community Food action planning has the potential to effect change at a variety of levels:.

The kitchen is the focal point of our conversation, our communication. We have learnt understanding. As well as learning about all about all kinds of food we are learning teamwork. .

Focus Group Participants Stone Soup Community Kitchen

For the participants, members of the most marginalized and “disposable” of our society have reaped both individual and collective benefits. The members want to claim a space where they are not simply ‘pushed aside as useless” but rather “have something to offer and a place to belong” to quote from one of the members.

For the agencies involved and the staff, the dedication and work they carry out, under difficult circumstances and uncertain funding is rewarded when the outcomes are so profound. Transformation is possible with the right supports.

For food producers their commitment to providing local food is embedded with strong and certain opinions about their role in a world where environmental and industrial threats attempt to install food like substances in every diet. Farmers and local food producers are, it appears, ready to take more leadership locally in increasing access to local food sources, including a role in educating and supporting an understanding of good food among marginal populations.

Perhaps the richest portion of the world café discussion occurred when we asked people to consider the top actions that would need to happen if the vision of a sustainable, food secure Prince George was to come to life. These top actions included:

- Community Involvement with Local Foods/Producers

Identified people from multiple sectors and on different levels need to be connected to each other. This will provide assistance and resources to those from other sectors who are looking to focus locally, as well as aiding communities in researching and using best practices on local foods from other areas. We also need to connect on regional food systems, and ensure a diversity of crops and the communication and cooperation between growers. There needs to be an overhaul of our provincial food transportation systems, with more local and regional

marketing. Without eliminating what's already working, we have to approach corporations to identify the barriers to placement of local products on their shelves.

- Creation of New Positions

The creation of jobs in creative partnership initiatives between different groups and individuals is a key action that needs to take place to help guarantee the success of our "ideal future". We need to combine people who want to work and learn with people such as farmers who can't afford to pay for extra work. The Canadian Farmer's Team is involved in something similar where they make matches such as these, and have been very successful. Providing such apprenticeships and mentorships will help bring people and agriculture together.

- Education and Research

There is a great need for education and research around local foods. There needs to be an increase in consumer education about and access to local foods and food security, as well as for local food proponents and the general public. We need to develop an understanding of the value of local foods, to try and teach people not to just look for the cheapest items. The public needs to be educated on where food comes from and the distance it has travelled; this can be done by doing full cost accounting of food, which would include the carbon output, pesticides, etc that come with foods brought in from other regions. There has to be an increase in fostering more local food preservation education and capacity.

As a community we need to reach out to regulatory agencies – focus on educating their staff members around food security. A lot can be done by a ground level agency, there are people to help inform those who are interested in increasing the local food system. One way to help achieve this is by working with local stores to promote local foods. We need to work on improving centralized, controlled 'agri-business', and looking towards transit models. There are a lot of resources out there but there is also a lot of disconnect, which is why education and the combination of resources are so important. Another idea is to provide a Food Safe Certificate or related education as a core curriculum for all school programs in order to help students later in life if they choose to produce foods for sale.

Another necessary action that needs to take place is to determine how to do research about what we can grow in our area, and we are going to have to make some collaborations/alliances to start this process. There is also a great need for the skills and methods to preserve local foods due to our climate. We should be utilizing the experienced farmers from our community to inform on agricultural research and on problems that can happen. It would be wonderful to have these farmers sharing their wisdom and experience with the community, once such way could be via providing apprenticeships.

- Changes in Agriculture

We need to plan for the impacts of climate change on our local food systems and productivity, and how our region might be changing. With this in mind we also need to regard temperature change

and what we may and may not be able to grow in the future. A key part in our success will rely on our ability to be diverse and communicate with each other. For the products we cannot grow, how can we best use our energy in regards to how far we will go to get those products? We will need to hire an agricultural officer to aide with and establish policies regarding local agriculture. It is essential to strive to obtain the products we cannot grow from other regions as close to ours as possible.

- Advocate for Political Will to Support Local Agriculture

Prince George needs a local governing body to manage and regulate what can and needs to be produced and consumed locally. The governance system around food marketing and production needs to be revised and re-invented. There needs to be assurance that the food is not contaminated, but that it is also easy to get to local buyers. The 'road blocks' in the Ministry of Forests, and for licenses need to be addressed. It is not easy to get farm classification on land, this needs to be changed to make it easier for local farmers to get approval. The farm tax classification system has also been a problem for many farmers or those who want to begin farming, the issues regarding this system need to be simplified and focused around helping local agriculture. The local region/municipality can also create a micro-loan program; small scale farmers don't need a lot of money. A local governing body will also need to re-examine the high mark-up on produce in grocery stores, the quota problems with dairy farming, and the regulatory guidelines regarding dairy industry in respect to the production and distribution of local milk. There should also be a labeling system on foods regarding the distance they have travelled (food mileage) and other related information, this will help educate the consumer on the true cost of the food.

- Provide Financial Support

There needs to be financial support for people interested in getting involved in farming; they need funding for start up compensation. One such method of financial support is via a farm subsidy or farm credit corporation. In relation to finances, we also need to address the issue of disparity between the rich and poor consumer; choice costs money. The development of a Co- operative store (example of Co-op in Calgary and Kamloops were given) where the City provided financial support by means of tax break, and providing an affordable lot. There are many ways in which local foods can be produced where it is financially beneficial to both consumer and producer. Funding needs to be made available to help with the start-up, maintenance, distribution and cost of local foods.

While the terms "top actions" and "conclusions" are not necessarily synonymous, the relationship of the above noted top actions to the Community Food Action Principles might suggest that as a community we have indeed honed in on some shared conclusions. Clearly, we've established a shared "call to action" that must be embraced by individuals, agencies, and governments if we are to build a sustainable, food secure Prince George.

Appendix 1: Local resources

Services provided by these agencies are discussed in full in the Community Inventory (separate report)

Association for Women Advocating for Women- AWAC
Active Support Against Poverty - ASAP
Carrier Sekani Family Services Soup Bus
Central Interior Native Health Society
Connections Youth Emergency Shelter
Elizabeth Fry Society – Shelter
Firepit Drop in Cultural Centre
Fort George Resource Centre
Haidih House (Neighbourhood Centre)
Ket so Yoh
Phoenix Transition House
Prince George Council of Seniors – Meals on Wheels
Prince George Farmers’ Market
Prince George Native Friendship Centre – Emergency Food Resources Program
Prince George Native Friendship Centre Friendship Lodge
Reconnect Youth Village
Salvation Army
St. Vincent de Paul
Tse Koo Habbeh Yoh (Women’s House)
Youth Around Prince YAP

Appendix 2: Poster for World Café Event

You are cordially invited!

PG Communities in Bloom
 present together with
 The City of Prince George, HEAL &
 Healthy Community Development at Northern Health

Kent Mullinix, Ph.D.
 Institute for Sustainable Horticulture,
 Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Food for Thought...

Thursday, January 21st - 7:00 pm
 UNBC Weldwood Theatre (Room 7-238)
FOOD SECURITY & SUSTAINABILITY IN NORTHERN BC
 Integrating Agri-Culture and Urban-Culture: Bio-Regional Agri-food Systems and
 Municipal Enabled Agriculture in British Columbia, Canada.
 (followed by a Moderated Question & Answer Session)
 For more information, contact Jackie Pement 250.649.0959

Friday, January 22nd, 9:30 am—1:00 pm
 PGNFC in The Power of Friendship Hall:
FOOD SECURITY & SUSTAINABILITY IN PRINCE GEORGE
 Dr Mullinix will kick-start a dynamic World Café style discussion on the future of
 food security and sustainability in Prince George. Coffee, muffins and lunch pro-
 vided. Please RSVP to HEAL@northernhealth.ca or 250.565.7455



Dr. Mullinix joined the Institute for Sustainable Horticulture (ISH) at Kwantlen University in British Columbia, Canada in 2007. He is Director- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security and is engaged in research and development to advance sustainable agricultural practice and agri-food systems.

"Every dollar we spend is a vote for how we would like our world to look"
 ~ Marnie Bosman & Doug Jamieson~



HEAL Chat:
**Bio-Regional Food Systems &
 Municipal Enabled Agriculture**

January 22nd, 2010
1:00 pm to 2:30 pm


Kent Mullinix, Ph.D.
 Institute for Sustainable Horticulture,
 Kwantlen Polytechnic University

The HEAL Chats are free learning opportunities offered by teleconference. space is limited and pre-registration is required.


For more information or to reserve your space
 please send an email to
HEAL@northernhealth.ca or phone 250.565.7455




Appendix 3: Stone Soup Survey



Where do you get your food?



What do you like about where you get your food?



What could be better about where you get your food?

Please return to _____ who will put your name in the draw for prizes, to be held at the Stone Soup Kitchen Feb 18

Appendix 5: References consulted

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ATTACHMENT #1: COMMUNITY INVENTORY