

Nechako Valley Food Network
Planning Meeting
Feb. 2, 2009
'Hot Topics'

Publication Group

Host: Michelle Roberge

Purpose: to develop a publication listing agriculture resources in the area.

- The publication would communicate to people who don't use computers and/or who want something "in hand"
- Funding could come from grant request or from advertising
- Free "listings" bigger ads = a fee
- The group would like to get a first publication ready by April
- Produce annually in the Spring
- List other tasks/subgroups that are formed (greenhouses, Master Gardeners, soil, manure/compost)
- articles on Public Health, Canada Food Guide
- laminate copies to keep at local restaurants? Mailout, handouts, Welcome Wagon
- There is a need for someone who would be willing/able to sell ads or write proposals.
- Some suggestions of possible funding bodies or people to contact: Kathy Laforge, Municipality of Vanderhoof, Northern Health for printing (contact Loraina Stephen) Ministry of Agriculture

Education Group

Host: Katie Byslma

Purpose: Educate community about healthy eating and food awareness

- Promote school growing projects.
- The projects could be grown in containers that could then go home with kids over the summer. These could be entered at the fall fair (free entry)
- Support teachers to help them work within their program so that they are not faced with extra work and time demands
- Provide mentors to help students in schools with growing projects (different stages)
- connect with parents (Honoring our Health group at Neighborlink)
- Promote a community kitchen
- Create and distribute healthy food budget-wise shopping lists, games, menus, etc. through website, bulletin board, publications, etc.
- Healthy food learning/teaching at the Farmer's Market and Community Garden
- Teach healthy food games:
 - o Learn about the food your eating at dinner discussions
 - o Ask questions like 'where did it come from?', 'what is the healthiest food on the table?', 'what is the least healthy food on the table?' etc.
 - o Help kids make healthy choices a part of their lives.

Food Production in Schools to Support Healthy Eating Strategies

Host: Marty Floris

Purpose: Build a greenhouse at Sinkut View school and teach kids how to grow food plants in it.

- The greenhouse is already planned and 'in the works'
- It has support from the school board
- Need a School District #91 Plan
- greenhouses
- raised beds
- links to Farmers/Experts
- tasting local foods
- Ask Ray about forming a plan . . . Marty = teacher/leader
- Loraina Stephen is interested in helping with the initiative
- need other interested parties to help with organizing this initiative

Placing 'Healthy Eating and Active Living' in the 'Heart' of Vanderhoof

Host: Lisa Burgener

Vision: Locate Community Garden (Demonstration/Teaching Garden) near Farmer's Market in Riverside Park

- highly visible location to promote community interaction and discussion
- this garden could become a model for neighborhood gardens
- run gardening mentorship programs from here
- walking distance for Seniors complex, four schools, BC Housing etc.
- walking, cycling distance through trails from Riverview and from the subdivisions by the hospital
- park area already popular destination in summer time
- groups to garden plots
- good sunlight and fertile land (flood plain)
- walking distance to Neighborlink kitchen for 'canning/preserving/ cooking workshops'
- compost demonstration spot for Nechako WRI
- water from river
- parents garden while kids play at the playground
- CNC gardening workshops held here?
- beside Farmer's Market . . . easy to sell at communal table and promotes discussion and knowledge sharing between farmers and community gardeners
- create Heart Smart walking/gardening programs which could access targeted cardiovascular funding
- possibility that Sturgeon Release Facility will be a multi-use building with an environmental (green) focused day care and after school care . . . at Riverside

Issues: Vandalism

- more facilities in park = more resources for protecting them

- placing garden near houses?
- Location
- exactly where in the park could the garden be placed?

Farmer's Market:

Host: Susie Blattner

Purpose: Decide on Location of Market and get it up and going

- juried Market or not? . . . keep products local
- .2 or .5 Coordinator would be helpful to have consistency and ensure follow through
- Historical Society has some tables which were from 'Farmer's Market' funding should go wherever the garden is
- District of Vanderhoof has some tents
- membership in umbrella group and BC Farmer's Market Association
- Riverside a good location! Encourages people to stay and enjoy park, picnic
- proposal to Council in conjunction with Community Teaching/Garden but if the Garden is blocked Farmer's Market to go ahead anyways
- Communal Table at Market?
- even if small at start, better to start than not
- flexible to move to another location if need be to start up
- group committed and keen to start work asap
- check that band shell is to be erected at Riverside – creates entertainment for market
- parking could also be available on St. Joseph's parking area

How to Grow a Garden

Host: Deirdre Goodwin

Purpose: To provide information, networking, and mentoring to people who want answers to questions about how to grow food.

- Discussion of mentoring possibilities
- Website as a place to collect mentor contact information (Volunteer Database?)
- Website as place for a book list (already started), as well as perhaps a wiki for questions and answers
- Could make links with the master gardener program at UNBC and people who have taken the program
- Books could be purchased for the library or recommended to the library based on Network recommendations
- need space, water source
- gardens for elderly to preschoolers
- canning, drying, freezing workshops
- root cellars
- Neighborlink - kitchen for canning, etc.
- Master Gardening Manual + its list of books

A Vanderhoof Seedy Saturday:

- how to grow vegetables -soil
- companion plants -nutrients/fertilizers – best?
- sources of soil -what seeds?
- pests – worms, moths, weeds -size

- raised beds
- crop rotation
- rototilling
- CNC course

Harvest Dinner

Host: Judy Blattner

Purpose: To organize a fall harvest dinner in order to promote agriculture and local food awareness

- Could be held on Burrard Ave. downtown and/or at the fall fair/Food Fair on Stewart Street
- Consult with Glenda Olson re: Taste of Nechako?
- Need to contact producers first and find out what kinds of food could be available
- Contact CNC chef program for cooks (The Ft. St. James campus of CNC has a commercial kitchen and chef's training program in operation now – or will have by fall?)
- Could have a competition – give the chefs a food list and provide a prize for the best recipe
- servers earn community hours – school and youth on probation
- menu ideas: buffalo, beef, rabbits, berries, fish, veggies, grain
- tie into the Wednesday Neighborlink lunches
- Could seek support from government funding
- Could contact Darren Carpenter and project agriculture at NVSS and could involve the school(s) with this.

Inclusion of Present Agriculture Base

Host: Gary Blattner

Purpose: To discuss how to include the large base of presently operating farmers and ranchers in the food network planning, and how to learn from their experience.

This group discussed a wide variety of topics ranging around the theme of taking a historical perspective and learning from past experience. There are many people who have started similar projects in the past (farmer's market, harvest dinner, etc.) and who learned valuable lessons from the experience. Consulting with them would be a worthwhile step in the planning process.

- There are obstacles that producers have had to deal with, and still have to deal with. It would be prudent to be aware of the obstacles as we move forward – being aware of pitfalls and obstacles helps to avoid them more effectively.
- There is a lot of hope of regenerating knowledge of agriculture. The group of people who are already farming are a valuable resource.
- Some things that it would be useful to know about:
 - o HASAP? (training and guidelines for safe food production)
 - o Group liability
 - o Food inspection – Loraina should be consulted as there are different levels of inspection and inspectors. The farmer's market could be shut down or unnecessary problems could result if some caution and planning is not exercised here.

- Ask Lucy Beck (Director of Environmental Health for Northern Health) to give package that was given to Farmer's Market in PG to support Food Safety Issues
 - There is a lot happening at the ministry level in agriculture right now. Strong group voices are needed to help the government know what is wanted and needed.
- ***Read A Seat At The Table: Policy Guide for Local Governments . . . it is available on the Network website - gives really specific examples of how local governments can help their communities to become 'food secure'*****

Soil Group/ Greenhouse

Host: Little Valley Farm (Denise and ?)

Purpose: To make people aware of research and possibilities for bio-energy generation and gardening soil production.

- Year round produce production in heated greenhouse -opportunity for other groups
- Bio-energy production can also generate weed and pathogen free organic gardening soil for community
- Fertilizer can be made from compressed processed cow manure
- UNBC researchers are also working on this
- cow pots – manure in pot, plant in it,
- not sure when they will start, set rates with BC Hydro
- scale is modual . . .start small get bigger
- Bakery wastes are big energy producers!
- There are possibilities of connections with community composting
- There may be funding or support opportunities from regional district waste management
- It was suggested that Graham Stanley from Community Futures is interested in promoting agricultural projects/ small business ventures and that this may be one he would support.