

# South Okanagan Similkameen Food Security Summit



Summary Report

10/23/2024

## Acknowledgements

The Community Foundation is grateful to **Valley First, A Division of First West Credit Union** for their financial support of the summit, and for their shared interest in building a more healthy, caring, inclusive, and thriving South Okanagan Similkameen region.



A DIVISION OF FIRST WEST CREDIT UNION

We also thank **Naramata Centre** and their staff team for hosting the summit and providing logistical, audio-visual, and catering support to ensure its success.





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The **South Okanagan Similkameen Food Security Summit** was a day-long event hosted by the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen and held at Naramata Centre on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. It was delivered as part of the Community Foundation’s strategic commitment to meaningfully address the food security challenges facing our region.

More than thirty-three organizations were represented at the summit, including:

- Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen
- City of Penticton: Social Development Department
- Canadian Mental Health Association: South Okanagan Similkameen
- Desert Sun Counselling Society (Oliver)
- First West Foundation
- First Nations Emergency Services Society of BC
- Food Banks BC
- Foundry Penticton/Penticton Youth Centre
- Inclusive Community Gardens Society (Keremeos)
- Incredible Edible Penticton
- Interior Health
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University: Institute for Sustainable Food Systems
- Local Motive Organic Delivery/Garnet Hollow Organic Farm
- Lower Similkameen Community Services Society
- Naramata Centre Society
- NaramataSlow
- Ntamtqen Community Garden and Food Hub (Lower Similkameen Indian Band)
- Oasis United Church Food Cupboard

- Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society
- Okanagan Fruit Tree Project
- OoKnakane Friendship Centre
- Penticton and Area Access Centre
- Penticton Bethel Church Food Pantry
- Penticton Community Fridge and Pantry
- Penticton Elks Lodge #51
- Penticton Starfish Pack Program
- Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen: Emergency Support Services
- Salvation Army Penticton Food Bank
- School District #67 (Okanagan/Skaha)
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul (Penticton)
- Summerland Food Bank/Seed to Feed Program
- United Way British Columbia
- Young Agrarians

In addition, the following organizations expressed interest but were not able to attend:

- ASK Wellness Society
- Central Okanagan Foundation
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Community Foundation of the North Okanagan
- Dignidad Migrante Society
- Feedway Foundation
- North Okanagan Land to Table Network
- Okanagan College
- Oliver Food Bank
- OneSky Community Resources
- Princeton and District Community Services Society
- Penticton Farmers Market
- Penticton Resource Recovery Society (Discovery House)
- Penticton Soupateria Society
- Similkameen Starfish Pack Program
- Snpink'tn Indian Band
- Vermilion Forks Metis Association

## **Format**

The summit featured a mix of small table conversations, large group debriefs, and presentations from organizations and individuals active in food security and the local food system. The agenda and slide presentation for the event are provided as accompanying documents to this report.

The day's conversations focused on two broad groups of questions posed in the agenda. These questions were designed to help the Community Foundation determine how it might proceed in its efforts to enhance food security, and help build a more resilient, equitable and sustainable regional food system in the South Okanagan Similkameen.

As participants introduced themselves, they were asked to share one or two words that described their hopes for the summit. Their responses are captured in the word cloud shown below:



## Themes

Summit participants recorded their ideas and conversations on flipchart paper. There is so much inspiration written on the collected pages – and many questions and concerns as well.

For this summary report, we reviewed those pages to identify emerging themes from the day. This is a preliminary list, and we will continue to refine our thinking as we spend further time with that material.

- **Indigenous food systems and food sovereignty:** a tremendously rich source of learning and inspiration to be honoured, supported and meaningfully consulted as we work toward greater food security for all in our region.
- **Policy change:** required not only as they relate to food growing, processing and accessibility (land use, food prices, food safety), but also in other areas that impact food security: housing, income, social and wellness supports, for example.
- **Advocacy:** a strong, clear, and unified voice for greater food security and stronger local food systems is needed. This relates to efforts to change policies affecting food security and food systems.
- **Education:** teaching skills in growing, buying preserving, and preparing healthy food; teaching children where their food comes from and how it is grown (building a new generation of farmers); incorporating Indigenous ways of farming, gathering, hunting, and preserving in food education; “learning by doing”
- **Farmers and farming:** attracting and training new farmers; valuing farming as an occupation (Red Seal trade certification); building markets and opportunities for local farmers to thrive; supporting efforts to match land with emerging farmers.
- **Networking and collaboration:** building stronger connections between the many actors working in food security and food systems; active knowledge and resource sharing; efficiency of collective effort; communications tools to facilitate connections (website, listserv)
- **Humanity of food:** food as a basic and fundamental need; building social bonds through growing, preparing and sharing food; building community around food; food security as an entry point to begin breaking the cycle of poverty; dignified, stigma- and barrier-free access to food.
- **Local economy:** a stronger local food system will have positive economic effects locally; providing better compensation for farmers and agricultural workers; buying local and keeping our dollars in the community; encouraging investment in local food production and innovation.

- **Resilience and Self-reliance:** a strong and thriving local food system that protects us from future climate disasters and disruptive events, and reduces our dependency on global food systems.
- **Infrastructure:** creation of, or access to additional storage and processing facilities; a centralized, physical food hub; transportation to move food to where it is most needed (or move people to where they can access food)
- **Food waste:** strategies for reducing/eliminating the amount of useable food that ends up in landfills and compost – diverting that useable food into secondary processing, for example.
- **Food and the environment:** “the health of the people is tied to the health of the land;” climate change and its impacts on food production; crop diversity; health of the soil and water; impacts of transporting food.

A selection of flipchart pages is included as an appendix to this report. These examples are included to provide a glimpse into the energetic small group discussions taking place at the summit. The flipcharts will be fully transcribed and made available at a later date.

### **Facilitator’s Notes**

To distill comments coming out of the large group discussions, the facilitator created brief notes on flipcharts at the front of the room. These notes were organized around the questions presented to the group.

First Round of Questions: *What can a sustainable, resilient, and accessible South Okanagan Similkameen food system do to contribute to improved food security in our region? What’s the potential?*

- Indigenous ways of being are honoured and respected
- Building stronger communities
- Building networks for farmers
- Food is humanized
- Better accessibility to fresh local food
- Connecting people to food at a higher level
- Building opportunities for self reliance
- Buying habits support local food and farmers
- Food security is achieved
- Basic food needs are met
- More thoughtful relationship to food
- Better health outcomes for residents

- Individuals have agency in the food system
- Wide variety of food production opportunities
- Policies support local food production and local farmers' access to markets
- Reliance on strong local systems
- People move from surviving to thriving
- Transportation exists to support access to healthy food
- This is bigger than just feeding people
- Income/housing policies need to be addressed

Second Round of Questions: *What does the journey look like to a more sustainable, resilient and accessible SOS food system that enhances our region's food security? What are the next best steps forward for all of us together? For the Community Foundation?*

- Local distribution and processing
- Policy and finance support for farmers
- Public celebrations around food
- Public food education
- Local government policy work
- Creating space for farmers to sell their produce regularly
- Food waste mitigation
- Linking all the expertise in the room together
- Contingency planning for emergencies that affect our food supply
- "Gap and capacity" map
- Co-op models
- Advocacy!! Role for CFSOS
- Communications tools to connect with questions/challenges
- Education programs: teaching food prep
- Ensuring everyone has a seat at the table; who is missing?
- Direct purchases from producers/hunters/fisherfolk
- Smaller roundtables
- Information sharing
- Site visits to see the work
- Relationship building
- Commitments
- Larger, long-term funding
- Collaboration on funding
- Human resource capacity



## **Post-summit Feedback**

The following comments were provided by participants who reached out directly or completed the post-summit survey:

- *It's very helpful and energizing to meet so many others in the same field as we are; what a terrific energy there was in the room.*
- *Overall, it was very well-organized and brought together a significant cross-section of individuals and organizations that are involved with food security work.*
- *Great – a really good opportunity to network and to try and find a way forward together along with valuable presentations.*
- *It was a great event and a good networking opportunity for those with similar mandates.*
- *Lots of opportunities to meet others in the food provision services and to get a good idea of the many other programs operating.*
- *It was a great opportunity to connect and see the bigger picture of the food security needs and assets.*
- *Nourishing to be more aware of and connected to people doing food-centred work in our region. The presentations were an excellent selection of inspiring projects.*

Survey respondents also provided some valuable suggestions to improve future conversations:

- *I was wondering about including more small commercial farmers, including those from different ethnic backgrounds (we have many in our area!) to see if we can learn from them how we can become more sustainable without relying so much on grant funding and explore possible partnerships.*
- *While I think it is important to have people from all aspects of the food security chain in one room together I think maybe having different themes and looking at different stages in the process could be helpful. Eg a day focusing on barriers to farmers to growing locally marketed food on their farms, a day looking at storage and processing of locally grown food for a winter supply, a day looking at what are the best ways to get the locally grown food to the people who need it. I think that breaking down the discussion into more bite sized chunks might yield a deeper discussion on each point and be more likely to result in action items. I think that might also help to make sure that we have all of the interested parties in the room. While we had a lot of food banks in the room we didn't have a lot of local food producers, or any grocery stores other than local motive.*

- *Perhaps a little less spin off group time.*
- *I was curious how you were going to collate and share back the information recorded on chart paper. Or if there were digital ways to gather and share information. For example, the 'one word' activity during the introductions ended up going quite long. Could folks use a QR code where they could share a word and generate a word cloud?*
- *I think having some vision to guide the purpose of our gatherings would be helpful. It the purpose to network? Or are we looking to bring some alignment and cohesive strategy to each of our areas of service?*

The Community Foundation continues to welcome feedback on all aspects of the summit.

### **Next Steps**

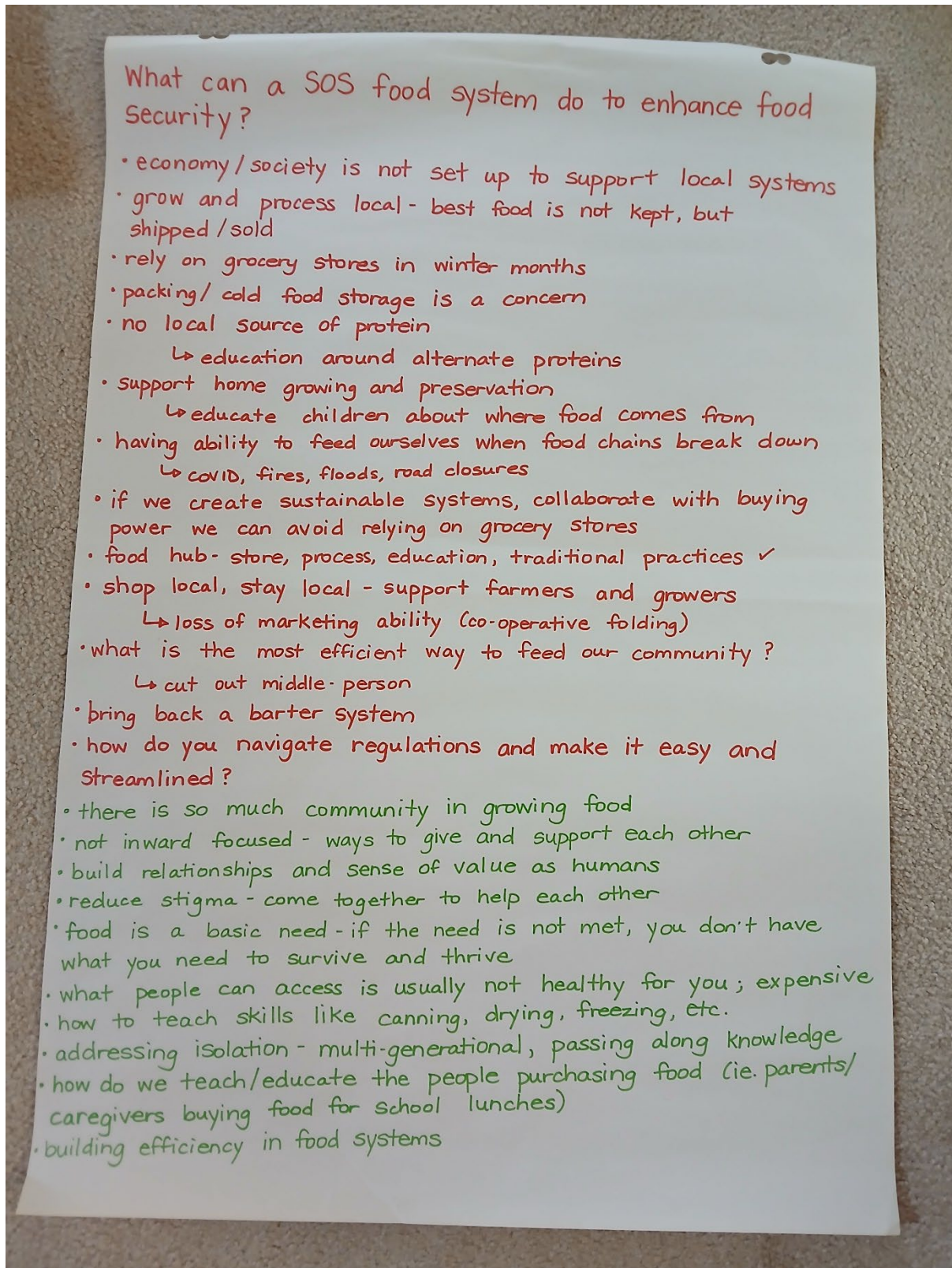
At the close of the summit, the Community Foundation committed to continuing the conversation by hosting a follow up meeting on November 29<sup>th</sup>. This half-day conversation (location and time to be determined) will use the outcomes and positive momentum of the food security summit as a starting point; our goal for the meeting will be to create the beginnings of an action plan to inform our collective work toward enhanced food security and a resilient, sustainable and equitable food system in the South Okanagan Similkameen.

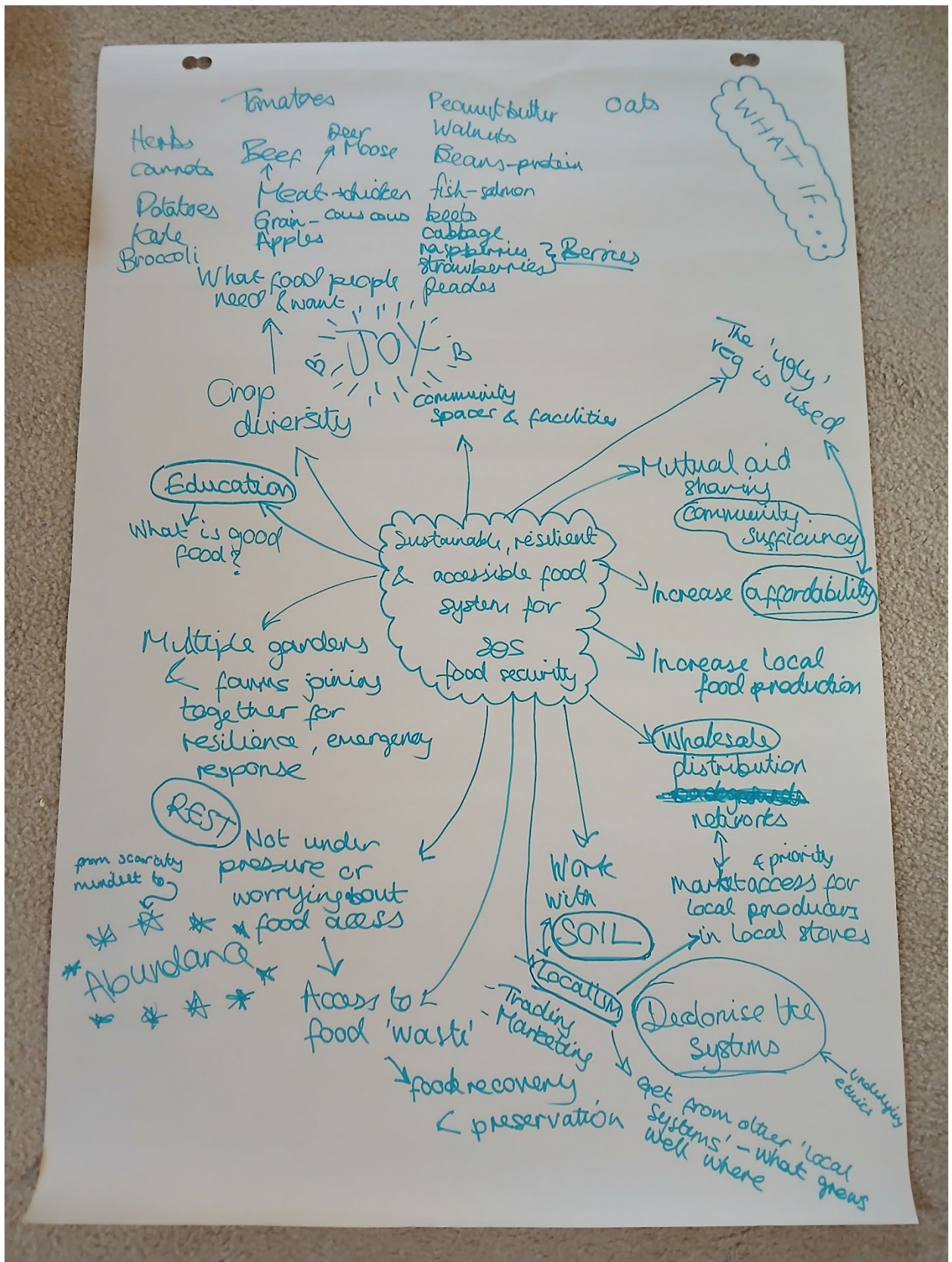
### **Contact**

For more information about the summit, this report, and the Community Foundation's work in food security, please contact:

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## Appendix: Flipchart images





## Question #2

- distribution center & processing center
- more intentional opportunities for community partners to share & collaborate
- more support for farmers (policy/financial)  
etc.
- Public education & celebration  
- campaign to support local farmers  
ex. "shop local month"
- local government policy changes  
including ones around food security, land use, transportation  
& providing opportunities for infrastructure  
that support community gardens.
- Indoor spaces for farmers to sell their items everyday - not just 1x a week at the farmer's market
- Potentially have some conversations with the large grocery chains
- a system in place for food waste
  - yard waste bin for curbside pick up
  - create meals with food that is on its way out.

- MONEY / FUNDING
- LINK → GROWTH → HARVEST  
→ DISTRIBUTION TO END USER
- DIVERSITY OF FOOD TYPE PRODUCERS
- CONTINGENCY PLANS / REGIONAL
- ≡ GAP & CAPACITY ANALYSIS
- ≡ ADVOCACY (COLLECTIVE FOR A  
(FOR THE FOUNDATION) UNITED VOICE)
- ≡ ACCESSIBLE WEB SITE
  - INFORMATION
  - REQUESTS
  - IDEAS / WORKING GROUPS
  - TRAINING
- ≡ ACTION PLAN THAT IS MEASURABLE



