

Coastal Agriculture Roundtable Meeting, Minutes

Wednesday, November 13, 2019 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Ucluelet Community Centre

“We took a step towards achieving a Global Goal today.”

Rebecca Hurwitz - Executive Director, Clayoquot Biosphere Trust

“Start in a humble way.”

Jean Keith-Ferris - Ucluelet Local Food Society



Present: Rebecca Hurwitz (Clayoquot Biosphere Trust), Colin Robinson (CBT) Nicky Ling (ACRD Area C), Evan Houser (Nuu-chah-nulth Education and Training Program), Lara Kempes (Ucluelet Chamber of Commerce), Erika Goldt (Eat West Coast), Andrea McQuaid (District of Tofino), Dan Price-Francis (Bodacious Oasis Farm Tofino), Louise Rogers (Tofino Urban Farm), Helene Descoteaux (Tofino Community Food Initiative), Harvey Robinson (Ahousaht Community Garden), Leah Austin (Tofino Community Food Initiative), Jenny Touchie (Yuułu?ił?atł Government), Jean Keith-Ferris, (Ucluelet Local Food Society), Lorna Watson (Ucluelet Local Food Society), Marylin Touchie (Yuułu?ił?atł Staff)



Alberni-Clayoquot
Regional District



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Welcome and Introductions

Jenny Touchie welcomed the group to Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ territory and introductions were made around the circle.

Purpose, Context, Agenda Overview

Heather provided context for the meeting. In 2011, ACRD developed an Alberni Valley Agriculture Plan to increase food security regionally. In 2014, the implementation phase began and it became apparent that the coastal regions within the ACRD needed to be included in the plan. 2017 brought funding to write the Coastal Addendum and it was completed in 2018. She noted the geographical divide as well as cultural differences between Alberni Valley and the west coast. She noted 3 overarching needs of the Coastal Addendum's Implementation Plan:

1. Implement compost systems for terrestrial food systems
2. Support 'community coordinator/s' on the ground
3. Host an Coastal Agricultural Roundtable

This meeting is the first coming together of the Coastal Agricultural Roundtable, moving from planning to implementation of the plan. The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, as a regional, inter-community organization, is helping to convene the ongoing conversation. Today's discussions will explore how we will work together, our project priorities, and what resources we have.

Mini-presentations and Questions

Louise Rogers – Tofino Urban Farm

Louise opened by explaining that there is a compost facility coming to the coast in a year's time. She noted organics in the landfill create methane which exacerbates climate change. Compost facilities will help provide locally produced compost that will create jobs. Our region has received a grant through the gas tax that will result in a compost facility in Port Alberni and at the landfill here on the coast.

Tofino Urban Farm started with a compost facility at Wickaninnish Community School to educate children and reduce waste. They have been setting up local resorts with their own compost systems that produce soil for their resort landscaping.

There is a West Coast Landfill Compost Pilot Project is in progress at the West Coast Landfill (on the right side by the brown trailer there is a small site being built that will be operational by January) using small stall layout. This will provide data for informing the larger-scale project slated to be operational by late 2020. The pilot will take compost downtown restaurants that don't have space for on-site compost. Residential compost pickup will commence within about a year.

Leah Austin - Tofino Community Food Initiative

TCFI was started in 2009 by a group of local gardeners wanting to dispel the myth that food production couldn't happen here. They created an annual garden tour to demonstrate strategies on the coast but today have a wide range of initiatives including: hosting the community garden at the Botanical Gardens; hosting the Wick School garden; education workshops and gardening clubs with students; hosting the West Coast Farm and Garden Show every February; a weekly

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table at the farmer's market; a partnership with Eat West Coast for a Food preservation program; periodic home gardening workshops; They are looking to initiate a fruit-gleaning program in response to the recent issues with bears and the excess fruit caused by warmer, drier spring seasons.

Lorna Watson and Jean Keith Ferris and Marilyn Touchie - Ucluelet Local Food Society/UFN

Jean opened by reflecting on volunteerism and how their passion and support is essential to the functioning of these types of initiatives. She noted that grant-writing is time-consuming and a barrier. She noted that when other organizations like ACRD with more capacity provide funding to the volunteers, the impact and output is immense. In 2018, \$1000 from the Grow Local program supported 4 community food production workshops. She spoke to Chantel Gimmel's efforts that helped spearhead the all the momentum in Ucluelet.

She explained that composting is crucial in order to grow things on our coast where the soil is poor. She also explained that Ucluelet has a by-law against compost because it attracts bears when done incorrectly. We must ensure all residents know how to compost in a way that is not harmful to bears.

ULFS has a large involvement in the Yuułu?if?ath Government gardens at Wya and have also installed grow operations at the daycare and senior's centre. Marilyn explained that the fenced garden at Wya is 80-100 feet. Trevor Jones got funding from VIHA back in 2009 to get it going, but it has had various phases of action and inaction over the past decade. The ULFS helped bring new life to it in 2017. It now has 5 compost piles. It grows fast crops like radishes and leafy greens, and slow crops like carrots and potatoes. Lorna noted community support and volunteer contributions to the gardens over the past several years.

Lorna spoke to the health and mental health benefits of gardening and working with the earth, and suggested how the garden could be worked into local mental health initiatives. The group agreed that there are many opportunities but the labour is sometimes hard for volunteers (currently about 20 hours per week) - employment is a good vision but then it is a lot of work to manage employees.

Harvey Robinson – Ahousaht

Harvey explained that Ahousaht hosted a carpentry course several years ago that built a community greenhouse. He remarked that coastal weather requires strong building. Ahousaht used their excavators to create garden plots and creates soil through a village-compost initiative. There isn't much soil so this is a challenge. There are 20 fruit trees but wildlife (bears) typically eat much of the fruit. Harvey discussed the difficulty in engaging community members, noting social shifts and knowledge gaps that have grown since he was a child, a time when there was more food production in Ahousaht, both terrestrial and marine. However, when the garden is ready for harvest, lots of people are highly interested. He explained that as the village expanded, a lot of the local garden/land/chicken runs were taken down. Marilyn raised the idea of ceremony as a tool for getting people engaged in local gardens (Wya, Ahousaht, and otherwise). Harvey remarked that many people are really interested in ocean-based production, including kelp, more than on land.

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Harvey also cited meetings with Koreans who were highly interested in Ahousaht's local food production. They gave him plant that is great for treating diabetes, a significant issue in Ahousaht, and the plant grew extremely well. He concluded by noting that there is a lot of potential and lots of activity, but there will be more in the future. Also discussed was the significant cranberry production in Ahousaht.

Evan Houser - Nuuchahnulth Employment and Training Program

Evan explained he helps community members work towards their employment goals and align the training opportunities for said goals. He tries to build understanding (in offices like Employment Canada) that employment is a crucial part of community building and is more than just a way to earn money. He noted interest in opportunities where volunteerism could turn into employment in local food initiatives, including within compost operations or as coordinators. He could also help to identify agriculture initiatives as opportunities for clients looking for training or employment. He noted that many people don't think about working in agriculture but are interested in connecting to nature, carpentry, or other relatable activities.

He helps clients access the Nuuchahnulth Economic Development Corporation to get grants and zero-interest loans and start their own business. He noted that this is commonly used to fund owner-operator water taxis, but they are open to anything, though this would generally lend itself to for-profit business models. He suggested NETP employment programs can be fine-tuned to meet community elements like food production- currently the programs mainly build skills for the tourism economy.

The group discussed how employment and training relates to local food production. Evan cited NETP funding for organizations to do special projects that would create employment positions- for example, a high school student to work in compost. Shan Ross is the contact person for this and intake will be Spring 2020. Evan is generally in Ahousaht weekly on Thursdays.

Rebecca Hurwitz and Erika Goldt - Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT) and Eat West Coast (EWC)

Rebecca explained how the region was designated a Biosphere Reserve in 2000 through a grassroots volunteer effort to demonstrate our commitment to sustainable development. CBT funds a number of local projects including many food-security initiatives. In response to increasing numbers of local food initiatives, CBT began working with Island Health create Eat West Coast, a regional "food hub" and help coordinate conversation around food projects in the area. She spoke to Vital Signs and Living Wage as indicators of the need for food security. She explained that economic development hasn't been a big focus for CBT but education leading to economic and community development is an area where CBT is active. Responding to Harvey, she explained that Koreans from Wando County are interested in developing partnership and knowledge exchange - mentioning the idea of kelp production exposition.

Erika explained that EWC looks for sparks and tries to grow them, resourcing partnerships in the region. Food security touches so many elements of our life - physical and mental health, culture, connectivity, sustainability. She helps identify expertise and resources and helps with grants. CBT is connected with local governments, with the health sector, with research and environmental science fields, and beyond. EWC has been involved in projects from local schools, to mental health, to food preservation, to marine seafood production.

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Rebecca cited CBT Neighbourhood Small Grants as a key way for individuals (not registered charities) and small community groups for grassroots projects - supporting more people and more projects more directly.

Heather Shobe - ACRD Agricultural Support Worker

Heather outlined ACRD Agricultural Support initiatives. ACRD has an Agricultural Development Committee which guides contractors' work in implementing the Agricultural Plan. Areas of initial focus (2014) were farmers markets and farm gate sales, but priorities have shifted with the evolving needs and momentum of the community. Recently, a \$750K Provincial grant was received by the City of Port Alberni for a Food Processing and Innovation Hub which will support kelp, shellfish, finfish, and terrestrial producers to process and distribute their products through a certified facility. Grocery chain distribution, for example, is often a barrier for terrestrial food producers.

Other current projects include a provincially-funded Climate Action Initiative that brings together producers and local governments to develop a Vancouver Island Regional Agricultural Adaptation Strategy. There will subsequently (Spring 2020) be 300K available for projects across the Vancouver Island Region. A Systems Change project aims to increase the impact of regional agriculture support, to learn from other similar initiatives across the Province, improve or adapt their own programs, and to better influence Provincial agriculture policy. A subsequent, second stage grant application (Summer 2020) could raise up to \$100,000/year for 3 years in order to expand or adapt the way the ACRD supports agriculture in the Region. Moving forward with implementation of the Coastal Addendum, Heather is seeking coastal direction and input, suggesting a layered approach, helping to connect to province and other resources, fostering and building relationships, and adapting the project to what is needed and what emerges. A related grant application was recently submitted in partnership with the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.

The group then broke for lunch during which time a presentation from Hannah Roessler, a professional agrologist who was involved in development of the Coastal Addendum. She focused on her experience in food production and climate change, especially with First Nations and traditional foods projects.

World Café

Rebecca and Heather introduced the World Café style of facilitated dialogue. The group convened around 3 tables focusing on

1. How we will work together? (structure, ToR, membership, governance, decision making)
 - Interest in seasonal meetings, though summer may not be realistic. Try for 3 meetings/year, set in advance
 - Interest in work-bee type meetings, or as a component of meetings, possibly in early June just before the busy season
 - Have additional newsletter/email communication and sharing platform
 - Varied members: include all governments and communities, include those who are passionate and who wear many hats, include those both at 'high' level and on-the-ground, include industry/youth/health/mental health

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- Invite guest speakers
 - Acknowledge the wide geographic spread of the initiative: Include support for travel where required, host the meetings in various communities, including Ahousaht
 - Shared interests include: networking, grant applications, funding and other resource sharing, support with projects, policy supports, advocacy, recharging, helping each other, ensure longevity and sustainability, learning from each other
 - Decision-making structure and process - bring proposals, discuss and improve proposals, assess them against established group priorities and strategic plan, assess available resources, allow decisions to emerge from that process
 - Trusting and expecting that a good structure for decision-making will lead to good decisions
 - Aiming for consensus, reviewing Terms of Reference regularly, adapting where required, considering quorum and whether processes are working
2. What are our project priorities? What are we going to do?
- Keeping this group going and being a collective advocacy voice
 - Focusing on production of soil
 - Expanding from knowledge and education to getting hands-in-the-soil
 - Intensive growing in small spaces, year round growing
 - Demonstration, mentoring, neighbourhood gardens
 - Capitalize on existing gardens
 - Equipment, fencing - affordable purchasing
 - Accessing and generating funding streams
 - Lands available – ACRD and First Nations, conversations about regulation, business licenses, zoning. Identifying food production spaces and prioritizing that as their use.
 - Getting creative with engagement strategies, getting more on board
 - Supporting volunteers
 - Employment and job creation in food production – we are lucky because we have a lot of local demand, the west coast brand, finding the consumers is not hard
 - West Coast Market Gardening course through Shelter Farm – get training through this channel. Tell participants about opportunities on the coast during the course.
3. What steps will you take? What resources do we have to share?
- Sharing skills, knowledge, talents among our group (through meetings like this), as well as skills that aren't directly related (e.g. massage for volunteers)
 - Composting is coming – curbside compost pickup means we need bins
 - Procurement opportunity to save money buy buying at a regional scale (ACRD compost bins and other)
 - Volunteer engagement – continually engage volunteers; could tourists volunteer as well as locals?
 - Potential for agri-tourism and high market demand

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- Window of opportunity with Tofino and Ucluelet OCPs to enable policy changes, food charters
 - Duck and goat rental to reduce pests and slugs
 - Nuu-chah-nulth language sign in gardens
 - Connecting opportunities and programs across communities, organizations, and industry (chefs)
 - Garden tours, workshops, labour exchanges, mentorships year-round
 - 'Demonstrate' coastal agriculture
 - NETP workshops, opportunities, and meeting space
 - Other NTC programs (mental health, economic development)
4. What else? How do we evaluate if what we're doing is working?
- Possible metrics - Are people regularly attending the meetings? Are we meeting an appropriate quorum? Establish evaluation criteria for any projects the group supports (production increases or data, etc.)
 - Create a list of resources (equipment, etc). Post online, potentially with Coastal Family Resources Coalition or Eat West Coast
 - Evaluation support through Island Health (e.g. vital signs data, but also potential to collect data on volume of food produced, volume of compost produced)
 - Meg Curtis (PhD student focusing on food security and local food production) is a potential project resource
 - 400 tonnes of organic waste go into the landfill each month; Tofino Urban Farm diverts 4 tonnes per month.

Closing, Next Steps, Participant Check-out

Heather thanked the group, acknowledging the sense of recharge and energizing that participants were expressing. The group agreed to meet again on Friday, March 6, ahead of the Farm and Garden Show. Heather agreed to work on a more formalized strategic plan/decision-making guide and Terms of Reference for the group for the next meeting. Evan agreed to get a workshop together around employment and training related to food production. Rebecca spoke to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, noting that these hyper-localized steps are contributing to international challenges.

The group checked out around the circle.

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① How do we work together?
 (structure, ToR, how often, who, decision-making process, etc.)

Next steps
 Evaluation
 - quorum

Feed each other (network)
 Pilot
 Project always learning
 OK to make mistakes

Transportation support

Meeting in different communities
 Harvest from community
 - Supports various employment.

Learning/Touring in communities
 Help us!

Decisions
 - Proposals
 - Discuss
 - Decisions

Study for making decisions
 we expect to be made

Taking time
 - consensus
 - Improving proposals

What is Quorum?
 May be we will change?

Indicative of what role of in planning

look at priorities
 look at strategic plan
 look at resources
 Emerges Decision?
 Acknowledgment

Structure
 - Learning activities
 - Ceremonies

Mandate
 - Learning
 - support
 - policy support
 - training support
 - grants support
 - project support
 - policy support
 - training support

Who?
 Food HUB/processors.
 Industry - TOCG.
 Chamber of Commerce.
 Ucluelet Culinary group Lara
 School District (Sandy Trustee)
 Funding org - Indigenous Agrolgist
 Guest Speakers ie BIAFBC
 Food Hub.
 NTC - Mental Health
 Nursing Authority.
 Island Health.
 Each gov't/council.
 Climate Board/CC representative
 People that wear lots of hats.
 Agri-tourism

High level? On the ground?
 Forks n' Ric
 Delivered -
 Gov't -
 send to tech
 you are
 want to
 people

Match with
 we please w.

How often?
 - additional
 - (newsletter by community info)
 - CBT coalition
 - email
 - letters
 - roundtables
 - 2-3 x
 - 1 x with Kell

Seasonal
 Too few will
 lose momentum
 - scheduled in
 advance.

CBT/ACRD as
 Lead Orgs
 (grants etc)

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② What are our priorities?

(What are we going to do? And in what order?)

SOIL - COMPOST IS A BASE FOR ANY GROWING

LAND - IDENTIFYING WHERE THERE ARE POSSIBILITIES **SPACE!!**

SMALL-SCALE GROWING - intensive growing in small spaces

- Seasonal growing year round
- pest control
- Education: demonstration hands on via business
- neighbourhood gardens 'garden buddies'
- Capitalize on gardens that already exist

SOURCING AFFORDABLY - equipment - fencing

grants?!

group buying?!

ADVOCACY
Group
Shared voice

PRIORITY
Keep this group meeting + moving!

SPACES TO GROW

ACRD granting funding portal for addendum priorities!

- ACRD + local zoning
- land use plans identifying lands prioritizing use
- recognition - options for business licenses

ACRD lands available
First Nations have some land space and additional funding streams
- could ACRD step up to identify lands for use/lease

Send people to market garden course + local training for our context

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- ↳ getting new people excited
- ↳ F&G show → more family participation

AFFORDABLE FOOD!!
healthy!

Securing contributors business/corporate sponsors or support.

Volunteer base - keeping engaged - creating spaces together

Employment for growing!

No barrier to market + selling we need to grow + local restaurants + groceries want it! marketing.

Markets exist already

BRAND

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③ What steps will you take at the smallest level?

(what resources can we contribute?)

- Continue with volunteer program + recruiting new volunteers
- Leveraging talents + skills that may not be directly tied to gardening (i.e. massage)
- New chat with language signs for plants... bring language community into the garden. - Wick School Garden - Hal Charlin - Simon - Nicole
- Composting bylaw in DU needs to change... presentation to Council? *leave her to write share + thank.*
- Hitaw recycling + composting is coming. Education opportunity?
 - ↳ Procurement opportunity → coordinate across communities
 - ↳ ACRO has got proof garbage containers are a good enough
- Newsletter or other means to share procurement opportunities
 - ↳ local Food Poster
- Healthy Food Charter + policies for procurement, can start a domino effect.
- 6ND-Free Zone? Initial presentation to Council has been made. Can this bring recognition to local products?
 - ↳ build relationships between food groups/champions + community leadership.
- School Garden coordinator - building relationships across region, between schools.
 - ↳ how to make garden more self-sustaining
- Continue to expand speaker/learning events in partnership with other committees
- Open up access to commercial kitchen in restaurants when not otherwise in use
- Connect opportunities / programs / needs to leverage maximum benefit
- Volunteer engagement (and evaluation) - TCFI can possibly share. Pro-D opportunity/need? LIRA BC Grant.
 - ↳ *Can tourists volunteer? - West Coast N.E.S.T.?*
- "Speed Weeding" Valentine's Day event?
- TCFI open to sharing learning + successes.
- Window of opportunity with OCP update in Vebelot + Toffin
 - ↳ house can offer tons of hot composting.
- Garden fairs + exchanges, share info amongst champions, mini workshops + exchanges all year round
- Invite everyone to Farm + Garden Show.
- how can we communicate amongst ourselves? and kids? → Slack or WhatsApp? FB Group. Forum?
- library/resource tool list so people can share.
- Show people what West Coast agriculture looks like.
- Neighbourhood Gardens (vs Community Gardens) - People are looking for ease of community
- Sharing purchasing opportunities such as lower-cost wood for building, sell kits? kids in woodworking
 - road maintenance/wood chips are helpful.
 - pallets, coffee grounds.
- Need garden mentors to shadow people for a year.
- Duck rental to address pests → shops. Goat rental?
- Meet in Ahvasakt to share + learn. Harney is keen.
- Social Assistance intensive hours are an opportunity to engage people - transportation is available from NTC.
- Continue selling produce
- NETP → Agriculture workshop could be hosted in Yu-chuk-akt + Ahvasakt + Th-a-qui-akt + Hezi-akt
 - ↳ i.e. how to prune fruit trees, build skills + resilience, non-traditional employment
- More chats in the gardens to share food prep + recipes, preservation workshops.
- NETP free meeting space in Uchelet