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Interior Health

# Interior Region Food Sovereignty Gathering

Virtual Indigenous Food Forum: A Summary

March 16, 2023





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## Summary

A virtual Indigenous Food Forum gathering was held on March 16, 2023. This virtual gathering was a follow up to the in-person Food Forum that was held in Osoyoos, November 2022. The purpose of the virtual gathering was to provide space for people to connect and share. Feedback from the in-person event re-iterated the importance and need to connect with others working on food security, food systems and food sovereignty.

On the day of the virtual gathering, 60 people joined on Zoom. Syilx Elders Pamela and Grouse Barnes opened with prayer. This was followed by a few words from Interior Health and First Nation Health Authority representatives. Next was two 35 minute sessions, where participants chose from seven different breakout rooms. Each room had a topic: Community Gardens, Food Economies and Trade, Health and Nutrition of Traditional Foods, Traditional Food, Land and Culture, Traditional Food in Institutions, Youth Engagement and Protection, Conservation and Restoration. Finally, the event was closed with a prayer by Pamela and Grouse Barnes.

There was lively conversation and sharing in each of the breakout rooms. Some topics gathered many people, while others had smaller groups. This changed the flow and dynamic of conversation. However, important conversation surfaced in every room. To capture all the nuggets of wisdom, community challenges and successes would take too many pages for a summary document. Here are a few themes that came up across groups:

- **Colonization and ongoing challenges:** Colonization continues to create barriers for accessing land and food. From Elders and youth finding it difficult to take time for their culture due to the need to be financially secure (often choosing between a job or learning/sharing traditional knowledge), to the current ways land (e.g. forestry) is regulated. However, there is hope! Tsawwassen First Nation has created paid positions for youth to learn from Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Another group pointed out that DRIPA #11 provides reasoning for Indigenous stewardship in resource management.
- **Funding and Resources:** The ongoing difficulty in sourcing low barrier and consistent funding came up in several groups. While there is a need to advocate for better funding systems beyond one-time grants, there was discussion on navigating the current system by sharing the different funding options available.
- **Connections and Partners:** Discussion happened in several breakout rooms about the different colonial institutions to partner with, such as government resource management, universities, and business focused supports. There were examples of challenges and successes in this area. While there continues to be dismissal of Indigenous Knowledge and lack of effort to learn and understand at the government level, successful partnership were shared (e.g. Thompson Rivers University).

These themes provide a snapshot into the Virtual Food Forum and the discussions that happened. Given the wonderful attendance and deep connection, the Steering Committee would like to host a second virtual gathering late June or July 2023. With the feedback that was received, the next gathering will look different as we try to meet the needs of participants! We also want to thank the Advisory Committee, who provided their insight and knowledge to this virtual event.



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## Resources shared by Virtual Food Forum participants

- Fred Fortier ([fred4tr@gmail.com](mailto:fred4tr@gmail.com)) is able to help with starting hot house/greenhouse and related programming including youth.
- Jacob Beaton of Tea Creek Farm - gets quite a bit of funding for his garden and wellness. Healthy minded learning environment and impact on community and youth has been profound. [Tea Creek Training and Employment](#)
- [NutritionLink Grants](#)
- West Coast Seeds are very generous with their seeds
- Community Futures central interior in Kamloops has programs supports for small businesses.
  - Operates the Kweseltken farmers market at Kamloopa Pow Wow Arbour
  - TTS Food Sovereignty fund
- First Nations Agricultural Association of B.C. - FREE Indigenous Agricultural Training Program for 2023
  - What you will learn:
    - Hands on Training about: food crops, forged crops, animal husbandry and bee keeping
    - General understanding of maintenance and operation of machinery and tools
    - Record keeping skills
    - Certifications upon completion include: First Aid, Food Safe
  - Why Participate?
    - Gain Skills in Food Production
    - Paid Child Care expenses
    - Travel costs are provided
    - All safety clothing provided (raingear, etc.)
    - Laptops and class room materials provided
    - Certification upon completion
  - How long is the training?
    - Two (2) Months Introductory Training
  - How to Register:
    - Contact Trevor Kempthorne – Special Projects Manager FNAABC
    - Email: [ma\\_fnaa@outlook.com](mailto:ma_fnaa@outlook.com)
    - (250) 299-5718 or (250) 299-7495