

# A Regional **Buy Local** Brand for the Alberni Valley and West Coast Communities

Project Proposal, Fall 2015


# Table of Contents

## **Part 1 – Introducing the Idea**

I. Introduction	3
II. Mission & Vision	4
III. Aspects of the Brand	4

## **Part 2 – Exploring the Details**

IV. Services	8
V. Market Analysis	10
VI. Strengths and Opportunities	16
VII. Challenges	18
VIII. Roles and Responsibilities	18
IX. Financial and Sustainability Plan	19
X. Implementation Plan	21
XI. Conclusions	23
XII. Appendices A-C	24
XV. References	29



## Part 1 – Introducing the Idea

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### I. Introduction

There is a strong trend across North America towards eating locally produced food, supporting local economies, and building relationships between producers and consumers. Economic development reports, summits and conferences, grant programs, and other buy local campaigns alike all exemplify the increasing public interest in where our food comes from. Appendix A displays an impressive volume of initiatives, organizations, websites, and resources, all concerning local food systems today.

The topic of food sovereignty and food security has been growing within academic literature (Patel, 2009; Rose & Murrell, 2011; Franco et al., 2015) and local community development (City of Vancouver, 2007; ACRD, 2011). The past decade has seen the rise of government food strategies and a shift in focus to create food-secure communities. Buy local initiatives increase the support of domestic food production by enhancing community awareness and provide a connection from farm to table for the consumer.

The Alberni Valley and its neighbouring coastal communities (Tofino, Ucluelet, and Bamfield) have an opportunity to create a strong community-based support system for the region's local food production. A strong trend towards eating and buying locally already exists within the regional district, making this the perfect time to create an agricultural brand that symbolizes the region as one connected unit. Initiatives and ideas have already sprouted within some communities. For example there is a current initiative for a 'buy local' campaign in the District of Tofino. However, there is room yet for the regional district to develop a brand to connect the growers, retailers, residents, and visitors of the area through their local food system. The 2011 Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan and its 2015 Phase Two successor have both made recommendations for a region wide 'buy local brand' to encompass all of the communities within the regional district.

The following document outlines the proposal for a region-wide 'eat local' campaign, which builds on the current brand of "What's On Your Fork" (WOYF).

## II. Mission & Vision

### *The Idea:*

Phase Two of the Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan includes the recommendation for the establishment of a region wide 'eat local' campaign. This action item supports the Plan's goal of attaining 40% food self sufficiency by the year 2031 as it raises awareness about where the food comes from that fills our plates. A similar recommendation came out of the Vancouver Island Food Security Hub meeting in 2012, suggesting a buy local campaign be integrated into the fabric of community food economies.

"What's On Your Fork" is a branding campaign that was initiated by the Agricultural Support Committee for the 2011 Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan. This branding slogan provides the perfect platform to launch a region wide initiative, connecting residents and tourists to the Valley's vibrant food community. The brand provides an arena for conversation between producers and restaurants, working towards the goal of having more food move from the farm to local restaurant plates.

### *Mission and Vision:*

The mission for the regional brand is to increase and promote support for the local food system within the Alberni Valley and neighbouring coastal communities. It will encompass the entire Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, connecting residents and visitors with local producers and businesses through an easily identifiable brand. The brand will also work closely with First Nations communities in the area, aiming to build a stronger foundation of community awareness and appreciation for First Nations traditional food knowledge and practices. Resources such as an easy-to-use website, promotional material, and the brand logo will result in recognition of local food. The mission and vision of the brand is to create and encourage a community that appreciates, acknowledges and supports its important local food growers.

## III. Aspects of the Brand

The regional brand will be much more than a logo. It will be a recognizable brand that is easy to use and promote. It will be marketed widely on social media and it will require consistent and constant care to continue to support local agriculture and agri-tourism. The various users of the brand include the following community members:

The producers: Described as the growers of food produce for the ACRD. This includes all farmers who grow food or raise livestock at anytime throughout the year to provide the region with fresh, local food options.

The food retailers: Described as the businesses, grocers, and retail outlets that sell or serve local food provided by the producers. They are the 'middle man', or means of distribution of local food production.

The consumers: Includes all individuals that support the local food economy through purchase of local produce either through the retailers or directly through the producers. Includes all residents and tourists that partake in the local food economy.

The following describes components that will be developed to enhance the brand's reach and effectiveness

1. *An Easily Recognizable Brand Name & Logo.*

This concept of a regional brand is not new, and is currently represented by a creative logo that has been showcased at various community events titled "What's On Your Fork." Refining the logo and brand name to be representative of location may increase the brand's chance of success in that it will be recognized as being connected to a place. The catchy phrase "What's On Your Fork" should be preserved as a tagline to a more direct, place-based brand name. Brand name and logo development should take into consideration the various uses of the brand – including symbols on restaurant menus, online presence, use on merchandise design, and the face of social media platforms. Two brand name ideas were developed for the purpose of this proposal and are suggested below:

**- Route 4 Farms**

This brand name idea was inspired by the fact that the route of Highway 4 connects the Alberni Valley and its coastal neighbours. This brand name offers a plethora of options in terms of logo development, simple symbols for menu use in restaurants, and a creative opportunity to grow other aspects of the brand. In addition, it offers the play on words of "root for farms."

**- Port to Pacific**

This brand name was inspired by the local slang for Port Alberni ("Port") and the city's connection to the Pacific Ocean through its coastal neighbours. This option offers the characteristic of a brand name that provides a sense of location within its title. This title would

also provide an avenue to grow the brand name on social media platforms and exciting new logo development.

For both of these brand name ideas the phrase “What’s On Your Fork?” should follow as the tagline. The use of this brand would be intended for businesses, events, or establishments that serve or sell locally grown food. Appendix B suggests the requirements that participating brand-users would have to meet in order to use the brand.

## *2. An Interactive Website & App*

Uses of funding for this project will include the development of an interactive, user friendly website with a complimentary mobile app. The website will serve as the meeting place for growers, chefs, and food enthusiasts. The website will offer services for producers, retailers, and consumers in the area. Many websites already exist that provide inspiration and ideas on website features and design. Suggested features of the website include the following pages:

**A. About Us:** Including an overview of what the brand is, who we are, contact information, and the mission statement and vision.

**B. Eat Local:** A tab that provides a list of the food retailers; including business maps, hours of operation, and a synopsis of the businesses that sell or use local food in their services. This could include restaurants, tasting rooms, wineries, breweries, grocers, etc. The Ontario Culinary Alliance has a feature on their website where you can plan your own culinary adventure, providing a trip planner tool enabling the user to organize a personalized “food tour” of all the local food supporting establishments, events, or locations.

**C. Why Eat Local?:** A section of the website to provide information on why eating and shopping for local food is important and relevant within one’s community and everyday life.

**D. Our Producers:** A page showcasing local producers and the amazing local food products that exist within the area.

**E. The First Nations Communities:** A page dedicated to the traditional food knowledge and agricultural practices of the First Nations communities in the region. Information on the First Nations within the area and the types of agricultural events and projects they are working on.

**F. Happenings:** An area where residents and tourists can gain access to information on upcoming local food-related events.

**G. Industry Resources:** A section for producers and food retailers featuring a job board, workshops and seminar opportunities, programs/educational training, information on grants, and recent agricultural related reports.

**H. in the News:** Relevant topics, issues, and events concerning local food systems.

**I. Links to social media:** Stay connected with the initiative by following its growth on instagram, Facebook, and twitter.

**J. Seasonal Newsletter:** All things food related for the ACRD on a seasonal basis. Upcoming events, successes, calls for help, etc., may all be featured in the newsletter.

**K. Community board** – A space to enable connection between existing food initiatives (TUCG, Tofino Food Alliance), producers, and retailers. Contact information and postings on opportunities for varying stakeholders could be discussed here.

3. *A Brand Manager*

To ensure the sustainability of the project, through a mixture of grant-funding and volunteer positions, the brand will require an employee that would be consistently working on maintaining all aspects and services that the brand encompasses.

4. *Presence on Social Media*

The regional brand will strive to constantly attract the attention of local businesses, residents, and visitors in order to increase the support of our local food system. The social media aspect is essential to success in today's interactive media world, and this requires constant updates and maintenance to remain current. A website that is not updated frequently loses users and becomes obsolete in a short span of time.

5. *Merchandise*

Material merchandise ideas that could be provided by the brand for marketing purposes include clothing (t-shirts, sweaters, hats), decals, water bottles, travel mugs, and reusable cloth tote bags.

6. *Continual Development of the Brand.*

The use and marketing of the brand will have a goal of staying relevant, current, and innovative. The ACRD experiences a significant amount of tourism giving rise to the opportunity to capitalize on emerging trends such as agri-tourism, local farm tours, and unique locally made products. Development and upkeep of all aspects of the brand will ensure its relevance and usefulness over time. Potential future goals could include one day hosting an event showcasing local food talent, or creating a small scholarship to help future food enthusiasts grow relevant skills and education.

## Part 2 – Exploring the Details

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### IV. Services

The regional brand will offer many services not only to consumers but also to food retailers and producers. Services for each stakeholder are outlined in detail below:

#### *Services for Producers*

The brand will provide services for the producers of local food including recognition and marketing via the online website under a section that features local producers exclusively. Producers will have the chance to be featured on the website, in the newsletter, or on the social media accounts. The website will also host a job board for food related employment, as well as have a space where producers can log on and connect with businesses that may carry their product.

#### *Services for Food Retailers*

For businesses that become active members of this regional brand, their service opportunities will be many. Businesses will be featured on the website with links and more detailed information about their establishment. They will have the opportunity to be featured on the website and in social media, partake in future events, interact with growers, connect with residents, attract tourists, and overall be a part of the local food system.

Retailers and businesses will be provided with marketing materials, such as decals to display as being a part of the local food movement, and will be encouraged to label appropriate dishes, goods, and products with the brand's final logo.



### *Services for Consumers*

The following details outline the services that the regional brand will provide for the general public, including residents and tourists of the region.

- ✓ *What's On Your Fork will first and foremost present consumers with an easily identifiable logo, providing them with the confidence that what is on their fork has been supplied to them by their local growers. The brand's logo will ultimately embody the idea of community support for food locally grown, produced, and distributed within the Alberni Valley and coastal region. It will provide any food-lover with the reassurance that they can eat easy, knowing that their food hasn't travelled far and was grown with care by a local farmer or producer. This will be the pinnacle service that the brand provides – creating a visual representation that we as a community support our local food system.*
  
- ✓ *Connection to the traditional food practices of the First Nations communities of the area.*  
Working directly with First Nations communities in the area will offer residents and tourists the opportunity to grow a unique relationship to our First Nations friends, gaining opportunities to learn from their traditional food practices and knowledge. Effectively involving the First Nation communities will involve inviting them to the table of discussion when further developing the brand and its associated marketing plans and services.
  
- ✓ *Information on local food, regional agriculture, and the importance of supporting the local food economy.*  
The website will feature an educational platform for online users, providing information about local agriculture and the importance of eating locally. Educational tools will include links to seminars, workshops, and talks regarding local food.
  
- ✓ *Connection to local-food supporting businesses*  
The website will provide an important tool that will enable online users to locate a restaurant, business, grocer, etc., that supports the local food economy. An overview of the business including location, hours, and other relevant information will be showcased under the **Eat Local** or **Our Producers** section of the website. A trip-planning feature could aid in making visitors' time in the area unique and memorable in terms of their culinary experience.

Creating personalized culinary experiences will be made simple with identifiable symbols located next to business names on the website. This could include child-friendly establishments/events, gluten free options available, suitable for vegetarians, etc.

- ✓ *Provide information on local food events.*

There are many ways/places that events are advertised in the Alberni Valley. However, this regional brand will have a unique characteristic of creating a meeting place (the **Happenings** page of the website) for anyone within the region to find out what exciting, upcoming food related events are occurring near them.

- ✓ *Connect residents to potential job opportunities, volunteer positions, and opportunities to get involved.*

Having a connected, region wide buy local unit will enable residents to get involved in topics they are passionate about within their community. An **opportunity board** will enable producers, retailers, and organizations hosting events to post available positions and opportunities on a central, online location to be advertised to the general public.

## V. Market Analysis

### *An Overview of the ACRD's Local Food Production*

The ACRD Agricultural Plan from 2011 provides extensive information on the current agricultural industry in the regional district. In 2012 a Community Food Assessment completed by the Alberni Valley Transition Towns Society (AVTTS) provided a general profile of the food community that exists within the Alberni Valley (Alberni Valley Transition Town Society, 2012). The following is a summary of the current state of our local food system, summarizing the findings of these reports.

#### Our Producers

The Alberni Valley boasts 7, 702 hectares of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve, of which 41.1% is utilized for food production as reported by the 2006 Census. Of this 41.1%, approximately 7.5% of the land used was used for vegetables, berries, fruits, nuts, and other horticultural crops – meaning 92.5% was used for livestock or livestock feed. The Valley is home to 89 farms, up from 81 between 2001 and 2006.

Large, commodity-producing, farms are growing in size, consuming approximately 50% of farmed land while small and mid sized farms slowly increase in numbers and in economic output.

Although livestock enterprises widely represent much of the utilized farmland, trends from the 1996 to 2006 Census displayed decreases in overall livestock dominated farms (except for horses). Much of the livestock production is shifting to areas with lower feed and land costs, with examples such as the poultry industry being largely concentrated in the lower mainland. Crop farms have seen a significant increase since 1996, with production in field crops increasing 27%, and greenhouse production growing by 64%.

A major obstacle that farmers in this region face is the revenue that can be produced from their operations. The loss of several dairy farms was a likely reason that the average revenue per farm dropped by roughly 14% over the 1995- 2005 period. Average gross margins below \$40,000 per year are likely to see net negative profits.

The local producers of the Alberni Valley are generally owner operated, with only large scale farms employing year round help. The agricultural sector in this region employs about 2771 weeks of paid labour, with 36% of work being seasonal, the rest full-time year round positions. The 2011 Agricultural Plan notes on recruitment of young farmers and succession planning becoming increasingly important issues over time.

Our food producers meet significant challenges in terms of distributing their product. Currently, food gets off the farm in a few ways, as detailed below:

- I. Farmer's markets, running out of Port Alberni and Tofino, with approximately 20 vendors in Port Alberni selling primary farm product, and very few if any farm vendors partaking in the Tofino market.
- II. The Alberni Farmer's Directory – this directory currently lists 46 of 89 farms (52%).
- III. Chain Stores: including quality foods, Buy-Low Foods, Fairway Market, extra foods, Safeway, and Wal-Mart.
- IV. Local restaurants – minor volumes are sold through local restaurants
- V. Local food initiatives – the Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild distributes food from local farms to residents in the form of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects from June to October, and to restaurants/resorts on a weekly order basis.

### Summary & Conclusions:

The Alberni Valley currently has a small community of farmers, with a few large farms dominating just over half of current farmed land, and small –mid sized farm numbers growing. The 2011 Agricultural plan lacks any significant reference to agricultural resources or opportunities in the west coast region of the District (within the Districts of Tofino and Ucluelet). Vegetable, fruit, and nut crops are increasing in numbers, and overall farm numbers slowly growing – however recruitment of young workers and interest is needed to plan for farm succession and sustainment. The region currently only uses 41.1% of the agricultural land set aside in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) for the area. The producers of the Alberni Valley struggle with establishing solid distribution channels. Current avenues for distribution include small farmer’s markets in Port Alberni and Tofino (yet Tofino’s is highly underused for farm produce), the Alberni Farmer’s directory, some chain stores, and minor involvement in local restaurants. The Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild is a reliable organization that distributes local food to residents and businesses of the West Coast. Land and sea based agriculture on the west coast has yet to be explored in depth in terms of opportunities and obstacles.

The region boasts some fantastic resources and events, including farmer’s markets, Family Farm Days held in Port Alberni, and the Tofino Food & Wine Festival. There is much room yet to provide a distinct distribution line of communication and knowledge to the general public on how, where, and when they can support their local growers. This regional brand will create a space for people to find out how to connect with their local food producers.

### First Nation Communities

Neighbouring Port Alberni, the Tseshaht First Nations reside on their traditional territory, and maintain values of non-intensive agriculture. No current major food-related programs exist within the community, however there is some land within the Nation’s territory that is up for development ideas – including the use of the property for some form of marine-based agriculture.

The Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht First Nations reside on the west coast of the region. In 2013, a Wild/Traditional Food Security Planning & Capacity Building report in partnership with the Raincoast Education society was completed, and reflected on local food education successes for the community (Raincoast Education Society, 2013). The report discussed the completion of many workshops, programs, and events that the Raincoast Education society helped deliver, including workshops on foraging for wild plants, traditional marine food and a marine traditional food feast. Workshops focused on the importance of traditional knowledge, intergenerational collaboration, and

knowledge about local food resources. Ty-Histanis, the newest sustainable community development for the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, included objectives and goals of celebrating traditional food sources such as fish and native plants through the development of central community longhouse and neighborhood smoke houses (Natural Resources Canada, n.d).

Other First Nations in the area include the Hupacaseth, Huu-ay-aht, Uchucklesaht, Hesquiaht, and Ditidaht communities.

Summary/Conclusions: The First Nation communities that reside within the ACRD area are home to many deep rooted, traditional agriculture practices. Increasing knowledge and appreciate about these communities' agricultural practices is an important part of our local food system, and must be considered when moving forward with regional agricultural plans. This regional brand would offer a resource to encourage the involvement, education, and increasing awareness about the traditional agricultural practices that exist within the communities of our First Nations neighbours. More research is needed to identify current agricultural events or initiatives that exist within the First Nations communities.

#### *The Current Market Demand for Local Food*

##### Food Retailers

Businesses including restaurants, resorts, retail shops, and grocers all partake in our local food system. Decisions regarding food-purchasing actions inevitably affect our local producers, through the support or lack there-of for the local food produced in the regional district area. Growing awareness of which businesses support our local food system would in turn support our community growers. More buzz about our local food system would create a domino effect, attracting the attention of those retailers and consumers that are not yet active within the local food system.

The Port Alberni community official website states "the demand for (and interest in) local food has never been stronger." Many food-focused events and organizations that have been successful recently include Family Farm Days, the Alberni District Fall Fair, the Port Alberni Farmers' Market, Transition Towns Food Group, and the Coastal Community Credit Union Barbecue. The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society provides informative resources, including a detailed map and directory of the Valley's local growers – with information on where, when, and how to find them.

On the west coast, many businesses within Tofino and Ucluelet rely on the Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild (TUCG) for their local food needs. Restaurants,

cafes, and resorts order produce weekly from this organization from June to October – exemplifying the already existing demand for fresh, local produce (TUCG, n.d). Distribution and access to local food continues to be the main obstacle for businesses on the coast when sourcing food from local producers.

#### Summary/Conclusions:

Port Alberni businesses exist within a community that is strongly moving towards demanding locally grown products, yet accessible information as to who sources food from where is still incomplete for the region. The Community Food Assessment reported in 2012 for Port Alberni discussed many recommendations, with a whole section pertaining to promotion and support of local food. This regional brand will provide a platform to put some of these recommendations into action and support the work already being done within the community towards building a more food secure Alberni Valley.

Businesses of the Districts of Tofino and Ucluelet are itching to get at local, regional food and do well with the help of local initiative TUCG. However, increased access to local food at all times of the year and more local products are desired. A regional brand would provide a connection to local producers and act as a platform for businesses to display how they are local food citizens.

#### Residents and Tourists

The 2011 Agricultural Plan describes Vancouver Island food trends as moving away from commodity type production, and towards niche-market, agritourism. The “foodie” movement across Canada is creating connections between agricultural industries and consumers – with the ‘buy local’ movement across BC being one of the strongest ‘buy local’ movements in the country. People are becoming more aware of packaging, labeling, food miles, and agricultural impacts on climate change. The mass array of buy local Facebook pages, hash-tags, and other social media trends (refer to Appendix A for examples) all display a movement towards eating locally – with local food becoming the more popular choice of cuisine amongst all age groups.

The TUCG provides weekly CSA boxes with fresh and local food to residents weekly at approximately \$40.00 a box. This service has been a huge success for the TUCG, and runs June through October. This is one example of the community interest in local food that already exists within the region.

The ACRD’s west coast communities, Tofino and Ucluelet, see an incredible amount of tourists each year, ranging from 700, 000 – 800, 000 visitors in the

Pacific Rim National Park alone per year. Most of these tourists pass through Port Alberni along the way, providing a significant opportunity to grow the agri-tourism sector in this region. If the region focused on directing tourists towards the many businesses that supply local food, as well as the producers themselves that offer services on site, the region could see a significant increase in support for all of the amazing food growers. Idealistically, this translates into higher revenues for the producers, and increased interest in the agricultural sector as a career choice for the upcoming generation.

Summary/Conclusions: The ACRD encompasses not only the residential, but tourist community that exists from Port Alberni, through to Bamfield, and over to Tofino and Ucluelet. Residents have expressed their interest in local food, through initiatives such as the TUCG, and the large tourist influx each year presents an opportunity for the Alberni Valley to showcase to the world its fresh, delicious, agricultural products. A regional brand will provide an innovative, current, exciting way to connect the residents and tourists of the area to the local food economy.

*Target Market – Alberni Valley & West Coast Communities*

The regional brand will encompass the following communities:

- I. Port Alberni
- II. District of Tofino
- III. District of Ucluelet
- IV. Bamfield
- V. All First Nations Communities

The brand will target producers, businesses, residents, and tourists as described above – capturing the interest of all who partake within our important local food system. The awareness that the brand will create and the excitement it will stimulate about becoming more involved with local food will indirectly work towards larger goals of the Agricultural Plan. To achieve goals of becoming 40% food self sufficient by 2031, a buzz must be created within and between all divisions of the food system. This includes the growers, chefs, food lovers, educational institutions, tourists, and residents. The target market includes people of all ages, income levels, and cultural backgrounds. Investing in a brand such as this will translate into investing in our agricultural sector.

### *Existing Like-Minded Initiatives, Programs, or Documents*

a. **The Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild<sup>1</sup>**

A food initiative dedicated to providing residents and businesses with the highest quality, local food from the Alberni Valley region at an economically viable cost.

b. **The Tofino Community Food Initiative**

A group of Tofino residents who are passionate about local, high quality, fairly-priced, easily-accessible, organic, sustainable, and healthy food.

c. **Alberni Valley Food Charter**

In 2012, the Alberni Valley endorsed a Food Charter with the goal of promoting food security to strengthen the local food system. A regional brand will work directly in line with the goals that this charter outlines.

d. **The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society**

A society based in Port Alberni promoting local food producers and providing a strong foundation of educational resources – including a farm directory and easy to read map of where to find local food right off the farm. This group completed the 2012 Community Food Assessment for the Alberni Valley area.

e. **The Alberni Farmer's Institute**

Represents farmers' and agricultural interest in the Alberni Valley.

## **VI. Strengths and Opportunities**

### *Established Interest & Current Momentum*

Throughout many areas of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, interest regarding the importance of local food is growing. Appendix A includes many events, organizations, and initiatives that exist within the ACRD. With many organizations and government initiatives currently working towards big food system goals – including increased food security for our local citizens – now is the perfect time to grow a regional buy local brand. The relationship between the brand and local initiatives, programs, and businesses will be a symbiotic one – as the brand will create a place to support action items, recommendations, and business ideas, all while the businesses and programs support the building of the brand.

Now is a crucial time for the ACRD in terms of building up community support for its local food system. Much time, resources, and interests have been

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild can be found at [www.tucg.ca](http://www.tucg.ca)



invested in securing the future of our food system – and all the hard work already done will need continual support to keep momentum and projects alive. This regional brand will do exactly this – provide an area to boast about the amazing work being done within our community to provide us all with nutritious, ethical, safe, local food for generations to come.

### *Strong Community Members & Initiatives*

The ACRD is home to many amazing educators, experienced workers, and enthusiastic community members. This all will make the goal for 40% food self sufficiency possible, and enables events such as Family Farm Day and initiatives such as the Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild to be a success. The regional brand will already have the amazing resource of people, programs, and support of the community to build an exciting campaign to support the local food economy.

### *A Resource Gap*

Although there are some fantastic resources already established – for example the interactive map provided on the Alberni Transition Town Society – there is a gap in the market for a central hub that connects every stakeholder within the food industry to one another. This regional brand will be a catalyst for conversation between community members such as growers and residents, chefs and foodies, Tofino and Port Alberni, or the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation and local education programs.

With education being a major component of working towards a more just and sustainable food system – a regional brand can act as a simple tool for the general public, drawing their attention to where their food may be coming from and simply ask the question, what is on your fork? Once asked, the brand's website will aim to have a plethora of resources to help people answer this question.

Overall, the ACRD lacks a regional, connective brand that enables people to easily recognize food that has come from their own community. This gap in resource provides us with an amazing opportunity to help support local food systems through many different avenues.

### *Agri-Tourism on the Rise*

This brand will create a platform to build the agri-tourism industry within the ACRD, a huge sector of opportunity for this region that sees incredible amounts of tourism seasonally. Our local food producers have the

opportunity to not only catch the attention of residents, but of the transient visitors passing through.

### *Potential for Growth*

As with anything, there will always room for growth. This regional brand will continually be looking for new businesses to add to the website, events to support, programs to initiate, and community members to connect with. As local food system support grows, so will the brand. Hosting events, creating seasonal farm tours, and attracting educational programs are all potential goals of the future.

## **Challenges**

### *Financial Support*

The biggest obstacle the brand will face is sustainable funding. There are grant opportunities that the brand would look at for start up costs of the project, however looking more long-term, funding may be a challenge. Appendix C offers three examples of funding opportunities that the brand will explore applying for.

A similar brand campaign titled “True North Fraser” was initiated for three municipalities east of Vancouver on the north side of the Fraser River. These included Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Mission. The brand established an appropriate name, developed an eye-catching logo, and began forming their website with great success. However, due to lack of an organized brand manager position and sustainable funding for the project, it has now fallen to the side and its activity within the community has almost come to a halt. In order to avoid conclusions such as this, it will be necessary to support annual costs through an annual business fee. The fee would aim to cover website maintenance and technical support, promotional materials, and an employee wage.

### *Timing*

It is important that the initiative get off the ground as soon as possible. As much as this is an opportunity, it creates a challenge to get the regional-wide brand up and running as soon as possible as to capitalize on the momentum of the local food movement.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The goals that this proposal lays out for a regional brand will require dedication not only in the form of financial support, but in the form of labour as well. The case study of the True North Fraser brand as outlined above provided insight concerning just how important it is to form a role in which someone takes pride and responsibility in the duties that running the brand will entail. After speaking with staff that worked on the True North Fraser project originally, there is much consensus that the unfortunate dissipating of the brand and all the work that was put behind into it, is largely due to the lack of consistent staff in ensuring its long term survival.

It is recommended that one full time employee be hired to lead the regional brand to grow into its full potential. Ideally, support will still be provided from community members, initiatives, and the regional district. However the planning, executing, and ensuring long-term sustainability of the brand will be made the responsibility of the brand manager. Duties may include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Hiring of web-development & app creation staff
- ✓ Developing the logo and brand name
- ✓ Managing social media outlets
- ✓ Enhancing communication between businesses, producers, and consumers
- ✓ Identifying funding opportunities
- ✓ Identifying community involvement opportunities
- ✓ Recruiting of businesses and producers to be featured on the website
- ✓ Maintaining and creating the blog, newsletters, and website material

## Financial & Sustainability Plan

### *Finances*

The launching of this brand will require financial investment and a plan to ensure long-term financial sustainability to ensure the brand's continual development and success. The start up of the brand and its associated costs are assessed separately from annual finances and are described below.

### Start-Up

The launching of the brand will require the most significant amount of funding overall – but will also offer opportunity to utilize grant resources as financial aid. Chart 1 provides a rough estimate of start up costs. All costs are subject

to change following more in-depth research of web development, material sourcing, and logo design. The first year of labour/wage cost is estimated here at \$15.00/hour at 25 hours per week for the first year.

<b>Chart 1 - Start Up Costs</b>	
<i>Item/Service</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Website Development	\$10 000.00
Refining and Copyright of Logo	\$400.00
Promotional Materials	
T-Shirts	25 @ \$16.00 = \$400.00
Water Bottles	45 @ \$10.00 = \$450.00
Tote Bags	50 @ \$6.00 = \$300.00
Decals	300 @ \$0.50 = \$150.00
Total	\$1 300.00
First Year of Labour/Wage	\$18 000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$29 700.00</b>

During the first year of launch, all advertising for businesses and promotional materials will be free of charge. Year one will aim to establish the brand as a recognized tool within all communities, translating into no charges or fees of any sort for brand participators.

Chart 2 provides an estimate of required funding from grants and consequently matching funds from government or industry.

<b>Chart 2 - Start Up Financial Resources</b>	
Grant Money	\$14 850.00
District or Industry Matching Funds	\$14 850.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$29 700.00</b>

### Annual Costs

Successful maintenance and development of the regional brand will come with annual costs. The following section provides an overview of what these annual costs would be expected to be, as well as a suggested approach as to how to cover these costs.

- i. A brand manager to maintain various duties and tasks, including upkeep of the website and social media accounts, development of brand participation within community events, and potential brand growth to support initiatives within the community. This is essential in ensuring the survival of the initiative. The employee may have the option to grow a small volunteer program to aid in the upkeep and development in the

- brand if they so chose – providing an opportunity to further include members of the community.
- ii. Annual restock of promotional materials will be required for new, joining members of the brand and for distribution at events, talks, markets, etc.
  - iii. Website technical support will be a cost occurring on an annual basis to ensure the professional and consistent upkeep of the website.
  - iv. Lastly, proposed here is the idea of a development fund. This small account could be a pool of resources with a goal of developing the brand in some way over time. This could be creating a small scholarship to aid in a community member’s academic progression relating to food-focused education. Other ideas include beginning farm tours or creating an annual event hosted by the brand itself, showcasing the extraordinary culinary partnerships that exist within the region. The development fund would provide an opportunity for the brand to consistently be adapting and developing towards ACRD food system goals.

Providing funds for these annual costs is suggested here to come from participating businesses that are highly showcased, promoted, and marketed on the brand website. For example, businesses could be billed \$365 per year (advertised as a dollar a day) to be a part of the brand and receive the benefits of online and social media promotion, mentions on blogs, promotional material, etc. From this pool of money, annual costs could be allotted a certain percentage of gross income (excluding website technical support, as this will be a fixed amount), enabling growth of the brand to be supported as brand popularity increases. It is recommended that the first year of brand launch be completely funded by grants and matching funds from the District or industry, meaning businesses would be given the opportunity to partake in the brand free of charge for a year. The following chart provides an overview of annual costs and suggested portioning of annual funding.

<b>Annual Costs</b>	
<i>Item/Service</i>	<i>Suggested Portion of Incoming Funding</i>
Labour/Wage	60%
Promotional Materials Restock	20%
Website Technical Support	Fixed amount
Development Fund	20%

## Implementation Plan

The proposal laid out here for a regional buy local brand is exciting, ambitious, and completely possible with the right support and energy. The following section provides a brief outline of what the timeline for building the brand may look like moving forward.

### *Phase 1 – Compiling Resources*

#### ❖ *Building the Team*

Step one will be selection of the brand manager to lead the way with What's On Your Fork and the community of people working to support the brand established. Having a small group of experienced and involved food citizens supporting the brand manager will create an exciting, strong platform for the brand to build upon.

#### ❖ *Grant Applications*

Once the team has been established and details of the brand's name finalized, applying for grants will be the next step. The BC buy local grant program will be a fantastic resource. A more in-depth look at the potential to apply for other grants, such as the Van City Sustainable Community grant, will also be more explored at this time.

#### ❖ *Talent Search & Community Outreach*

The next step will be the exploration of talent to help join the team in terms of website development, logo design, and merchandise production. Involving the community in some of these decisions would create an exciting buzz amongst the community. For example, online discussions and open brainstorming sessions could enable the creative input of the general public into building the brand.

### *Phase 2 – Prepare to Launch!*

Once funding has been approved, preparation for the brand launch will commence!

#### ❖ *Build brand platforms (website, social media, community presence)*

This phase of implementation will include hiring the web developer, building social media outlets, and perfecting final logo design. Dialogue with community members and various stakeholders will help to create the final picture of what the brand will bring to the public.

- ❖ *Attract Food Retailers & Producers*  
This time will be geared towards creating excitement among local food supporting businesses and farmers. The goal will be to gain their interest as well as allow them to provide feedback as to what they would like to see or services they would like offered within the regional buy local campaign.
- ❖ *Ordering Promotional Materials*  
Choosing wholesaler providers for all promotional merchandise and ordering of materials will be done during this stage of planning.

### *Phase 3 – Launching the Brand*

- ❖ *Official Promotion of the Brand Commences*  
Large events in each community will be targeted as opportunities to officially launch the newly revamped region-wide buy local campaign.

### *Phase 4 – Maintain the Good & Build for Better*

- ❖ *Use of Feedback from First Year of Launch*  
Following the first year of launch, continual altering of aspects of the brand that did not work and reinforcement of those that did will be required to consistently grow the brand and ensure success.
- ❖ *Maintenance of Brand Platforms*  
The brand manager will assume the role of ensuring all aspects of the website are up to date, blogs are current, and social media is trending.
- ❖ *Consistent Recruitment of Businesses*  
The brand will constantly be looking to grow its involved community, adding businesses and producers to the site as necessary.
- ❖ *Growing of Website Services/Resources*  
Continual development of online and in-store resources for residents, consumers, and tourists will be a goal for the brand manager.
- ❖ *Development of New & Exciting Ideas*  
The brand will constantly be looking for ways to improve and grow. For example, answering the question of how do we involve businesses that may not be directly related to the food system?

## Conclusions

The ACRD has an opportunity to grow an exciting, innovative, and supportive 'buy local' brand. The opportunity comes at a time when local food movements are sweeping across our nation, and while important actions towards creating a food secure community are occurring. This proposal has the intention of being the fertile seeding grounds to grow an exciting for the development of an effective and successful a regional buy-local brand. This proposal is meant to stimulate conversation and encourage brain storming to develop the best possible regional buy-local campaign possible. The aimed outcome of this proposal is continued, progressive discussion around making the brand come to life.



## Appendix A: Shown Support for the Local Food Movement

	<b>BC</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Brand/ Campaigns/ Websites</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- True North Fraser</li> <li>- Get Local BC</li> <li>- We Heart Local BC</li> <li>- BC Farm Fresh</li> <li>- Shop Local Victoria</li> <li>- Cowichan Grown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foodland Ontario</li> <li>- Harvest Ontario</li> <li>- Ontario Farm Fresh</li> <li>- Ontario Fresh</li> <li>- Lanark Local Flavour</li> <li>- The Local Good</li> <li>- Live Local Alberta</li> <li>- Eat Real Eat Local</li> <li>- Food Link</li> <li>- Eat Local Sudbury</li> <li>- Select Nova Scotia</li> <li>- Taste Alberta</li> <li>- ABfood</li> <li>- Food Matters Manitoba</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Buy West Eat Best (AUS)</li> </ul>
<b>Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Farmfolk Cityfolk</li> <li>- Vancouver Farmers Markets</li> <li>- Tofino Community Food Initiative</li> <li>- Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild</li> <li>- BC Food Systems Network</li> <li>- BC Seeds Gathering</li> <li>- Beyond the Market: Growing the North</li> <li>- British Columbia Co-op Association</li> <li>- Creston Valley Food Action Coalition</li> <li>- Cowichan Green Community</li> <li>- FarmStart BC</li> <li>- Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation</li> <li>- Link Land and Farmers</li> <li>- UBC Farm</li> <li>- Fresh Roots</li> <li>- The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society</li> <li>- The Vancouver Island Food Security Hub</li> <li>- The Alberni Farmer's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Young Agrarians (CAN)</li> <li>- Ontario Culinary Alliance (ON)</li> <li>- Harvest Ontario (ON)</li> <li>- The Organic Box (AB)</li> <li>- Slow Food Youth Network (CAN)</li> <li>- Calgary EATS! (AB)</li> <li>- Local &amp; Fresh (SASK)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Slow Food International (INT)</li> </ul>

	Institute <b>BC</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Summits/ Conferences/ Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- University of British Columbia – Land and Food Systems Faculty</li> <li>- Kwantlen College, Horticulture Faculty</li> <li>Events</li> <li>- Tofino Food and Wine Festival (BC)</li> <li>- Family Farm Days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growing a Permaculture Garden (ON)</li> <li>- Fork Fest (AB)</li> <li>- Eat Local (AB)</li> <li>- Local Food Tours YYC (AB)</li> <li>- Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference (ON)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home Grown Local Food Summit – University of Michigan (USA)</li> <li>- Sydney International Food Festival (AUS)</li> <li>- Florida Local Food Summit (USA)</li> </ul>

### Miscellaneous

- ✓ Ingredients – Local Food Movement Documentary
- ✓ Fresh – Documentary on how cheap food comes at high costs
- ✓ Hashtags: #eatlocal, #buylocal, #realfood, #locavore, #localfood, #slowfood, #eatlocally, #farmtotable, #supportlocal
- ✓ Edible Vancouver Magazine
- ✓ Calgary EATS! Food System Assessment and Action Plan
- ✓ Continuing Education (Conestoga, ON), Field to Fork (Fleming College, ON), Sustainable Food Systems (Trent, ON), Sustainable Agriculture (UBC)
- ✓ In the news: Global News Local Food section

## Appendix B: Use of Brand Agreement

1. The brand may only be used by farms, businesses, and events that are located within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District.
2. The brand may only be displayed by events if the event fulfills at least one of the following requirements:
  - A. You are a community run event that is providing a meal that was sourced from 50% or more local ingredients.
  - B. You are an event such as a market or show that has 50% of its vendors selling locally produced consumables.
3. The brand may only be used on consumable products that contain a minimum of 50% local ingredients sourced from within the ACRD.
4. The brand may only be used to promote meals, dishes, and beverages within local businesses that were prepared using a minimum of 50% ACRD sourced ingredients.
5. The brand may not be altered in any way, and will be provided in a range of preapproved sizes.

For any use that is not prescribed in the above notes, approval for brand use by the brand manager is required.

## Appendix C: Funding Opportunities

1. Investment Agricultural Foundation: BC Government Buy Local Program  
Businesses and organizations representing BC's agriculture, agrifood or seafood sectors are accessing up to \$75,000 for eligible projects. This covers things such as social media, web campaigns, branding, and public relation activities.
2. The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia - Sustainable Food Systems grants.
3. Van City Community Project Grants – offering up to \$15,000 dollars to cooperatives or not-for-profit organizations that support environmental sustainability and cooperative economy projects. “Increasing sustainable purchasing and buying local by promoting and strengthening social mission-based businesses, enterprises, and local business networks. ”

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