

Kaslo and Area Food Security Project Report from March 2006

Prepared by Gillian Sanders



**These pictures are from our Community Food Forum on
March 25th, 2006. We prepared a free, locally produced lunch
that fed over 65 community members of all ages.**



Introduction:

The Kaslo and Area Food Security Project was a research project designed to identify needs and assets of food security in the North Kootenay Lake Area. The research was conducted in February and March of 2006 by Gillian Sanders and Aimee Watson. We hosted three mini-forums, conducted individual interviews and held our final Community Forum on March 25th to gather information from our community members. Through this process we also identified some solutions to improve food security in the Kaslo area. This document summarises the information gathered, and is prepared in conjunction the PowerPoint presentation titled “NKL food security needs and assets charts”.

Food Producers:

There are five main food producers in the North Kootenay Lake Area, few market gardeners and many home gardens.

Lofstedt Farm is 5 kms outside of Kaslo and is a biodynamic, organic mixed farm with a Community Supported Agriculture Program (CSA) for 50-60 families. Community members in the Kaslo and Nelson area buy a share for a summer and/or a winter season and receive a weekly distribution of seasonal vegetables. The CSA program has been in place for 14 years, but as of the writing of this report the program needs a head gardener for the 2006 season.

McIntyre Farms is in Argenta, 35 kms north of Kaslo on Kootenay Lake. They produce 25-30 tons of vegetables, mostly root crops, for Kootenay Lake, the East Shore and the Slocan Valley. They farm various plots of land using a team of horses.

Both of these farms find it difficult to compete with industrial food prices and have accepted a standard of living that may not be attractive to everyone. It was noted that it is hard to make a living growing vegetables, but it is a healthy living.

It would help these farmers and encourage others to farm vegetables if there was more education on the importance of eating well and the true cost of producing food (without farm and travel subsidies).

There are three meat producers in Meadow Creek, 30 kms north of Kaslo. Van Tuyl Farms produces beef and hay, Tesla Spring Farm produces meat chickens and eggs, and Conrad Farms produces beef domestic venison, pork, meat chickens and eggs. It was recognized by all these farms that there is a growing market demand for locally produced, free range meat. In fact, the local farms can not meet the demand, and would be interested in expanding their operations. However a newly enforced government regulation is threatening the viability of these otherwise productive family businesses. This regulation stipulates that all meat that is to be sold must be slaughtered at a government regulated slaughter facility. The closest facility is in Salmon Arm BC, 8 hours away, and for some meat (venison) the closest facility is in Williams Lake BC, 12 hours away. Shipping their animals to these facilities at their own expense threatens the

livelihood of these farmers and stresses the animals to produce meat that is not as high in quality.

There was a plea from these meat producers to write to our government officials to promote a slaughter facility closer to home, or some of these family farms may have to go out of business, which will compromise our local food security.

Gardeners in our area are interested in a locally adapted seed bank, and want to be a part of educating more people on how to grow their own food. We did investigations into fallow land in the area and did match up some would-be growers with land to grow upon. The mini-forum for farmers and gardeners was well attended and some of the recommended solutions for improving local food security were: encouraging others to grow their own food, promoting seasonal eating, promoting links to our local farms, education of organic food versus factory farming, implementing a school educational program on growing food and hosting a Kaslo Fall Faire showcasing our farmers. The Fall Faire could also have contests for children (who grew the biggest pumpkin, sunflower, etc) and preserving contests (best salsa, applesauce, chutney, etc.).

Food Distribution:

At our food distribution mini forum we talked about many ideas to improve food security and build community with focus on low-income families, individuals, and seniors. The idea with the most support was a Community Kitchen, where community meals (potlucks) can be hosted. The hot meal program was stopped in Kaslo a year ago and this has left a gap in our community. The Meals on Wheels Program funding was cut to our community and this has resulted in seniors not having access to convenient hot meals. The meal could be prepared once weekly and would be welcome to everyone; contribute if you can, come anyway if you can't. Various existing kitchens exist in Kaslo and some could be turned into a community kitchen.

We would collect food donations from stores and restaurants and volunteers would prepare meals to be served at Community Potlucks. Soup was identified as easy and accessible. Seniors at home could have the meal delivered to them, and the Community Church is willing to help with delivery. The Community Church is delivering pre-prepared frozen meals to seniors at home and reported that many are requesting home made soup. Soup can also be frozen for distribution or for future use at the kitchen. Many nutritious and yummy soups can be made from locally grown vegetables, supporting our local food producers.

We could host educational workshops at the kitchen to promote cooking of nutritious, affordable, locally produced meals. There could also be seasonal workshops teaching preserving; canning, drying, freezing, smoking, salt curing, and pickling. There is a need for education on how to prepare meals for special diets such as diabetes, heart trouble, and low fat meals, teach parents how to prepare baby food, and a food consultant could be brought in to help to teach some of these skills.

There was discussion of hosting a cooperative bulk buying club to increase affordability of wholesome foods, and local retailers are supportive of helping to order these foods.

Local retailers (IGA, Cornucopia, Rudolph's Bakery, and Sunnyside) were interviewed and are supportive of buying locally produced food, depending on consistency, competitive pricing and availability. There is not much excess food after sales for distribution through the community kitchen, but there could be some.

Also identified was the need for a community food storage, where bulk buying club food gets dropped off, Lofstedt CSA shares could be left for pick up, and there would be a community freezer, cold storage, meat smoker, root cellar, and food dehydrator. Ideally all of this would be at a central location.

We would need to have a kitchen manager (trained in Food Safe) to make bookings for the kitchen space, organize and collect food donations, organize workshops, organize bulk buying club, and promote local, seasonal foods.

There are many low-income community members in the Kaslo area and we identified that a cooperative commercial kitchen would build capacity and create much needed employment opportunities. A business incubator would succeed in this area because there are many entrepreneurs with a varied skill set. The shared cost of equipment, materials, marketing, and kitchen space would enable community members to start a small value-added foods business without having huge start-up costs.



Health Professionals:

The mini forum with our local health professionals led to a lively discussion. Low incomes were identified as the main barrier to food security in the Kaslo area. Kaslo food retailers import relatively small amounts of food to service our population of 1,200, so prices of food in Kaslo are higher than in Nelson, but comparable if on sale. Milk is expensive, especially for large, pre-school families and is never on sale. The prices of higher nutrition foods are expensive, and the cost of junk food is cheaper and is more convenient. Some schoolchildren are responsible for their own lunches, and they tend to pack high sugar, low nutrition lunches.

It is hard for low income expectant mothers to eat adequately. There is a Pregnancy Outreach Coordinator who provides pre-natal support for everyone who is pregnant, but post-natal support is available only if mother is breastfeeding. The funding for food vouchers for mothers on this program has been cut to only \$8/week, which obviously does not provide for much food, much less high quality food and vitamins. Many mothers report that they travel to Nelson to go to the Nelson Food Cupboard to receive food because it is more accessible than the Kaslo Food Bank. The highest rate of breastfeeding in the Kootenays is in Kaslo, credited to our pregnancy outreach program.

There was discussion about the need for educational sessions on healthy eating and food preparation to address poverty and economic issues. There is a dietician to consult with about special diets and she does shopping tours with diabetics and those with health problems. However these tours are available only twice a year, due to lack of funding.

The Kaslo Victorian Hospital provides meals to patients that are prepared on site, and there is community recognition that this is an important asset that we will continue to support.

Suggestions were made to educate community members and schoolchildren on how to grow their own food and to eat seasonally. There was also suggestion that the Kaslo Food Bank perhaps needs more help or consistent sources to be able to relax the barriers, as it is available only once every three months.

School Programs:

There is a need for more education in the schools (JV Humphries in Kaslo and Jewett in Meadow Creek). Suggestions of a school greenhouse and gardening education had much community support. There is a breakfast for learning program at JV Humphries for a \$1 donation, and the donation is not necessary. There is not currently a hot lunch program at this school. Jewett School does have a hot lunch program twice weekly, and there are reports from the teachers that they recognize a significant improvement in the student's behaviour and concentration in the afternoons on the days of the hot lunch.

The grades 11 and 12 have an elective foods class, which focuses on nutrition and preparation of healthy meals. There is also education on where food comes from and the

difference between organically produced food and industrial farming. The nutrition program at JV Humphries has stopped candy being given as rewards by teachers.

Kaslo Community Garden:

The Kaslo Community Garden provides community members with an opportunity to grow food together and learn about growing food. It has been running for five years and has been improving the soil through this time. They have saved seeds for food bank members, donate produce to the food bank, have tools to use and provide good raised beds for only \$10/year.

Kaslo and Area Fruit Tree Project:

The Kaslo and Area Fruit Tree Project is designed to link community members with excess fruit (or those unable to harvest their fruit) with volunteers who would like to harvest the fruit for themselves. There is an abundance of excess fruit in the North Kootenay Lake area. The Fruit Tree Project has been running for 4 years, with the 2005 season being the most successful. In 2005 we linked 53 harvesters with 122 fruit trees and harvested almost 19,000 lbs of fruit!

Lardeau Valley Hall:

The Lardeau Valley Hall has an amazing kitchen located in Meadow Creek, 35kms north of Kaslo. The kitchen has 2 propane ovens, 2 grills, a commercial dishwasher, refrigerator, 2 steam tables, an island workplace and servings for 150 people. There are many in Kaslo who wish this kitchen were closer to home! Unfortunately, the drive to Meadow Creek is far enough that it is prohibitive for travel to utilize this kitchen, and transportation for low income community members continues to be an issue. When a community kitchen is established in Kaslo, we will work in conjunction with the Lardeau Valley Hall to host educational food workshops.

Kaslo Saturday Market:

The North Kootenay Lake Arts and Heritage Society hosts a Saturday Market in Kaslo. This market would like to attract local farmers and gardeners to sell more local produce. Farmers expressed that there is not enough of a market yet to spend the time selling goods here, but there is an opportunity for gardeners with excess produce to share a booth to sell their goods. The market needs more shade for produce and for shoppers, as it gets very warm in the summer months.

Solutions to Improve Food Security:

There were a number of solutions identified through the series of interviews and forums to improve food security in the Kaslo area.

The most popular solution is the Community Kitchen, building community around food and hosting community meals. There would be education of food preparation, where food comes from and the importance of nutritious food. The bulk buying club could be operated out of the kitchen, and the community food storage units could be centralized here. This kitchen could be expanded to a Cooperative Commercial Kitchen which would enable community members to prepare value added food products for commercial sale, thereby increasing the economic status of low income individuals and families.

The role of the community garden could be expanded to host more educational workshops on growing food, and perhaps linking with the schools to promote gardening within the school curriculum. There were suggestions of “growing an extra row” for donation, a children’s garden contest, the Fall Faire and promotion of growing food and knowing your local farmers through an educational column in the local newspaper.

The school could expand the nutrition program already in place to promote good nutrition in all grade levels, and there were suggestions of promoting organic milk for use in the school because of concern with industrial milk production.

The “Buy BC” program could be reinstated, and Selkirk College could host more food related classes.

The JV Humphries School nutrition program can be expanded to all institutions to promote healthy snacks and treats for promotion and events.

Transportation was identified as a need throughout the community and especially for low income community members to access food related events. Advertising of these events and general education can be hosted on the Kaslo InfoNet website.

The Kaslo and Area Community Food Forum:

The Community Food Forum was held on March 25th, 2006. This event brought in over 75 community members. We held workshops on local food security initiatives, served a free, locally produced lunch, viewed the documentary “The Future of Food”, and finished the day with discussion on North America’s food supply and local initiatives. Everyone had a great time at this educational and fun food event.

Conclusion:

The Kaslo and Area Food Security research team conducted research into food security needs and assets of the Kaslo area in February and March 2006. This report summarizes the findings and provides some solutions to improve local food security. There is support for implementing a Community Kitchen in Kaslo. There are some initiatives already addressing food security in the area, and there is room for improvement.

Appendixes

Appendix 1 Power Point Presentation
NKL food security needs and assets charts

Appendix 2 Sample of Promotional Material

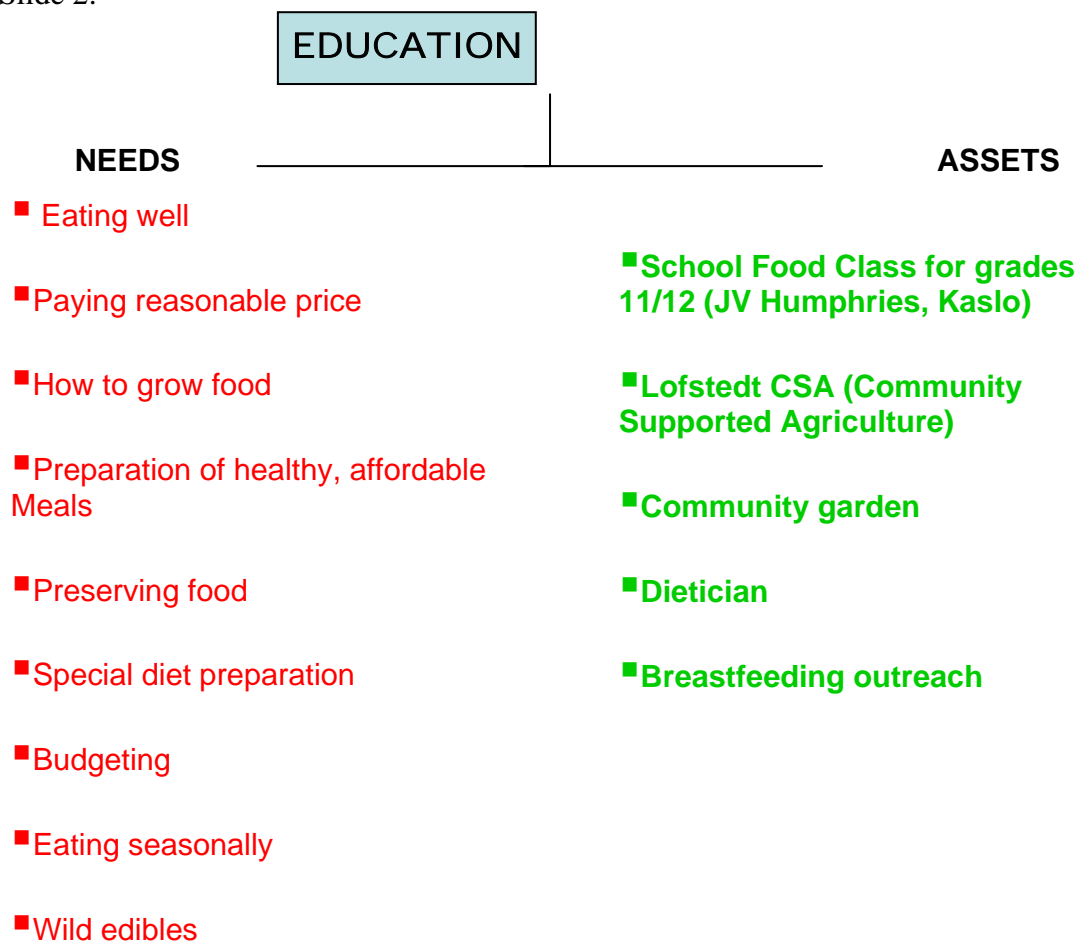
Appendix 1
Power Point Presentation
NKL food security needs and assets charts

Slide 1:

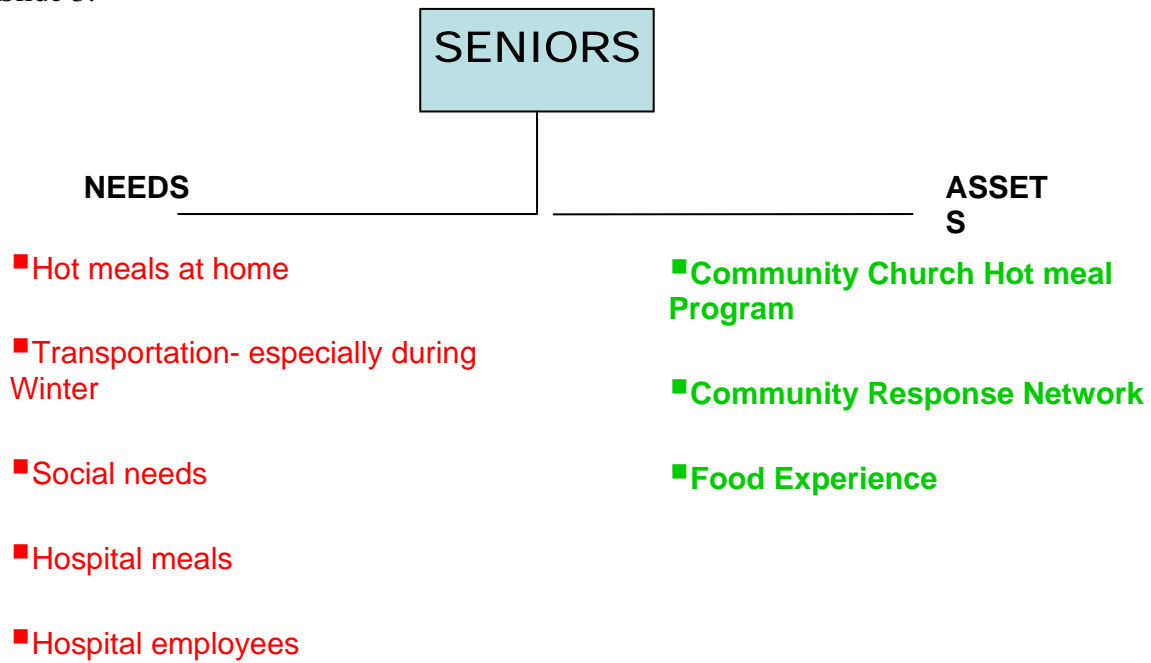
Kaslo and Area Food Security Project 2006

- This brief slide presentation shows the results of a short term (February & March 2006) research project identifying needs and assets of food security in the North Kootenay Lake Area.
- There was a series of Community Forums held to gather this information, as well as individual interviews.
- The final Community Food Forum was held on March 25th 2006, attended by over 70 community members.
- This project was coordinated by Gillian Sanders and Aimee Watson, with the help of our volunteer task force.
- This project was funded by ActNow in cooperation with Interior Health and sponsored by Kaslo and Area Seniors Association and North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society.

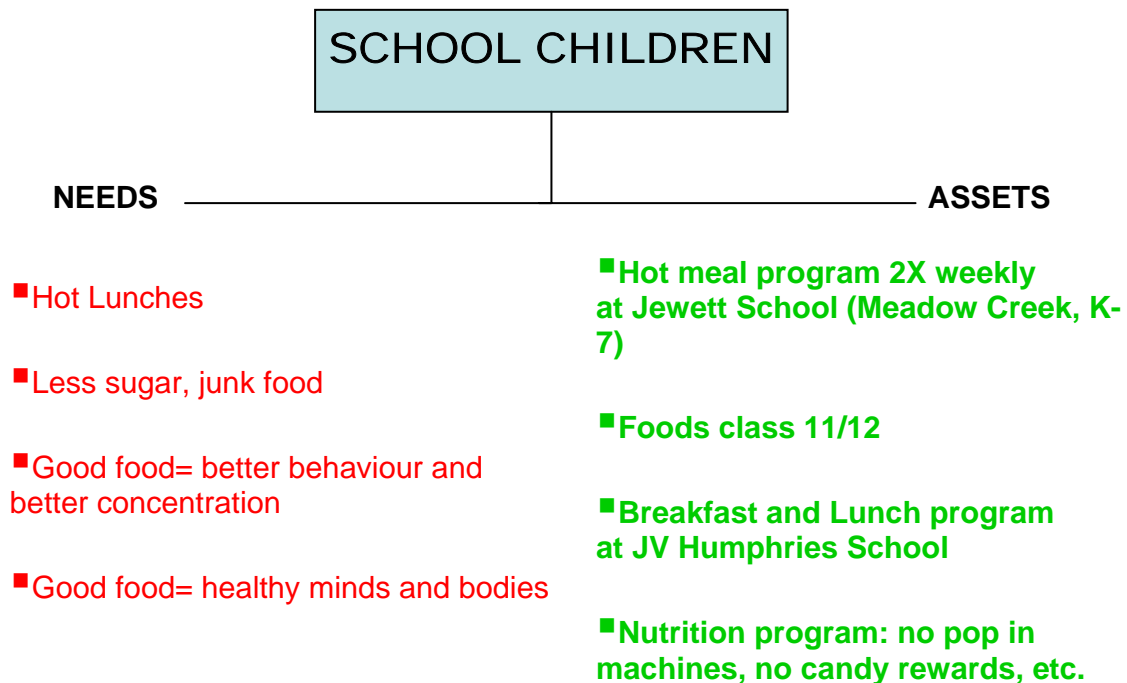
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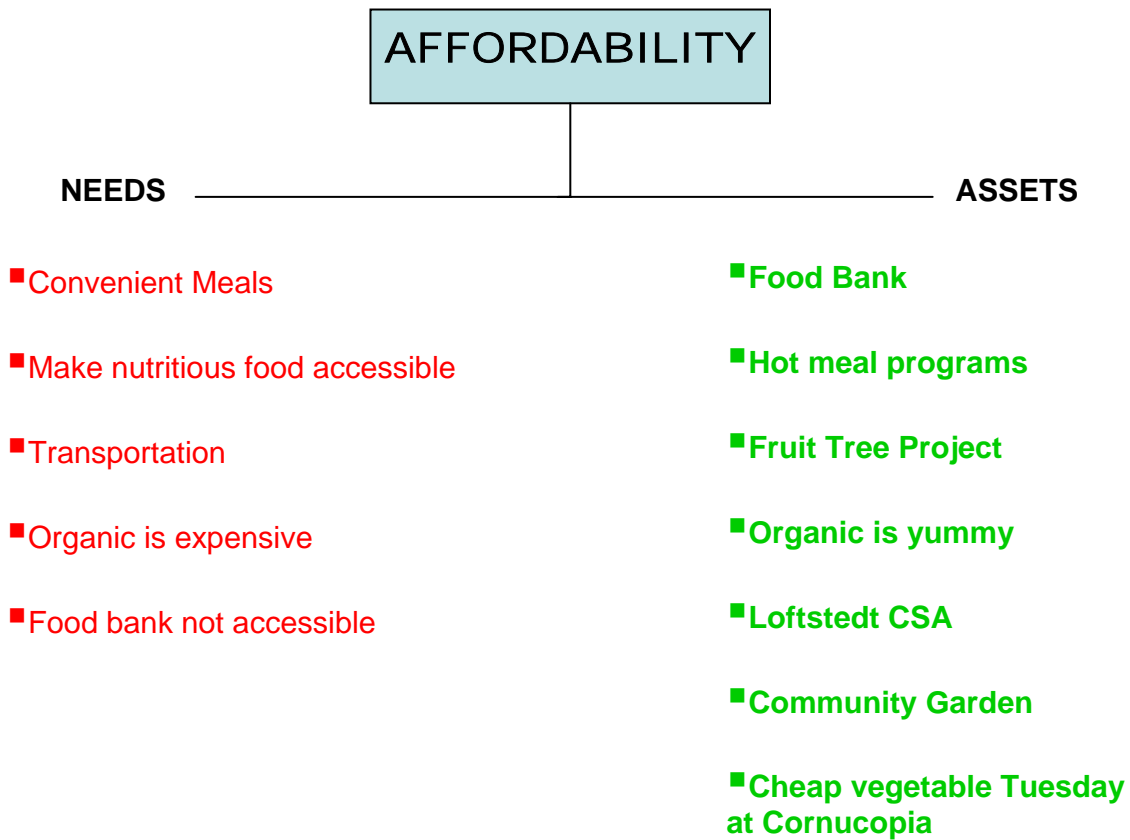
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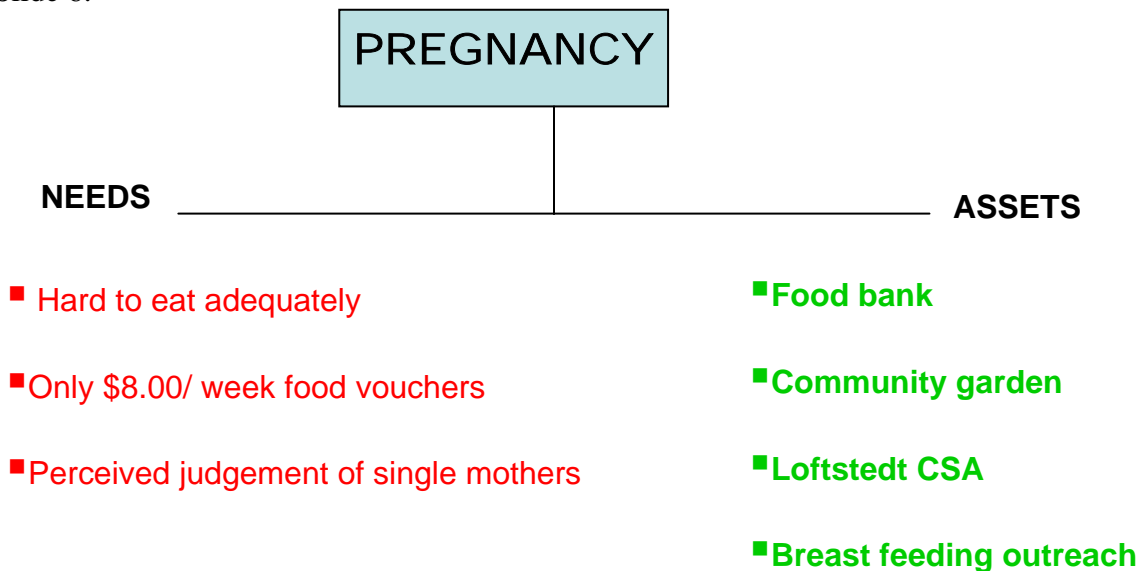
Slide 4:



Slide 5:



Slide 6:



Slide 8:

SOLUTIONS

As Identified through a series of
Community Forums held February
and March of 2006

- Community Kitchen
- Hot soup delivery to Seniors
- Co-operative commercial kitchen
- Bulk buying club
- Central food storage-freezer, cold store, dehydrator, root cellar
- Community meals
- Grow an extra row to donate
- Children's garden contest
- Fall Faire
- Gardening education programs
- Buy BC campaign re-instated
- Educational column in Pennywise
- More school education on nutrition
- School education on growing food
- 50 countries for "slow food" movement
- Build community around food
- Know your farmers
- Link to BC food network, Kaslo InfoNet bulletin board, directory KOGS
- Work trades, youth involvement, education of institutions around sugar
- snacks and treats
- Encourage Selkirk College to host foods class
- Schools need organic milk
- Transportation to food events/ community meals

Appendix 2

Promotional Material

Food Security Brochure
Food Forum Poster
Food Forum Advertisement

Food Security is critical to a healthy population and has been identified as a core component for public health by BC's Ministry of Health.

“Food insecurity affects the whole community through increased healthcare costs, decreased learning capacity of children and impaired health of the growing child.”

-from The Cost of Eating in BC.

The North Kootenay Lake Area has some excellent resources such as the Community Shared Agriculture Program from Lofstedt Farm, the Community Garden, Food Bank, and the Fruit Tree Project, which help provide community members with access to healthy food. However, there is room for improvement. By linking these groups with healthcare professionals, school programs and local food producers, we can plan for a system that ensures food for all in the future.

The Kaslo and Area Food Security Project has identified some initiatives that will help improve local food security. Our Food Security Task Force welcomes your ideas!



The Kaslo and Area Food Security Project was funded by: ActNow BC, in cooperation with Interior Health, and sponsored by North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society & Kaslo and Area Seniors Association.

Our Food Security Task Force Welcomes You! For more information please contact:

Gillian Sanders at 353-1137

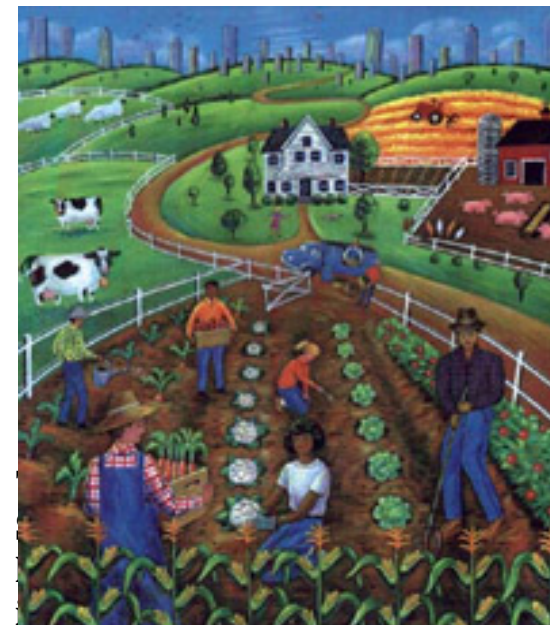
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THE KASLO AND AREA

FOOD SECURITY PROJECT



North Kootenay Lake area. Food security means supporting local food producers and making healthy, nutritious food accessible to all community members.

Local Food Security is important in the future with rising oil prices and the cost of importing food to remote areas such as the North Kootenay Lake area.

QUICK FACTS: HOW MUCH FOSSIL FUEL IS IN YOUR FOOD?

An average of over seven calories of fossil fuel is burned up for every calorie of energy we get from our food. This means that the average 2000 calorie daily diet requires approximately two quarts of crude oil to produce, process, package and transport.

The processing of just one pound of coffee requires over 8,000 calories of fossil-fuel energy -- the equivalent energy found in nearly 30 cubic feet of natural gas, or around two and a half pounds of coal.

To reduce the amount of fossil fuels consumed and greenhouse gases generated by the foods you eat, buy locally grown organic products, foods with minimal packaging, and avoid highly processed foods.

Our local farmers produce beautiful fresh meat and vegetables. They are: Lofstedt Farm in Kaslo, McIntyre Farms in Argenta, and Tesla Spring

Farm, Conrad Farm, and Van Tuyl Farm in Meadow Creek.



The Kaslo and Area Community Food Forum was held on March 25th, 2006. This event brought in over 75 community members. We held workshops on local food security initiatives, served a free, locally produced lunch, viewed the documentary “The Future of Food”, and finished the day with discussion on North America’s food supply and local initiatives. Everyone had a great time at this educational and fun food event.

The Food Security Project Task Force is looking at local initiatives to improve food security for the North Kootenay Lake area. These initiatives were identified through a series of interviews and community forums held in February and

March of 2006. These initiatives include a Community Kitchen where Community Meals can be prepared and served, and educational workshops can be held to teach how to cook affordable, nutritious meals. There can also be workshops on food preserving techniques, and cooking for special diets. Gardening education for community members and school children would also improve local food security. The most social event of the day can be eating food, and there is a growing movement to build community around growing, preparing and eating food together, seniors and youth, families and individuals.

Do you *love* food?

Where does your food come from?

Is your food source secure?

Building a Secure Community Food Network for Kaslo and Area



The Kaslo and Area Food Security Project Invites You to our Community Food Forum!

**Saturday, March 25th, 2006
10-4:30pm at the Kaslo Scout Hall**

**10-10:30:
Welcome & Introduction**

**10:30-12:30:
Workshops on Local Food
Security Initiatives**

**12:30-1:30:
Free, locally produced
lunch!**

**1:30-3:30:
“The Future of Food”
A popular documentary about
North America’s food supply and
our food security**

**3:30-4:30:
Discussion & Focus on Local
Food Security Initiatives**

There are a limited number of pre-registered free childcare spaces available!

Funded by: ActNow BC, in cooperation with Interior Health and sponsored by North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society, & Kaslo and Area Seniors Association. For more information contact: Gillian Sanders at North Kootenay Lake Community Services at 353-7691 or gillian@nklcss.org

Building a Secure Community Food Network for Kaslo and Area

The Kaslo and Area Food Security Project is hosting our Community Food Forum on Saturday, March 25th from 10-4:30 at the Kaslo Scout Hall. Everyone is welcome! Come learn and share your ideas about local food security initiatives, share our free, locally produced lunch, and view the documentary ***"THE FUTURE OF FOOD"***.



For more information please call
Gillian Sanders at
North Kootenay Lake
Community Services
353-7691
or email gillian@nklcss.org