

Nechako Valley Food Network Annual Report January 2009 to March 2010

Mission Statement:

Promote the growth and distribution of local agricultural products in the Nechako Valley. Educate and aid individuals to grow and eat their own produce in an environmentally sound way.

Our Role in the Community:

To help create a local food economy through connecting producers and consumers, and creating awareness about the value of local food through numerous initiatives

Brief Description:

The Nechako Valley Food Network (NVFN) was officially formed in September 2008 by a core group of about five individuals that are passionate about locally grown foods and food security for Vanderhoof. Since then, the NVFN has grown to roughly sixty-five members and/or interested parties. The NVFN holds regular meetings once a month to discuss food related issues in the community, develop goals, and create action items for future events/initiatives. Attendance at the meetings ranges from four to ten people per month. Committees are formed to address specific events/initiatives. The NVFN maintains a website, producer database, and community bulletin board that showcase all things to do with local food production, food security and education. The NVFN is part of the Nechako Healthy Community Alliance and works under their society act.

Activities and Initiatives:

The NVFN organized, attended and supported several events and initiatives from January 2009 to March 2010.

NVFN Events, in which NVFN members put on or helped coordinate for the community at large.

- Held two large public meetings in Jan and Feb 2009. These events sparked the interest of the community in the idea of locally supported agriculture and food security in Vanderhoof.
- Collaborated with NVES to promote the Kids Container Gardening Exhibition at the Vanderhoof Fall Fair Spring 2009
- Food Event, July 2009: Greenhouse tours and local foods potluck supper. 20 people attended and visited five greenhouses/gardens in the Vanderhoof area.
- Food Event, August 2009: Tour of Borno's Community Supported Agriculture garden/greenhouse. Five people attended this event.
- Bulletin Board and websites updated monthly. Themes have included seeds, apples, garden produce, wheat, a 'home grown holiday', the movie *Fresh*, and sockeye salmon crisis.
- Taste of Fall Dinner, October 2009, coordinated by the NVFN for the Sustainability Planning Workshop and funded by BC Healthy Living Alliance. Highlights of event:
 - all local ingredients from local producers
 - all baked goods and desserts made by Farmer's Market vendors
 - fed over 90 people plus all leftover food donated to Neighborlink
 - local chef
 - utilized the tremendous Katimavik volunteers for serving, cooking, setting up and taking down
 - created a brochure to distribute at event highlighting the local producers that supplied food for the dinner, recipes used, event schedule, and tips on how to host a "green" event.

- Attended tradeshow and fairs presenting our outreach and educational booth display. Events attended included Going Green Living Green Trade Show, Farmer's Market, Nechako Valley Exhibition, and the District of Vanderhoof Recreation and Leisure Fair.
- Collaborated with Reel Alternatives to host the movie, *Fresh*, during the 2010 film festival.
- Facilitated a discussion about local food for the CNC Essential Employment Skills Program, March 2010.

Networking Events, of which members of the NVFN participated.

- Small Scale Agriculture Focus Group for Economic Development Plan
- Large Scale Agriculture Focus Group for Economic Development Plan
- Farm to School Salad Bar Videoconference
- Food Security and Sustainability in Northern BC conference
- Sustainability Planning Dinner
- Agroforestry workshop series
- BC Food Systems Annual Gathering

Outcomes:

In its first full year of operation, the NVFN has held and participated in several success events and initiatives. Overall, the NVFN has fueled a new energy in the community, where many residents and even some businesses are now starting to think about sourcing more of their diet from local producers. For example, the Bean Coffee House has begun to source more products from local producers as a result of education fostered by NVFN. They are now utilizing local beef, bread products and paper products, with more to come.

Additional local foods initiatives that were inspired by the community meetings coordinated by NVFN:

- Little Valley Farms is now marketing their natural, grass fed beef locally in stores and restaurants (The Bean freezer, The Reid, Scott Foods and several outlets in Prince George).
- The revived Farmer's Market group came together under the NVFN, and in May formed their own vendor driven society. The Riverside Park Farmer's Market began in the summer of 2009.
- The Bornos gardens started selling bins of organic vegetables again in the summer 2009.

Future Direction:

Below is a list of goals and initiatives that the NVFN will be supporting over the next year.

- a. Compilation and publication of a print directory of local producers by May/June 2010.
- b. Facilitate the consideration of a centralized location for selling local products year round by connecting local producers with Farmers' Cooperative case studies from other northern BC communities (spring-winter 2010).
- c. Offer a supportive role to local foods meal initiatives in schools by strengthening the links between the School District and local producers (spring-fall 2010).
- d. Research the feasibility of a community or inter-agency garden (winter 2010/11).
- e. Maintain and update the bulletin board and website and expand the database of local producers (on-going).
- f. Coordinate and support community education/awareness events to raise the profile of the benefits of locally grown foods and to educate about food related issues (on-going).
- g. Continue to support and promote the Farmer's Market (summer 2010).
- h. Determine membership benefits and a possible membership fee (spring 2010)