

GOOD FOOD



Listening to the land

2021 Report

GATHERING



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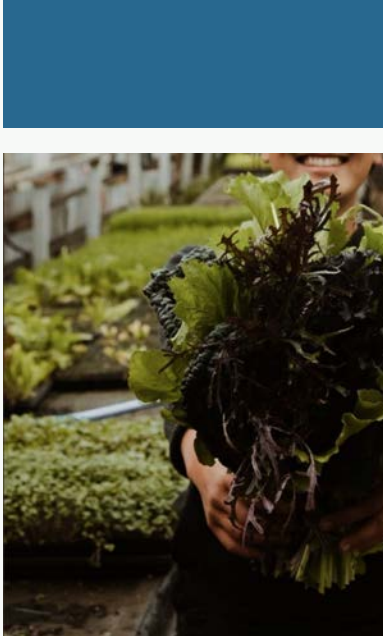


Introduction

The Good Food Gathering is an annual conference hosted by the Good Food Network bringing community, food advocates, organizations, local governments, farmers, and educators together to connect, collaborate and engage in meaningful dialogue around the key issues and opportunities of our local food system. In 2021, the event centered on the theme of 'Listening to the Land', focusing on decolonizing our food systems and embedding justice and equity into our collective work.

WHO IS THE Good Food Network

The Good Food Network joins numerous organizations and individuals across the Capital Region with the shared purpose of connecting and aligning our efforts and work together towards a healthy and sustainable food system in our region. The Good Food Network is backed by the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR).



Day 1 | November 26



Introduction

The Good Food Gathering began with an honoring of the land from CRFAIR's Executive Director Linda Geggie.

In this introduction, we brought forward what the Good Food Network is accountable for when it comes to taking action on dismantling the harm that dominant settler foods and systems have caused. The Good Food Network commits to continuing learning and taking steps to decolonize our minds, thoughts, communications, and actions. The Network gave an invitation for feedback with the acknowledgment that we are on a journey of continuous learning.

Panel session

Kicking off the start of the event was our keynote panel discussing the theme of the event, "Listening to the Land". Moderator Lajah Warren created conversation around experiences working on the land, listening to the land, and community collaboration. Panelists Mark Albany, Sarah Jim, and Beangka Elliot shared important insights into what it means to listen to the land and what questions we should be asking ourselves while carrying out our work. Mark pointed out the need to get out of our comfort zone and truly experience the land by actually being there, more than figuratively; you have to touch it. Sarah weaved in the topic of hope by discussing restoration as a way to collaborate and physically decolonize land. Beangka asked a crucial question-- who asked for this work to be done-- pointing to our collective need to listen to the wishes of local nations and amplify the voices of Indigenous communities.

These topics, stories, and so much more were discussed throughout the panel, leaving attendees with deep thoughts to consider around how they connect, listen, and work on the land as they move forward through the rest of the event.

[Watch session recordings](#)

Day 1 | November 26



Healthy School Food Environments with Matthew Kemshaw

Matthew Kemshaw, School Garden Coordinator for SD62 and the School Food Shift Lead, hosted the virtual session on Healthy School Food Environments. Matthew gave an overview of a study that he conducted in our region focusing on what strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities exist in the current school food landscape. The key themes that arose were that food is more than solely nutrition and that there is a need to address hunger systematically and collaboratively. Matthew brought forward examples of school food programs such as culinary arts programs, breakfast clubs, backpack buddies, and school-run salad bars that support healthier school food environments.

Developing school meal programs helps frame the conversation around food in schools, encourages a values-based approach, and supports change in a big organization. He ended the session with a call to action for regional or district conversations to explore pilot food school program development. Matthew's session highlighted the importance of healthy school food environments and the need for action to make systemic change for a holistic approach in tackling hunger.

Megan Dewar, a food justice advocate, spoke of her experience meeting and learning from community growers with disabilities while she worked alongside the Growing Together accessibility video project. The group discussed physical barriers for those with disabilities in community gardens: ramp access, tool-storage and hose locations, bathroom and parking access, and ground types as well as social barriers. Persons with disabilities who receive government aid often live below the government-prescribed poverty line; they seldom have access to land and may be unable to attain continued access to community garden space. Woven into her words was the consideration of colonialism, the removal of Indigenous peoples from their land, which is an immense barrier to access, as well as the isolating impacts of an individualistic mindset resultant of colonialism and capitalism.

Apart from growing food, Megan highlighted the heroic work of organizations that help get food to those that need it, such as the Red Cedar Cafe, Community Fridge, and others. Megan shared that the model of mutual aid, and the social ethos underpinning it, are the path beyond food security and into food sovereignty. Food sovereignty requires the dismantling of patriarchy, colonialism, racism, ableism, and capitalism. A grand project indeed, however, to paraphrase Megan, engaging in conversations about accessibility is itself working to combat inaccessibility.

Accessibility and Land Access with Megan Dewar



[Watch session recordings](#)

Day 1 | In-person sessions November 26

Red Cedar Cafe: Nourishing Each Other Through Community Solidarity WITH RED CEDAR CAFE



The Red Cedar Cafe welcomed us into their restaurant with open arms and lots to share. The group assembled around their garden for an introduction to the work of Red Cedar and proceeded inside to learn about ongoing and new initiatives. Each member on the staff team at Red Cedar shared their work and their passion for making healthy food accessible. They noted that about 14,000 kg. of food goes through their kitchen weekly, amounting to roughly \$10,000 of food. This food gets distributed through their 1,200 frozen meals delivered to the community every Sunday or out of the free store every Monday and Friday.

A common thread between the conversations was how Red Cedar is rooted in responding to the needs of the community that they provide services for. Responding to the needs of community means working collaboratively with folks that have barriers to accessing food. The care that the team had for their community came through during this session and made the learning memorable.

Power to Choose: Strategies for Promoting Health in Food Access Services WITH SHELBOURNE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

At the Shelbourne Community Kitchen, Kim Cummins opened up the discussion into the topic of healthy food; what actually defines 'healthy' food?

Kim explored how "healthy and nourishing" food for one person may not be for the next, as everyone has a different relationship to food within their body, culture, and in relation to their income level. As such, Shelbourne Community Kitchen has shifted from pre-boxed hampers to self-selection, which offers participants the ability to make choices about their food selection that is relevant to their needs and concept of health. Kim also shares how the Shelbourne Community Kitchen proudly invests in a garden program, which cuts their costs, produces thousands of pounds of food a year, and offers participants fresh produce. They partner with multiple farming programs, as well as support local farmers through mutual benefit partnerships, helping older farms with labor, and other initiatives. The Shelbourne Community Kitchens offer flexible family-oriented times to pick up food, and a variety of choices so that participants can access the foods they need.

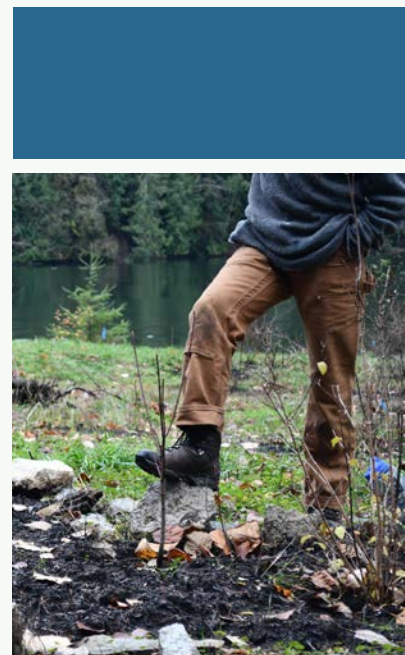


Learning from the Land: Restoration & Resilience in Indigenous Food Systems WITH PEPÁKEN HÁUTW

Judith Lyn Arney and Sarah Jim of PEPÁKEN HÁUTW introduced the group to their journey of restoration out at SNIDZĒL. The walk began with a conversation of the grouse that once soared through the canopy, a canopy since stilled, but with the hope that their songs return. After a brief walk along a riverside forest trail, the group came upon the first restoration site wherein they learned about the restorative techniques and ongoing process of removing invasive species, such as blackberry and lemon balm, to revive the native ecosystem.

The tour came upon a patch of cedar trees which bore markings of stripped bark, signs of WSÁNEĆ stewardship, use, and defiance of colonial condemnation. Once the guides had finished the tour, the whole group participated in the spreading of leaf mulch to help the plants and provide a winter habitat for insects. To conclude, everyone shared what they had learned amongst a circle; it was evident that everyone had meaningfully reflected on their experience, and intended to carry forth the lessons and themes of respect, responsibility, and stewardship to the health of the land in their work. When considering what it means to be a settler on stolen land who endeavors to have a positive impact, Judith's words were echoed...

“It is better to be like the apple tree that provides without taking over, than the blackberry that encapsulates unbounded”.



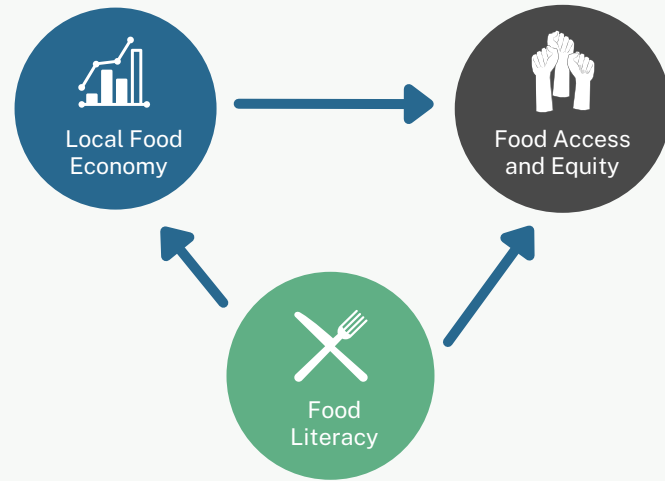
Day 2 | November 27

[Watch session recordings](#)

Good Food Network Updates

Joan Stonehocker, the executive director of Lifecycles Project Society, shared the Good Food Network Update and information about who is a part of the Good Food Network. This network is a regional system of many different community actors all working towards the 2025 Good Food Goals. These goals aim to create a universal way to measure change in the regional food system over time in the impact areas of food literacy, the local food economy, and food access.

Priorities for the Good Food Network for 2021 included developing the metrics framework, working to enhance equity in the food system, and capacity building. Joan asks us to sign up to receive the monthly newsletter to stay informed, join a working group, and reach out to decision makers in our community.

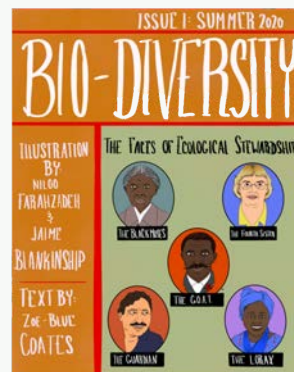


PechaKucha Presentations

In the Pecha Kuchas speakers told their stories through a fast-paced presentation style of 20 seconds a slide, across 20 slides. Through these presentations, speakers had the opportunity to quickly present important parts of their organizations, new initiatives, and spread word about their topic to form connections and share opportunities. Zoë-Blue Coates' Pecha Kucha presentation included information about 'BioDiversity Zine', a beautifully illustrated series of zines that showcase diverse relationships that Indigenous, Black and People of Color have with the land, plants, and stewardship, as well as sharing information about historical figures. Other Pecha Kuchas included the work happening at the South Island Farmhub, the Kitchen Connect Food Hub and the Victoria Community Fridge. Across the presentations, speakers shared about how their organization functions, their programs working to break down food barriers, and efforts to increase access to local food. Though very short presentations, the Pecha Kuchas are packed full of rich community initiatives, thoughtful reflections on our connections to food, and photos of the community in action.



Food Business Incubator & Processing Facility



Unscrambling the Puzzled Food System: Impact Areas Update

This session began with a conversation around how our food system consists of a wide variety of food producers but is controlled by a small number of powerful corporations that create an industrial system, devoid of culture and values. The session leaders explained that we must change the system from industrial to local by building stronger relationships with our food supplies and having more local autonomy of our food supply. The session highlighted different experts in local food organizations reflecting on how they identify within the food system and how they can strengthen their relationship to build a better system.

Though the answers come from diverse voices in the local food system, their answers overlap greatly, expressing that a better system needs stronger connections between local organizations, more awareness about local supplies, and enhancing education about local food and how to use it -- commonly referred to as 'food literacy'. The presentation transitioned to breakout groups to discuss our roles in the food system and how we can share and create different strengths to build resilience. Some key points across the breakout groups centred around questioning the status quo, expanding conversations about system change, joining mutual aid groups, and connecting local growers with local food organizations. The session was wrapped up with a final question asking participants to reflect on what calls to action will guide them for the next year to keep these discussions active.

Syd and Jen from the University of Victoria Campus Community Garden led a session on-site centred around the theme of 'Listening to the Land'. Youth were given a space to create art that spoke to their connections to the land and to the garden space. Syd led a discussion on what "listening to the land" means to them, and how the Campus Community Garden represents both a space of learning and also a space of ongoing colonization. Attendees were asked to hold that truth in their hearts while taking part in the event and going forward in their interactions with the land. The facilitators put together sense-based prompts to encourage attendees to touch, taste, smell, watch, and listen to the garden to inspire their art.

During the session, the participants and facilitators created visual art, wrote poetry, told stories, and shared their experiences about food, land, and family. It was clear from the conversations between participants that the session had brought people together and had allowed them to connect to the land and to one another.

Making Space for Creative Voices | Youth Stream





Plant Knowledge Walk with J.B Williams

Through captivating storytelling and knowledge sharing, J.B Williams guided a group through SMONECTEN creating connections to the land. The group learned about cedar trees, trailing blackberries, and ocean spray. J.B. shared various traditional and medicinal uses of each plant. The group walked through a few trails, stopping at special spots where we had a chance to ask questions and interact with each of the plants we were learning about. To close the walk J.B. told the story of how four birds were competing to see who would be granted the most beautiful song from the creator. The metaphors in the story are linked to how we behave and interact with each other and the land as human beings. These stories left the group with lots to reflect upon.

Climate Resilience: Regenerative Ag & Soil Science with Sandown

While too wet for a tour of the farm and its crops, the group kept warm and dry in a large high-tube greenhouse. Jen Rasheigh and Jen Cline, with the aid of a large aerial map, gave participants an analog virtual tour of the farm instead. Jen and Jen shared their knowledge of the site's history, spanning from pre-colonial times with the Tseycym nation, to the multi-year process of having the Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture approved. We learned about the Farmpreneur program, and met Farmpreneur, Dinah. Dinah first year in the program led her to supply local restaurants, and spoke to the importance of the farmpreneur program in starting her new business. In the session, attendees learned about the soil science lab at Sandown. Brooke Hayes, a current Ph.D. candidate and esteemed researcher, shared her knowledge of soil health as she spotlighted various soil components from the sample on a large screen with a microscope. It was a true treat to see a nudibranch at work!



We are inflamed: Food Justice Review with Iy  Creative

Opening the space by prioritizing connections between the people in the room, Ariel and Zoe-Blue discussed the need to focus on food justice, food sovereignty and land-based relations. Zoe-Blue began by sharing her work with the BioDiversity Zine. A goal of hers with this work is to inspire kids interested in food by showing them there are people who look like them who have been or still are working in this space. Ariel transitioned into discussing the essential need to decentralize our food system for our own health. He connected this conversation to comments from the panel on how learning and unlearning are active roles, and that we need to engage with them. To address this need for decentralized food systems, Ariel shared the work of Iy  Creative that has supported 30 families bi-weekly with food grown on these lands. Ending on a high note, Laura Deviato and the Lelolai Family came in to play upbeat and lively music as the attendees sat with themes brought up of accessibility, affordability and improved health through healthy food.

Food is Land, Land is Body Film Screening & Conversation

As the event came to a close, we gathered to celebrate, watch and discuss the film, *Land is Body, Body is Land* created and produced by Living in Liberation, a project of Iyé Creative. The film discusses food sovereignty and is centred on Indigenous voices from the WSANEC, Cowichan and Metis Tribes. The film took us through stories of people that work intimately with the land, sharing their learnings and joys. Once the film was over, we gathered in a circle to have a conversation. Asiyah and Ariel facilitated an in-person conversation while Lajah Warren, Juman Risheq and Jared Williams facilitated a virtual conversation. Questions were posed that led to deep reflection from the audience such as when did you stop listening to the land, do you respect your food? These sparked stories of how people used to eat with the seasons, the connection we feel to animals when out on the land, and the disconnection of large urban centers. Rich and meaningful conversations took place as we reflected on how we all connected to these themes brought forward in the film.



As the conversations came to a close, so too did the 2021 Good Food Gathering; an event that brought a community together, virtually and in person, over two days of impactful learnings. Through the tone set by the keynote panel, the diversification of perspectives on food accessibility, getting out onto the land and spreading mulch at PEPÁKĒN HÁUTW, and so much more, this event fostered learning, and listening. Listening to each other, to our community, and to the land.

Good Food Champions



Red Cedar Cafe

Spurring into action in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, red cedar cafe has created a truly welcoming and positive space for accessing healthy food. They have been dynamic in the ways that they have supported those who need support in accessing food. Pivoting from a restaurant to hot meal deliveries to frozen meal deliveries and now also a functioning cafe, the support that Red Cedar Cafe has provided by getting good food to people that need it is highly commendable. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers that work with Red Cedar Cafe to make the work happen.

Community Food Support & Community Fridge

Over the last year, Community Food Support and the Community Fridge have created a strong presence in our community in creating ways for everyone to get nutritious food. With COVID-19 only exacerbating existing food insecurity and inequality within our community. Their aim is to support folks in accessing food while making the process as barrier-free as possible. Promoting the fact that everyone in the community deserves access to healthy food. Thank you to Community food support and the Community fridge as well as to all their volunteers for all the hard work they have put into making healthy food more accessible.



Compost Education Centre

The Compost Education Centre has been a consistent source of food growing knowledge in our community for a long time. In the past year, they have been an essential resource of ample information for people who have recently sparked interest in growing their own food, and for those who have been growing food for a long time. We want to recognize the CEC for all the hard work they put into continuing to create innovative workshops and educational experiences for the community throughout the changing COVID-19 restrictions.



Thank you!

We want to thank every attendee, speaker, facilitator, and community partner that gave their time to make this event possible. Making space for critical thinking, collective dreaming, and reflection around the future of our food systems is vital in working towards a system rooted in decolonization, collective action, and justice.

We hope you enjoyed the themes, conversations, and connections made at this year's Good Food Gathering!

Land Honouring

CRFAIR and the Good Food Network honour the unceded lands in which this event was hosted. We endeavour to honour the land and its treaties by strengthening our relationship and responsibilities to them. This event was hosted on unceded Coast Salish Territories*, specifically of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees) and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) Nations here in the core area, the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations {WJOLEŁP (Tsartlip), BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), STÁUTW,(Tsawout) W̱SIKEM (Tseycum)} out on the Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands, to the west Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht, and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) and Pune'laxutth' (Penelekut) Nations.

Huge thank you to this year's sponsors:

