

A photograph of two large fish, likely salmon, hanging vertically on a wooden rack. The rack is made of several horizontal wooden poles. Below the fish, a fire is burning in a pit, with bright orange and yellow flames visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the outdoor setting.

# Sharing Our Voices

Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities  
Indigenous Foods Network

*Report and Recommendations*

Funded by:  
Vancouver Island Health Authority

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## Sharing Our Voices

Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Foods Network (VICCIFN)  
2012/2013

**VICCIFN would like to thank the Elders who attended the gatherings, as they were so willing to share their knowledge and grace us with their presence. We would also like to thank our amazing community partners who lead this project. We want to acknowledge the vast knowledge and capacity in each community, and hold it up to the respect it deserves.**

### **Who We Are**

The Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Indigenous Foods Network is a collective of passionate and dedicated members with a shared vision of a healthy future based upon reconnecting with First Nations cultural teachings and practices. The network membership is made up of culturally knowledgeable food harvesters and gatherers, health professionals, community development workers and members of the scientific community. The working group, approximately 10 people, reflects the diverse membership of the network.

We aim to build collaborative approaches in addressing issues in traditional food access and security as well as to support individuals and communities as they share the ancestral strengths that are deeply rooted throughout Vancouver Island for the preservation of future generations.

Our Vision is to recognize, maintain, enhance and celebrate traditional foods in a holistic way that honours cultural knowledge and values. We strive to meaningfully engage with Elders and Aboriginal youth and to provide opportunities for rural or isolated people to participate in the Network.

### **History**

VICCIFN was formed by like-minded individuals interested in creating a collaborative approach to raise the profile of traditional foods on Vancouver Island. Our first meeting took place in July 2008 as a follow-up to the Traditional Seafoods of Vancouver Island Conference, which highlighted the environmental contamination of indigenous foods research of Dr. Peter Ross. A strategic planning session was held in September of that year from which point the Network has continued to expand.

The Traditional Foods Conference has formed the basis of much of the work of VICCIFN over the years, with gatherings hosted in communities such as Halalt First Nation, Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose Bay), Tseshaht (Port Alberni) and Tsa'xis (Fort Rupert). These gatherings have focused upon providing opportunities for First Nations communities to identify food related issues that they are most affected by,

as well as sharing traditional food teachings and knowledge and advocating for First Nations management and practicing rights.

### **Working Group Structure**

As members of the Working Group, we work collectively to achieve the aims of the wider network. This includes dividing responsibilities amongst us for our various projects, as well as ensuring the sustainability of the network overall. To do this we meet every month, alternating one in person meeting with one teleconference. In person meetings are usually held mid-Island (Port Alberni and Nanaimo). Smaller working groups are formed as the work requires. We value the unique skills and passion that each member brings to the table and we actively work to grow and nourish all of our working group members through mentorship, support and encouragement. We also recognize that everyone contributes what they can and when they can, thus we honour the time and energy contribution of members.

We are trying to hold bi-annual teleconferences for community members interested in joining our working group and/or learning more about what we do.

### **Why this project?**

We were approached by VIHA to look at what an Indigenous Food Security Hub could look like here on the Island. We knew we could not answer that question without going to the community. We then helped to organize 8 gatherings in total with rural, isolated and urban communities.

We wanted the gatherings to contribute to food issues within the community and therefore incorporated hands-on activities requested by each community. This is also a model we have used in the past for our regional gatherings. We then supported the communities in organizing the activities, provided honouraria to Elders for sharing their knowledge and helped facilitate a sharing of information and knowledge to contribute not only to this report but to knowledge transfer within the communities.

Before we started this project we knew, as a group, from our experiences that the funding provided by VIHA for food security was not reaching the Aboriginal communities on the Island. We knew that funding to help towards the Annual Traditional Foods Conference was helpful but we were not sure if this was enough for communities, so we asked the communities. We appreciate the funding that supports the Traditional Foods Conference, as this is a very powerful event that sparks food security action and knowledge translation in the local communities. A challenge with the conference is that not all Island First Nations are able to attend. We know it is essential to bring and create opportunities for learning, sharing and program development close to where people live.

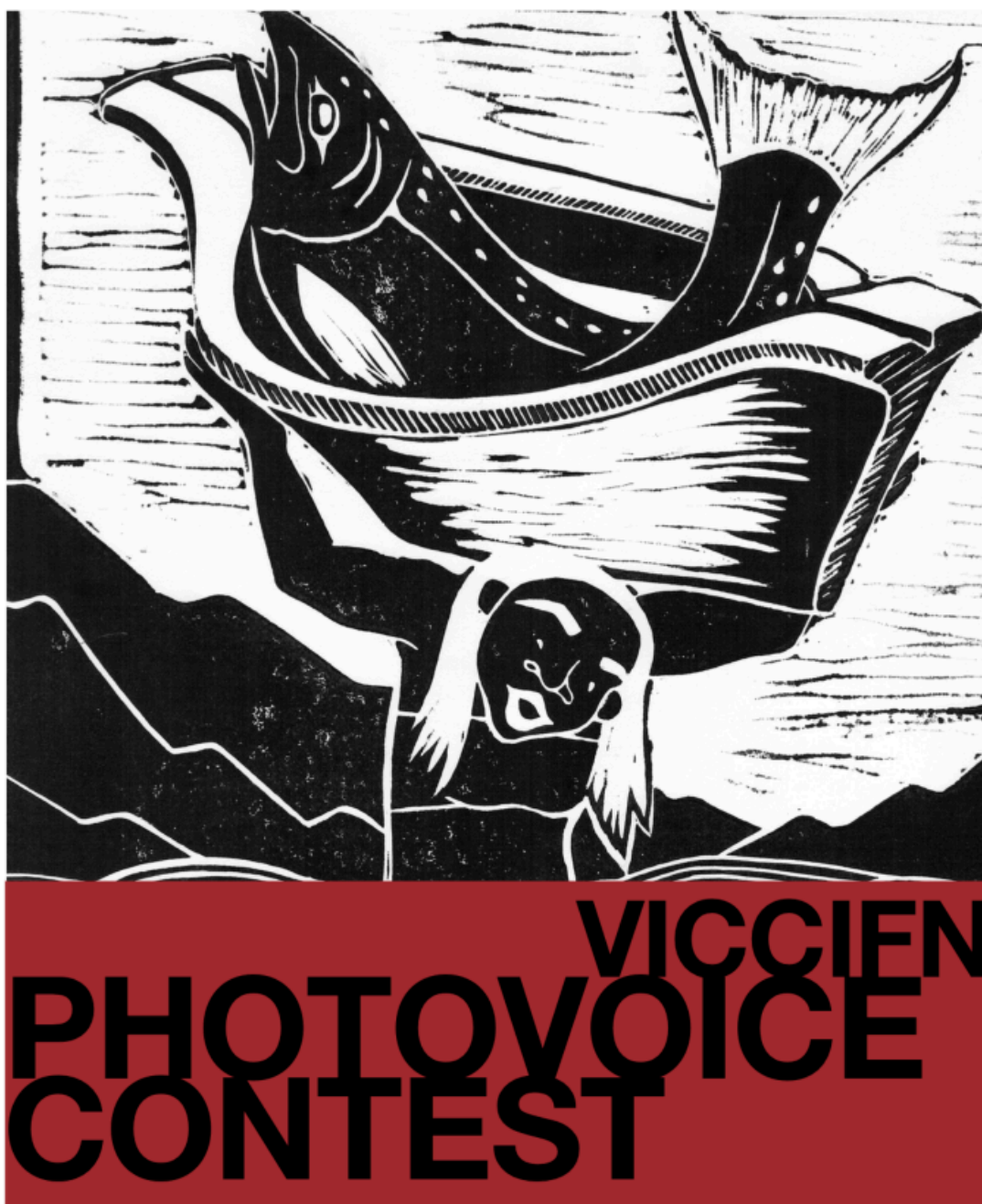
The project had 4 pieces:

- Regional Gatherings that took place in Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw, Victoria, Campbell River, Cowichan, Port Alberni and Ahousaht



- Traditional Foods Conference in Tseshaht territory in Port Alberni Sept 2012
- PhotoVoice Competition – outlined in the next few pages.
- SurveyMonkey online survey tool

Within the following pages we hope to Share the Voice of the community. We would like to highlight the current situation, needs and wants as well as barriers and challenges to food security within the communities. We hope that the recommendations that follow the report will be taken into account within VIHA's food security program and funding structure.



end date  
**JAN 31,**  
**2013**

submit photo + story to:  
**viccifn@gmail.com**

Share YOUR story about what food sovereignty/security/safety means to you! Email a picture + short story (max 100 words) to share with Vancouver Island food communities and be eligible for a chance to win a new camera or some traditional medicines. More info at [www.indigenousfoodsvi.ca](http://www.indigenousfoodsvi.ca)

## Sharing Our Voices – PhotoVoice Finalists

*"My ideas of food sovereignty have sadly faded into the abyss of capitalism, a land where I must "fish" down the aisles of systemic suppression as I gather these "sustainably sourced" cans of salmon. The ideals of consuming fish are typical in much of society: I gather, therefore I eat. Rarely do I see emotions being shed for filling my stomach peacefully. So, today, I am learning to be mindful: this has become my goal. Although, I follow these labels of President Choice cans (in the included picture) of salmon with a rather high bravado that I am eating locally, or at least, actual food named "salmon". I either live by a ploy from commercialization, or I live to force myself to eat these higher priced can of goods. Yet I still purchase this article of a once noble glory with my wallet, instead of my spear."*

Written By Kevin Adam Henry



*"Local Indigenous foods are one of the numerous bonds that tie Indigenous Peoples to their lands. Food security is awareness that we, as natural stewards of the land, must maintain the relationship between the health of our ecosystems and the health of our peoples in order to*



*ensure sustainable and healthy futures for ourselves and our children; whilst honouring the legacy of knowledge from our ancestors and knowledge keepers. My photo depicts salmon harvesting; a right given to us by the creator which contributes to the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical health of my family and community.*

*Toyax Sut-nuun -*

*Thanks!"*

*"Food security means to me being able to smoke and can our own fish we catch in our territory rivers, being able to share and teach our youth and children how to smoke and can fish themselves so they can pass on to their youth and children. Being able to have our traditional foods all year round. Share our oral history and canning and preserving history how our ancestors adapted and learned from others in how to keep our traditions alive for future generations."*

*Half smoked canned sockeye 2012! Jackie Jack Tsaxana, Gold River BC.*

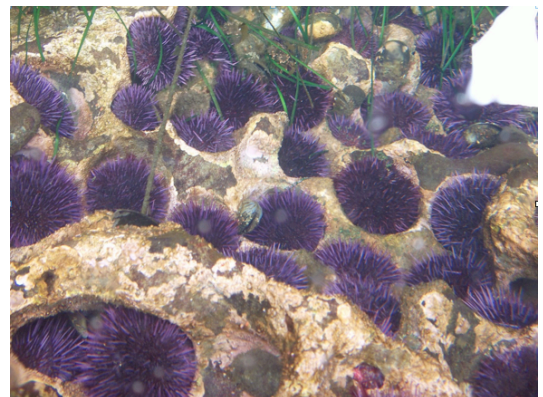


*"When I walk in the woods, I'm always looking - to catch a glimpse of orange, another chanterelle for my basket - for the deep green shoots of stinging nettle, my favourite steamed vegetable - and for medicine plants. If you walk with me, you will notice me nibbling. I nibble the rinds of red rose hips rich in vitamin C, the fragrant needles of Grand Fir, tasty wild berries and juicy Miner's lettuce. This winter I'm eager to tap a Big Leaf Maple and bake with its' sweet sap. I belong in the forest. I am happy there."*

*Jessica Wolf*  
*(a biologist and nature nut, who enjoys sharing her knowledge of wild edible plants and mushrooms through public workshops.) Here with an edible cauliflower mushroom.*



*"Ladybug Garden & Greenhouse at T'Sou-ke First Nation strives to ensure our people sustain themselves with foods, teas and medicinal herbs they create themselves by traditional methods of food preparation, production and preserving. Youth Programs on food security & Cultural significance related to our Traditional Territories where we bring Youth, community members, Elders and invited guests on gatherings of Traditional foods and medicines to utilize within our Nation, sharing our natural teaching classroom with our neighbouring Nations and Communities where we practice Blessings and Prayers with our Elders at every gathering, broadening the knowledge within our community." Submitted by Christine George*







*"This is the result of my experiment with salmonberries this summer - syrup, cooked jam, freezer jam and a pie (with cardamom flavouring, yum!). Anytime I eat my summer preserves, it always brings me back to the evening my family and I gathered big buckets of berries - it was a beautiful golden summer evening; we could faintly hear an owl hooting far up in the trees and a slight breeze was blowing, keeping the mosquitos away. Food is a great way to make, share, and keep memories and I'm excited to learn more from the network so that my*

*family and I can make more of them."* Submitted by Cynthia Benedickson

*"Food security means many things but for me it's about telling stories about food, especially indigenous foods. These stories make me feel hungry for those real foods, i feel like an elder - I'm not and closer my family who live far away.*

*These food stories are to hunger for as the moment they're satiating me they seem to make me feel better, physically, emotionally, ad spiritually. My body feels light, clear, calmer. The indigenous foods ingested bring me to first memories of how fresh crab is cooked, how content my Mom looked when having a seaweed, fish, oilcan oil meal and how she learned that low tide was what for supper.*



*Best of these stories is*

*Copper Bay fish harvested, preserving of "blue back" sockeye salmon that was about fish but mostly about family times!! I feel like an elder, when I'm not cause I don't hear these stories anymore, here away from my birth place, but from others. Most recollecting is in books. The memories and relishing about indigenous foods I do about most any table of friends and relatives seems to a few and me."*

*Food respecting,  
Victoria Mills*



*"When feasting, our family chooses from a variety of traditional foods that were also enjoyed by our ancestors who taught us how to gather and prepare these foods. We would often source out exotic foods that we could not get in our own territory, like seaweed and smoked oolichans, which we would get from the natives that live near Terrace BC. Our feast included herring roe on kelp, four varieties of smoked salmon, wind dried salmon, seaweed and smoked oolichans. The rest of the feast consisted of clam chowder, bannock, wild berries, whipped soapalali dessert with raspberry puree drizzled on top."*

*Submitted by Annie Watts*



*"Fisherman in the Somass River (Aaron Watts)  
; eating healthy fresh food  
and knowing where it came  
from...knowing that you  
caught it and it's healthy to  
eat. Know that your family  
has been eating this same  
food for centeries. "*

*Submitted by Nickie  
Debbie Watts — with  
Aaron Watts.*



*"Boat loaded with sockeye salmon (Tseshaht Community)  
;working as a community to share this  
bountiful catch, to eat healthy, work together,  
and to have fun. connecting to nature and  
being involved." Submitted by Nickie Debbie  
Watts*





*Daughter and Mother (Nicole and Tia Watts)*

*"Teach our children to eat healthy and take care of body, mind, and soul. To always choose foods that are good for you, to protect you from anything, there are many dangers and food is one of them."*

*Submitted by Nickie Debbie Watts*



*Father and Daughter (Damon Rampanen and Tia)*

*"Seen in this picture traveling back to Tofino from Ahousaht, got to eat wonderful fresh seafood"*

*Submitted by Nickie Debbie Watts — with [Damon Vann-Tarrant Rampanen](#).*



## Sharing Our Voices Community Needs Assessment Summary

*Information for this report was gathered at each of the Sharing our Voices events. Each event had its own flavour and information was collected in the most respectful way possible. Some information was gathered through questionnaires as others were collected from roundtable discussions and one to one discussions.*

### The Importance of Traditional/Indigenous Foods

Indigenous foods are not only a source of energy and rich in vitamins/minerals for First Nations people on Vancouver Island, they signify and include cultural and spiritual practices and identity. VICCIFN would like to highlight how important these foods are from a holistic perspective. Strengthening of a traditional diet provides connection to tradition and nourishes the mind, body and soul.

*Which foods are we speaking of? Some traditional foods here on the Island include:*

Berries	Venison	Moose	Kelp and
Bannock	Herring Eggs	Cockles	Seaweeds
Deer	Oolichan	Sea Eggs	Octopus
Elk	Oolichan grease	Gooseneck	Cod
Nettle	Rock Stickers	Barnacles	Scallops
Mullein	Wild Teas	Smelts	Geoduck
Salmon	Smoked Salmon	Sea Urchins	Seal
Clams	Fish Heads	Moose Tongue	Trout
Oysters	Roots	Beaver Tail	Pemmican
Indian Ice Cream –	Crab-apples	Heewaah	Abalone
Soapberries	Halibut	Oysters	Duck
Bear	Sockeye Salmon	Prawns	Sea Lion
Salal	Mussels	Blackberries	Geese
Crab	Smoked Fish	Huckleberries	
Dog Salmon	Dry Meat	Salal berries	
Chum Salmon	Camas	Blackcaps	
Dandelions	Wild Lettuce		

**Key Finding** – There is a vast variety of Indigenous Foods that are a part of Vancouver Island First Nation Communities

**VICCIFN Recommends** – A greater acknowledgement of the vast ecosystem that needs to be promoted and protected as part of the Indigenous Foods system.





### What do Traditional Foods mean to the COMMUNITY:

- “Fishing, smoke house, cedar, fire, seafood, bannock, sharing, potlucks, baked goods, shelled goods, prayer, blessing of the food, community, multicultural, laughter, ancestors, protein....”
- “Healthy, soothing, friends and family togetherness with love.”
- “Healthy way to live”
- “Local, food/medicine, land and sea foods, they are indicators of other animals/plants in the ecosystem”
- “Community gatherings and delicious food”
- “Being Back home”
- “Good for you”



**Key Finding** - Traditional foods hold great significance to VI nations especially around health and connection to family and heritage. The importance of food **PRACTICES**, and **CULTURAL TEACHINGS** is a key component when we speak of traditional foods and of First Nations culture.

**VICCIFN Recommends** - Greater funding and support for VICCIFN coordination to set the table with the foods that promote health through regional gatherings; these events are powerful culturally appropriate health promotion events.

Where do you get your food? What is the food system like today in your community?

Many community members indicated that they were involved in some traditional food practices such as:

- Canning Salmon
- Accessing Traditional Foods
- Freezing
- Gathering food when visiting home territory
- Growing food
- Harvesting Nettle
- Harvesting Berries
- Drying meat
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Attending traditional foods events
- Smoking Fish
- Seafood Harvesting



*“Thankfully, my family are traditional food gatherers for seafood, berries and medicines. Although due to pollution and growth in our territory it is becoming harder to gather our food as we did in the past”*

- Feasts
- Education programs for youth
- Cooking
- Grocery store
- Receive good food boxes – community family meal program
- Native Plan restoration or garden creation
- Tending to gardens, forests and seafood beds
- Creation of food resources and tools
- Supermarket, local butcher, organic produce
- Most of my meals are served at Our Place.
- Seaweed harvesting
- Plant harvesting
- Stores, forest, water, trade, garden
- From the sea!!
- Coop (access to food)
- Grocery stores, the land, the sea, trade with others (food network)
- Rich with local foods at certain times of the year – garden foods, mushrooms, fish, shellfish, but some months/ seasons are too dependent on stores.
- I work to make money and spend it at the store. Sometimes I go out to collect seafood, teas berries and vegetables from the land. I also eat in restaurants.
- Learn from other schools, work colleagues, VICCIFN

*“Where does the meat from the stores come from? We know where our seafood comes from.”*

**Key Findings** - Each community has specific Indigenous Food Practices and teachings that they would like to engage in and focus on.

**VICCIFN Recommends** - Greater funding and support for VICCIFN coordination to support communities in planning these events.

#### Why Are Indigenous Foods Important?

- Indigenous foods are important in that they provide aboriginal peoples with a direct connection to the land and the sea, something that I feel entails much more than just food. For example: food security; nutrition; cultural traditions, connections to elders, confidence, rebuilding of lost social structures following contact.
- Many reasons



*"I believe that restoring the environment with native plants and utilizing more native foods will benefit both indigenous and settler communities. But I also believe that it is important to support the recovery of native food habitats and food traditions for the health and dignity of the indigenous community in particular. It is a moral obligation for the settler community to support this work, but also an opportunity for healing at many levels. Also, native foods are amazing! They are adapted to this climate and region, and are delicious."*

What are the barriers and challenges around access to Traditional Foods in your community?

- Living away from home territory, and pollution affected harvesting grounds
- Poverty – "Poor for now, but I manage. My ability to make a healthy meal comes from the heart. Protein, Vegetable and grain is my focus once a day"
- Families mail food, deliver food
- "The only time I get to eat our Traditional Foods is if I go to a gathering or event where they have the food"
- Dependence on food kitchens, food aid, emergency food system
- Priorities: poverty and addictions, housing
- Dependence on the grocery store for food
- No access to boats
- Moved from traditional territory – unfamiliar with new lands/waters
- Stopped by Conservation officers when harvesting
- Feelings of being "blocked by government"
- Increase in alcohol in community
- Traditional foods – "cleaned out"
- Knowledge and access – sometimes knowledge of where to access wild foods
- Isolation, isolation, isolation
- The foods I want are not available to me
- Pollution, land privatization, invasive species taking over, transportation, lack of knowledge, time!!
- Balancing a modern lifestyle with traditional values
- Rights, access, a land base to grow our own food
- Boat transportation
- Good Food Box not available in my community
- Farm Markets not close
- Trading has become difficult (regulations, etc)



*Beach Clean Up and Knowledge Day*

**Key Finding** - There are many factors that affect and have impacted Indigenous Foods on VI. Each community has varying barriers and approaches/programs need to be community specific.



**VICCIFN Recommends** - Funding and support for VICCIFN coordination to help empower communities around these barriers

Would you like to be connected to a food network in your area? How?

Yes, access organic foods

Yes, face to face/phone meetings

Yes – practices

Yes – more connected to growers

Yes – Google group, gatherings, volunteer opportunities

Email, conferences, working together

Yes – more traditional foods feasts or workshops to reconnect to practices

Yes – internet/workshops/face to face

Yes – barter, gleanings

Yes – traditional harvesting, sharing projects,

Yes – Face to face

More workshops

Gathering from wild



*Bentwood Box Cooking – Cowichan*

**Key Finding** - The communities involved with this project found great interest in having, and being connected to, an Indigenous Food Network.

**VICCIFN Recommends** – Support of hands-on and practical learning experiences through VICCIFN events and Hub connections

**Recommendations and Community Desires**

**How could VICCIFN support you, your family and your community?**



*Knowledge Keeper and Elder–  
Della Rice preparing for a walk*

- Hosting food activities and learning opportunities in my community
- Being a connection to resources and knowledge supports
- Hosting food activities and learning opportunities
- Linking you to other resources
- Organizing events like Gatherings and Foods Conference
- Listserve and facebook
- Event sharing
- Organize wild food harvesting excursions. Link with protected areas to harvest seed, bulbs, and cuttings for creating new native plant harvesting sites or community gardens.
- Any and all (kinds of activities)
- Feasts and potlatches – going back to our traditional ways
- Harvesting activities and events



- Community oriented
- Harvesting anything that is available and feasting right in the community on reserve
- An event themed around inter-tribal trades. Who specializes in bark noodle cakes? Do they still know how to make them? Who has a camas garden? Who developed a dozen types of crab apples? How did we process skunk cabbage? What was the spiritual practice in place around specific food collection?
- Special berry picking training – ensuring that there is always some left for the birds to eat and spread the seeds.
- More foods to hunt/fish/gather. This is difficult with current health and processing laws.
- Traditional foods workshops and resources.
- Political gatherings – how do Indigenous people work together to advocated for our rights to traditional foods. What are the threats to our food systems? We need to come together around this.

**Key Finding** - Community members want practical events with knowledge transfer.

**VICCIFN Recommends** - Funding for VICCIFN coordination and programming to support these events



**If there is funding available how could it best support food security in your community?**

- Education, sharing, explore ways to increase access and knowledge of traditional foods
- Support us to grow our own food
- Homegrown foods
- Workshops on accessing and preserving wild foods
- Expanding our community garden
- Outdoor educational activities. I would like to do monthly community field trips to do a combination of education and gathering.

- Protection of the environment. This is where our food grown.
- Pilot projects to address current food access issues
- Support community members without boats to go out and collect/ fish for seafood
- More FN community kitchens
- How to harvest/hunt/gather traditional foods and medicines for healthier diets and health
- Traditional healthy fruits
- More revitalization of environmental plants
- Potlucks with healthy foods and water bottles available.
- Diabetic workshops

**Key Finding** – First Nations communities want events that are hands on, encourage knowledge transfer within community and empowers growth and learning with each other.

**VICCIFN Recommends** - Funding and support for VICCIFN coordination to help create programs/resources and support communities to set up appropriate events.

### **Historical food system:**

Nanoose larder remembered by an Elder: Whenever anyone had more than their family could eat, they gave it to the larder (fish, deer, wild foods) and families who didn't have enough could come and collect the food from the larder. Children were a big piece of this: contributing with fish they caught etc. This strengthened people's connection to the earth and the food it provides and it fostered an understanding of how to use food to get the nutrients, minerals and vitamins we need. It was a holistic system that went beyond feeding people; it fed culture and community.



She felt saddened that this no longer existed and that we have lost the ways of knowing about this system and the wild foods and cultural ways that it supported/encouraged. Another Elder remembers a time when everyone had his or her own boats. Women would go out in rowboats to get whatever foods were in season for their families. The Fraser River used to be so full of fish that you could only put your net in the water for 10 minutes. The act of getting food, doing things that are physical was part of peoples' lives for millennia. There was always something to do and there was learning all year round, and would travel with the seasons to collect wild foods.

*Elder at Traditional Foods Conference*

### Needs/Ideas:

- More gatherings around traditional foods
- Need to work together more and share funding.
- Community Gardens
- Importance of language
- Community boat access
- Seasonal calendar – get food together
- Clean our polluted beaches
- Teaching of cooking and growing as well as preparations of meat and skins
- Cooking classes, evening dinners and gatherings
- More opportunities for people in the city to access traditional foods
- Seafood for the younger generation so they could learn more about the traditions, clams, oysters, sea urchins, fish, octopus.
- More detox
- Harvesting Shellfish
- (Showing) how to be blessed by our food by play (harvesting practices perhaps).
- Bannock making 101
- How to hunt and fish traditionally
- Purifying our ocean food for the future generations
- Popularizing healthy traditional food options
- Smoke House – to preserve smoked fish, fish heads, canned salmon, berries
- Cultural dancing activities
- Once a month traditional foods.
- Food teachings
- Picking greens and planting
- I would like to see more potlatch
- Would like to have traditional food and food fair at Our Place
- I miss community kitchens
- Fishing
- Canning fish
- Teach how to do a pitt cook, bbq salmon, skin and cut up deer
- Local advertising how efficient traditional foods are
- Neighbours sharing food with others



- Partnering with education institutions to ground them
- Recipes for traditional foods
- Food fight/eating contest
- Info and demos in local newsletters, educational at womens, mens and childrens groups.

**Key Finding** – Hands-on, practical and cultural food practices in community are requested

**VICCIFN Recommends** – Support for VICCIFN coordination and funding for programming

**Where do you want to get your food:**

- More from garden, water, forest and trade
- Want to focus on preserving food.
- From the pristine beach – not always the case
- My community – fishermen and gardens
- Our community garden
- From within the region that I live in
- Home grown
- Ocean
- More consistent access.
- More preservation of a variety of foods
- Excellent, good healthy
- Organic
- Would like to see us expand our community garden. Grow more from home
- Fresh – no packaging, no pesticides, no GMO. Like it looked 300 years ago. Lots of variety. Inclusive of traditional plants.
- More gardens instead of lawns – native plants
- More field trips for families, with food and language components
- Revitalize spiritual practices around gathering
- Traditional food protection
- Education around ethical harvesting
- First Nations management of territories
- A licensing system for wild food harvesters which would show that they have been trained and are carrying out ethical harvesting methods and have received permission from local First Nations.
- Making sure the elderly have healthy food
- Traditional Plant harvesting walks
- Gardening workshops for medicines
- Food and Traditional Food Revitalization tied to Language Revitalization and healing.
- Community Smoke House
- Better collaboration with everyone who works within this field



- Skill building meetings monthly

**Key Finding** – Increased access and availability of foods close to home, increased food skills, and environmental stewardship protects Indigenous foods.

**VICCIFN Recommends** - Support for greater food skills and programs that strengthen the food system and increase knowledge, skills, and confidence around food.

**Are youth connected to traditional foods practices in your community?**

- Not everyone connect with traditional foods
- We are trying our best to get youth and elders involved
- Not sure
- Somewhat
- Parents need to tell them about it
- Sometimes depending on the time of year
- In town not really, but at home I believe so – picking berries, cutting fish, smoking fish, clam digging, getting seafood!
- “They are when they learn from me”
- Some are some are not
- Yes – I am. I have found a great community that helps educate people
- I hope so.
- “parents now adays do not talk to our youth about our traditions when we were young, or to get them involved in the tradition”
- Sometimes through Friendship centres
- No, but I would like to go home to Bella Bella to learn traditional canning.
- “My kids are aware of traditional food, I prepared a lot of fish, smoke house, jarring. I butchered a deer before also. In our community today, not so much”
- Not all have access
- “There’s some breadth but not a lot of depth to their knowledge of traditional foods. More time needs to be spent on the acquisitions practices – getting out on the land, hunting, gathering
- I know they would like to be more so



- Some must travel really far to access
- Yes – collecting seafood
- Yes, I gather for myself
- Help with salmon cleaning, and freezing, canning, smoking
- Youth taking part in elk harvest

*Making Jam at the Traditional Foods Conference*

**Key Finding** - Vast variation in youth connections to Traditional Foods.

**VICCIFN Recommends** - Support for VICCIFN coordination and funding for programs and events that connect schools, youth and Elders and knowledge keepers in the community.

### **Partnerships for VICCIFN**

Are there any partnerships that you think could connect with VICCIFN?

- Always great to partner with local initiatives
- Uu-a-thluk
- Need to look at innovative ways to sustain education and increase overall distribution of healthy foods
- Nisma Project Society
- Raincoast Education Society
- Parks Canada
- Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks
- Public schools
- Coastal Family Resource Coalition
- Support First Nations with a rights based approach to access. There are too many laws and regulations that deny access. This needs to be addressed

Tla-o-qui-aht community garden



*New relationships and knowledge sharing at the Cowichan Sharing Our Voices Event*

## **Recommendations to VIHA Food Security Program:**

Before we begin our recommendations we must present the reality for communities today:

- There are 52 First Nations communities on Vancouver Island
- Many of these communities are remote and isolated
  - o Most remote and isolated communities require access to a boat in order to go to a grocery store, which costs approximately \$100 per trip
  - o If food is ordered in, freight charges are approximately \$1/lb on top of grocery prices
- Social Assistance is being cut as we speak to \$265 per month for a single person and only \$410 per month for a family. This needs to cover not only food but all basic expenses. The Cost of Eating Report (Dietitians of Canada) quotes that a healthy food basket for a family of four in BC would cost \$868 per month.

**As a vision, VICCIFN would like to create a foundation for our network with a community coordinator as well as community food champions/coordinators. As a team we would meet with the VICCIFN working group as well as regional Hubs to close the communication gaps around food security initiatives on Vancouver Island. As a team, we would seek funding to help support the creation of resources and programs that are culturally and geographically appropriate with the communities. Such resources/programs would include individual food skills, budgeting skills, knowledge transfer, etc.)**

*Specifically towards the VIHA Food Security Program, our recommendations are:*

- To consider the communities request to support individual, community level, regional and island-wide initiatives that protect and support access to traditional foods.
- VICCIFN to act as an Island-wide Hub (as a resource providing, community linking, regional food gatherings, and funding support network) as well as support other HUBS – **on the condition** that each of the other Hubs takes on the responsibility of reaching out to their local First Nations communities. The responsibility should not solely lie with VICCIFN as the funds are not representational to helping all 52 communities with the same pot of funding as a regional Hub.
- To continue to support VICCIFN with the Annual Traditional Foods Conference
- Overall, to increase the amount of funding to acknowledge work being done within Indigenous communities and regional needs.



- Support VICCIFN in creating a foundational base and development of strategies to reach out to as many communities as possible.



*Together we built and planted a community garden with raised beds followed by a dinner with community Elders and knowledge sharing – at Gwa'sala-Naxwada' (xw*





*The rest of the photos included here are from our Traditional Foods Conference. We thank you for taking the time to review our whole report and reading what we hope represents the voice of the communities.*

