



GOOD FOOD NETWORK

# PROGRESS REPORT

2023/2024



# Contents

03 *Honoring the Land & People*

04 *What is the Good Food Network?*

05 *Outcomes Map*

06 *Key Food Systems Issues*

07 *Food Sovereignty*

08 *Tackling Food Insecurity & Affordability*

09 *Food Production & Land Access*

10 *Food Economy*

11 *Food Literacy*

12 *Supporting Youth Involvement*

13 *Food Access & Equity*

14 *Collective Action & Stories of Impact*

15 *The Numbers: Shared Bounty & Network Growth*

16 *Get Involved & Sponsors*



# Honoring the *land & people*

In stewarding healthy and sustainable food systems, we walk in the footsteps of the Indigenous peoples on whose lands we are located. CRFAIR and the Good Food Network reside on unceded Coast Salish Territories\*, specifically of the Lək̓ʷəŋən peoples, also known as the Songhees and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) First Nations, the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations, also known as the W̱JOL̓EP (Tsartlip), BÓKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), STÁUTW̱ (Tsawout) W̱SIKEM (Tseycum), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat)}, Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nations, as well as the T'Sou-ke, Pacheedaht, and Pune'laxutth' (Penelekut) Nations. We endeavor to honour the land, the peoples and the treaties by strengthening our relationship, knowledge and responsibilities to one another.

The presence of settlers (non-Indigenous peoples who live on these lands) is not neutral; it has had, and continues to have, devastating impacts on many aspects of life for Indigenous peoples. Many of the common farming and distribution practices, including the seeds we plant, the ways we educate, and our methods of growing food came to these lands through the ongoing process of colonialism. These means of production have, in many ways, led to the dispossession and disconnection of all people from the abundance that nature has to offer while disproportionately impacting Indigenous peoples.

Thanks to the resiliency and leadership of Indigenous people and their allies, traditional ways of caring for the land and one another have not been erased. We believe that this ongoing history of colonial violence can and must change if we are to reach our goals of local, sustainable, and equitable foods for all. Acknowledging this shared history, continuing to learn how it has shaped our ways of being in relation to one another, and taking actions to support the leadership of Indigenous peoples to revive traditional ways of being, are commitments embedded within the work of the Good Food Network. In hopes to amplify and celebrate the work being done by the many Nations and their allies to ensure the continued thriving of traditional food systems, this report highlights some of the work being done locally. The Network continues to practice learning and unlearning and will undertake a Network-wide Learning Journey in 2024. We humbly encourage feedback and dialogue on how to be in better relation with one another and the land.

\* The term Coast Salish is used to encompass a number of Indigenous peoples, including Esquimalt, Hul'qumi'num, Klahoose, Lekwungen, MALAXEŁ, Musqueam, OStlq'emeylem, Pentlatch, Scia'new (Beecher Bay), Sliammon, Shishalh, Skxwú7mesh-ulh Úxwumixw, Stó:lo, Straits, Tseil-Waututh, T'Sou-ke, W̱SÁNEĆ, and Xwemalhkwu.

# What is the *Good Food Network*?

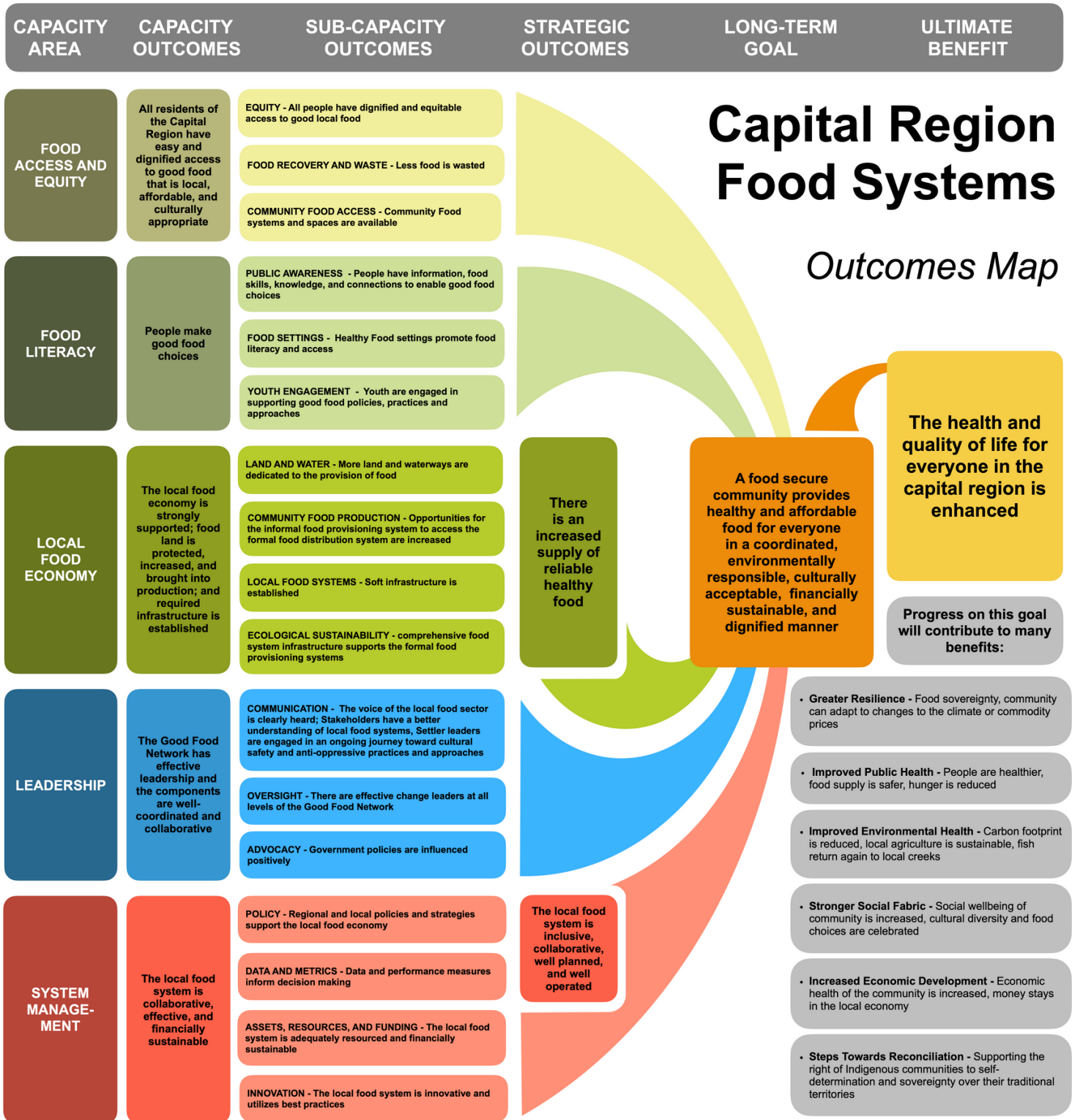
Every year, committed actors from different sectors in the Capital Regional District work collectively around a complex social problem; how to create a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable local food system. This report aims to share some of the many actions being taken to achieve this goal. While this is a non-exhaustive report of the incredible initiatives taking place throughout the region, it provides a snapshot of the inspiring leadership of local communities and a map to guide forward movement.

The Good Food Network is a group of diverse people, organizations, institutions, decision makers, advocates, educators, health professionals, activists, farmers, makers and distributors that share the common goal of increasing local, healthy, equitable and sustainable foods. The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) is the organizing back-bone of this network, acting as one point of connection. CRFAIR drives this collective action towards our shared food system goals by providing administrative, legal, and financial support; as well as hosting events, gathering spaces, educational opportunities, and communication services.





# Outcomes Map



## Capital Region Food Systems

### Outcomes Map

- **Greater Resilience** - Food sovereignty, community can adapt to changes to the climate or commodity prices
- **Improved Public Health** - People are healthier, food supply is safer, hunger is reduced
- **Improved Environmental Health** - Carbon footprint is reduced, local agriculture is sustainable, fish return again to local creeks
- **Stronger Social Fabric** - Social wellbeing of community is increased, cultural diversity and food choices are celebrated
- **Increased Economic Development** - Economic health of the community is increased, money stays in the local economy
- **Steps Towards Reconciliation** - Supporting the right of Indigenous communities to self-determination and sovereignty over their traditional territories

# Key Food Systems Issues

## Food Sovereignty

Many people are not able to access land or resources to practice their traditional foods and medicines.

## Food Literacy

Many people have been denied access to the knowledge and skills associated with preparing food and making informed decisions about their food choices.

## Food Production & Land Access

Disruptions in the supply chain, regional food instability and dramatic land use changes have highlighted the importance of sustainably producing healthy food that is locally sourced and distributed.

## Food Insecurity & Affordability

High cost of housing, ever rising food prices, and a lack of food distribution centers are exacerbating food security in our region.

## Youth Involvement

Young people are looking for ways to learn more about our food system and take an active role in their learning

## Food Access & Equity

Systemic barriers to accessing and preparing culturally relevant foods are rooted in an interlocking system of oppression.



# Building Food Sovereignty



## SALISH SEA GARDEN PROJECT

The Salish Sea Garden Project, initially called the Clam Garden Initiative, began as a pilot project from 2014–2019 to experimentally restore two clam gardens by managing them as WSÁNEĆ people have for thousands of years.

Characterized by a rock wall at the lowtideline that traps sediment and expands the habitat in which clams flourish, the wall acts as a reef-like habitat, creating homes for kelps, fish, and other important foods that would otherwise not appear in these areas.

Once established, clam gardens support up to two times more clams than unmodified beaches. Now in its second phase, Parks Canada staff and the WSÁNEĆ Traditional Knowledge Working Group have revived the project after a period of dormancy during the pandemic to build on lessons learned from the first phase of the Clam Garden Restoration Project and expand the scope to create healthy, sustainable ecosystems.



## PEPÁKEN HÁUTW

The PEPÁKEN HÁUTW Native Plants & Garden Program offers weekly workshops for the 350 students of the WSÁNEĆ School Board that educate students in growing, planting, and harvesting native plants like JSÁY (douglas fir), KŁO,EL (camas) and DEKENIŁĆ (thimbleberry); as well as growing fruits and vegetables. In addition, PEPÁKEN HÁUTW offers hands-on Learning on the Land Programs to more than 200 people annually to help restore native ecosystems at four sites within WSÁNEĆ territory.



## WSÁNEĆ LEADERS & PARKS CANADA

WSÁNEĆ Leaders and Parks Canada are working together on three projects which enhance local fishing, hunting, and foraging opportunities in traditional territories. Growing Together, Fur to Forest and Clam Gardens are projects tackling issues that threaten food sovereignty by restoring native ecosystems, mentoring youth, managing wildlife populations and tending to food ecosystems.

# Tackling Food Insecurity & Affordability



## GOOD FOOD BOX

The Good Food Box program, operated by Fernwood NRG, continues to thrive, offering affordable and fresh produce boxes to residents across Greater Victoria. Their dedicated team of volunteers purchases produce from local farmers and suppliers to provide an array of healthy options for the Good Food Box recipients. In 2023, their Gift of Good Food campaign fed 228 families, seniors and new parents facing barriers to accessing nutritious, fresh food.



## THE MUSTARD SEED

In 2023 the Mustard Seed collected 3 million lbs of product from 32 grocery partners in the Greater Victoria region as part of the Food Rescue Program. These products including perishable, dry goods and hygiene items are then sorted and redistributed out of the Food Security Distribution Centre to the over 75 agencies that make up the Food Share Network. These agencies distribute this product in many ways including free markets, food banks, community meals and snack programs.



## RED CEDAR CAFE

The Red Cedar Cafe is a non-profit meal program fueled by volunteers and community. Between their frozen meal program and free store, the red cedar cafe has been a vital community resource since its inception in 2020. The Café continues to distribute between 1000 - 1300 frozen meals per week.



# Food Production & Land Access



## **SOUTH ISLAND FARMERS INSTITUTE - LAUNCHED!**

Over the past year the South Vancouver Island Farmers Institute was launched grown to provide mentorship and support through their Sustainer Series, the return of the Farmer2Farmer conference, and a series of field days. They are a local institute founded and governed by farmers – for farmers and community members who support agriculture and growing. They continue to work to improve agricultural land stewardship and food security in our region.



## **CRD FOODLANDS ACCESS PROGRAM**

The CRD's Foodlands Access Program has been developed to support new and young farmers by facilitating affordable access to productive farmland. Work on the 2019 Regional Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study, advanced this year with the RFP and process underway to get the Bear Hill CRD owned property into production



## **SANDOWN CENTRE FOR REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE**

Sandown supports and engages with emerging growers, researchers, community members and regional farmers; working together to build a thriving, climate change-resilient, sustainable local food system. At last year's 2023 Good Food Gathering, Sandown received the 'Food Economy Champion' and overall 'Good Food Champion' awards as an incubator farm program

# Growing our Local Food Economy



## KITCHEN CONNECT

The new Kitchen Connect facility was established this past year to support marginalized populations, food processing entrepreneurs, farmers, social innovators, and community members through shared access to kitchen infrastructure, programming, and resources. Kitchen Connect is working to support and build strong local businesses and feed our community by making produce and processed goods from the kitchen available to our charity and community partners through the South Island FarmHub.



## CLOSING THE SUPPLY GAP

Closing the Supply Gap (CSG) is a collaborative initiative focused on the short and long term development of the local food system, building the infrastructure and relationships that are required for an economically sound, sustainable, and resilient local food supply chain. Their recent capacity assessment study presents an assessment of infrastructure strengths and gaps that are affecting our capacity to build a robust local food system, one that is based on ecologically regenerative principles and socially just values.



## FOOD HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY

The District of Central Saanich conducted a study on exploring the feasibility of establishing a food hub in Central Saanich. The project assessed the viability of a shared-use food processing facility (food hub) for food and beverage producers and processors in the region. The report identified potential food hub locations across the district and provides a model for the process of establishing and operating a food hub.



# Promoting Food Literacy



## SHELBOURNE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The Shelbourne Community Kitchen works to lower barriers to healthy food for over 1500 adults and 500 children who are living on low income in our community. The kitchen works hard to prepare and share healthy meals through their Food Skills and Pantry Programs



## FOOD LITERACY ROUNDTABLE

Our annual installment of the Good Food Gathering's Food Literacy Roundtable took place at the South Island Farm Hub. This event featured a conversation with lyé Creative about expanding the ways in which we think about food security when providing programming, followed by a hands-on pasta making workshop and shared dinner. With participants representing various organizations and initiatives across, and beyond, the Good Food Network, we were able to hear from a number of folks with different perspectives and experiences. [Read the 2023 Food Literacy Roundtable Report.](#)





# Supporting Youth Involvement



## FLOURISH! SCHOOL FOOD SOCIETY

Flourish! School Food Society believes that nourishing food should be available to all students. They create diverse, seasonal and youth friendly menus, and prepare and distribute over 800 scratch cooked meals each school day to 20 schools across the region as well as providing nourishing grocery items to 11 schools, feeding an additional 400 students every day. They also support school garden care and help school based staff integrate food learning across the curriculum.

## YOUTH FOOD NETWORK

The Youth Climate Stewardship Collective program was a series of free workshops that ran through the spring of 2023 for youth ages 14-20. The youth explored themes related to climate justice and ecological stewardship in a local context. This included topics like seed saving, harvesting and preparing medicinal plants, food justice, permaculture, solidarity with Indigenous peoples of these lands, and nurturing diverse and safe communities. Another program over the summer provided opportunities for youth to learn from members of our food community who were willing to share their knowledge on foodwork in the region. Participants learned about the local food system and shared cultural food knowledge with our community and each other. This all culminated in the annual youth stream which took place at the Good Food Gathering.

**CLICK HERE TO LISTEN!**





# Increasing Food Access & Equity



## STUDY ON PROMOTING EQUITY AND SUPPORTING FOOD MAKERS

Nelly Jimenez conducted a research study to recommend a food equity framework for the Kitchen Connect food hub. The report identified some of the most significant barriers faced by newcomers and immigrants in Victoria when trying to access and produce their cultural foods. The information collected from the interviews that Nelly conducted helped to develop recommendations to make the resources of the Food Hub more accessible for those groups and to strengthen the value of food equity within the organization.

## IYÉ CREATIVE'S CULTURALLY RELEVANT CROPS SURVEY

In 2023, Iye conducted their Culturally Relevant Crops Survey with community participants through a number of engagement sessions. The report identified some of the most significant barriers being faced by those interviewed such as the cost of culturally relevant foods and a loss of ancestral knowledge related to traditional and culturally significant foods. The report further outlines a list of recommendations for improving the production, distribution, and sharing of knowledge associated with culturally relevant foods.

**CLICK HERE TO READ!**



iyé

**Culturally Relevant Crops for our Communities (CRCC):**



A SNAPSHOT OF GREATER VICTORIA

**REPORT SUMMARY**

**DEC 2023**

# Taking Collective Action

## Flavour Trails Festival

CRFAIR, in partnership with the District of North Saanich and Destination Greater Victoria, hosted the 17th annual North Saanich Flavour Trails Festival this year!



Flavour Trails events promote and organize community celebrations that provide opportunities to experience the quality and creativity of the regions' farmers, fishers, harvesters, food producers, chefs, vintners, cider makers, brewers and distillers. In addition to a season-long promotion of North Saanich's food and agricultural businesses in the region, a weekend celebration was hosted at Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture in addition to other local businesses.

More than 500 residents, visitors, and anyone looking to expand their knowledge and taste for local food and beverages got out to taste and explore the abundance of North Saanich!

## Good Food Gathering

The Good Food Gathering is an annual event for those working to enhance the local food system. The "gathering" emphasizes opportunities for cross sector collaboration, networking, skill building, and highlights the Good Food work happening in the Capital Region.

The 2023 Good Food Gathering included a calendar of events to highlight and amplify the work of the network throughout the month of October, a workshop that provided connection, tools and support to members struggling with lack of adequate resources, and a network dinner with awards and updates from the Good Food Leaders.





# Game Changer! School Food Programs

The launch of the Flourish School Food Society marks a decade of collaboration among organizations dedicated to healthy school environments through forming a society focused on improving access to healthy school food. Their mission is to bring positive changes to how students eat and learn about food in schools. They aim to create nourishing school meal programs supported by hands-on learning in school gardens.

In their inaugural year, Flourish provided over 700 scratch-cooked hot lunches and 110 snack breakfasts daily across 20 schools in School District 62 through the "Setting theTable pilot" program. They are now working to expand their reach to other districts in 2024. A significant challenge they faced in 2023 was adapting to new provincial funding for school food programs. While previous funding was limited, a substantial three-year investment was announced by the Province in 2023, enabling local school districts to enhance their food programs. The challenge now is to utilize these funds effectively to develop efficient, fair, and inclusive school food programs tailored to the local community.

## Shared Bounty Network Growth

### Engagement

- 1,442 subscribed members to the Monthly 'Around the Network' Newsletter
- 1,167 Facebook Followers and 678 Instagram Followers
- Over 125 network members at our Annual Gathering
- 10+ work experience jobs filled by youth and equity deserving groups

### Resource Sharing

- \$500,000 to network members and projects through shared fundraising
- Over \$1 million to food system infrastructure
- 10 working groups and roundtables
- launch of the United Way Regional Food Hub Equitable Food Connections Initiative

### Collective Impact

- 800 scratch cooked meals to 20 schools through Flourish Pilot project SD62
- 115 farmers, fishers, food processors and harvesters selling through South Island FarmHub
- \$1,279,000 in cumulative sales from South Island FarmHub
- 105,104 seedlings and 700 cubic yards of soil-building materials distributed to communities by the award winning City of Victoria's Get Growing, Victoria Program!

# Get Involved

This report is brought to you by the Good Food Network's coordinating body, CRFAIR, with guidance from the Good Food Network Leadership Roundtable.

Stay informed by signing up to receive our monthly newsletter, find out about local events, volunteer opportunities and more at [www.crfair.ca](http://www.crfair.ca).

Join a roundtable and work with other advocates who share your passion!  
Email [info@crfair.ca](mailto:info@crfair.ca) with the name of the roundtable you'd like to join.

If you/your group is working to shift systems in a collective approach and would like to be featured in next year's report please contact [info@crfair.ca](mailto:info@crfair.ca).

## Thank you to our supporters!



*This project has been made possible in part by the Government of Canada.  
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