



# Who's at the Table:

A Community-Based Exploration and Mapping of Regional  
Food Security Initiatives and Structures in a Northern Context

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**PIBC North Central Chapter  
Webinar Series - #1 (of 3)**

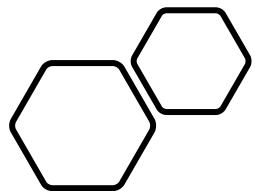
**February 1 2023**



# Preface



- ❖ Provide a wee-bit of background specific **food security in Canada**
- ❖ Provide an overview of the research project **‘Who’s at the Table: An Exploration of Community-Based Food Security Initiatives and Structures in a North-Central Canadian Context’** (Drs. Booth + Healey + Christine)
- ❖ My focus today is to provide the **results** of the research specifically **relevant to registered professional planners (RPP) to empower the food champions in all of us** 😊



## Background on Food Security in Canada

Almost every planner working in Canada will work in a community where food security is a serious issue. In Canada, about 12% of the population experiences **regular challenges in accessing or affording sufficient nutritious food**, creating challenges for peoples' physical and mental health and wellbeing. **Planners wishing to contribute to the wellbeing of the community they serve** need a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities within these communities regarding food security.



## The Story / Journey

- 1) Objectives
- 2) Deliverables
- 3) Jan. 2022 Mural virtual dialogue
- 4) The Voices + Knowledge Sharing
- 5) Key Findings Specific to RPPs



*We gratefully acknowledge that we reside on the unceded traditional territory of the  
Lheidli T'enneh Nation.*



# Project Objectives

Using community-based research methods + building upon earlier research within the region => we hosted two community sessions by Zoom.

## We focused upon the following:

1. Developing a 'map' of the different approaches, initiatives and linkages of different agencies, voluntary organizations and governments related to regional food security (**what's currently happening in the region?**)
2. Identify gaps + political, ideology, cultural limitations (**what's not working?**)
3. Identify local preferences for organizational structures and approaches (**what could work better?**)

# Deliverables

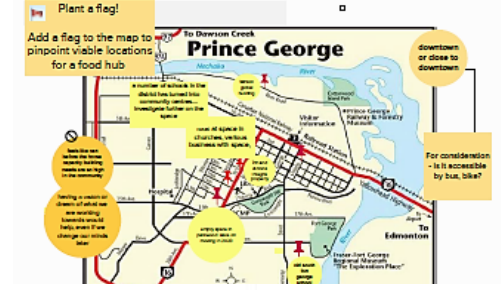
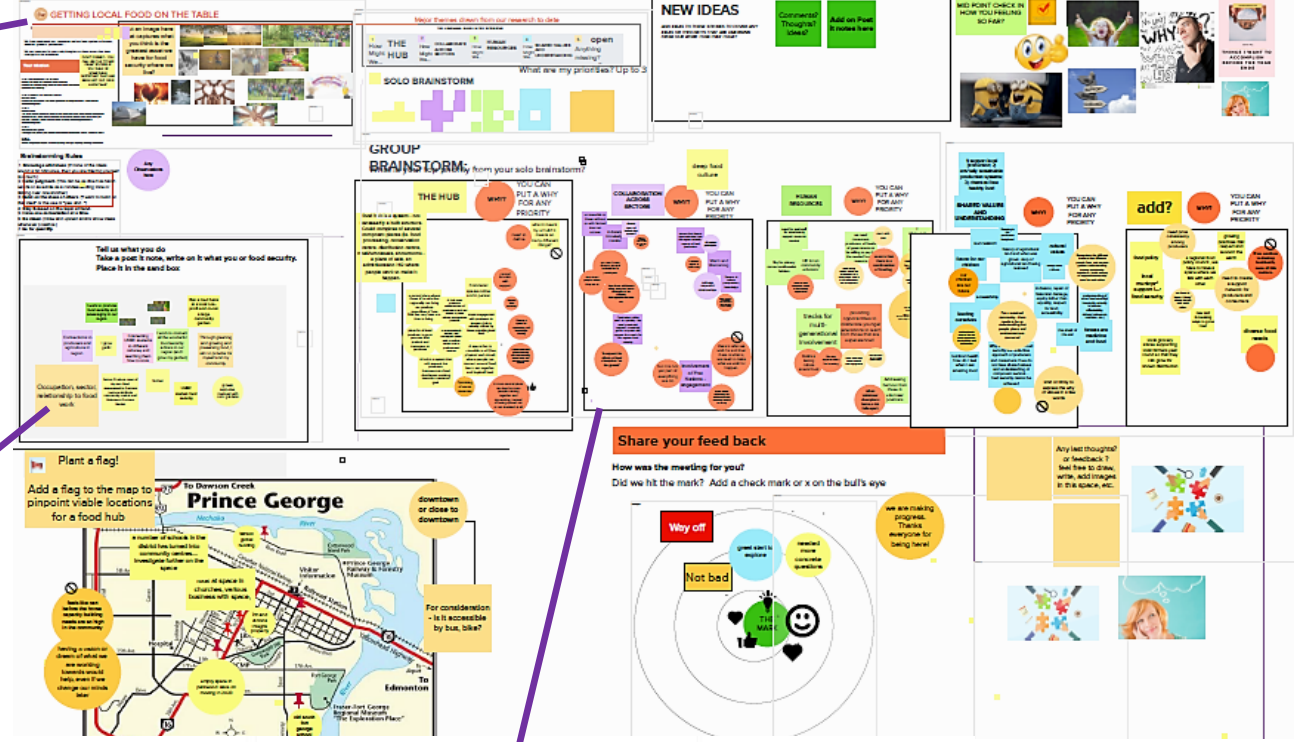


1. Offer detailed information to support community work (**what's currently happening in the region**)
2. Support discussions and progress on how to speed up desired actions (**add to what's working**)
3. Support ongoing and future collective actions such as funding applications; additional actions and strategies; etc. (**to overcome what's not working or enable/support to work better**)

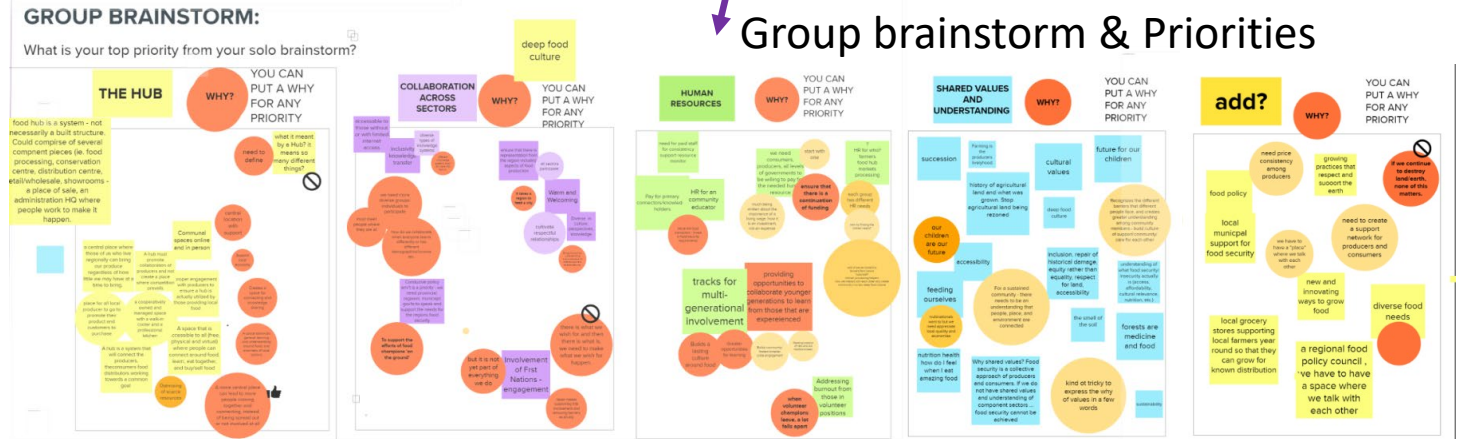
# Greatest asset



# Who came?



# Group brainstorm & Priorities



The Mural conducted at the first gathering, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022\*

\*Not every participant was able to navigate this online method. However, not every research tool ever works for 100% of the participants. This is the reason behind using multiple methods. Those who did successfully access the tool provided rich and compelling data.



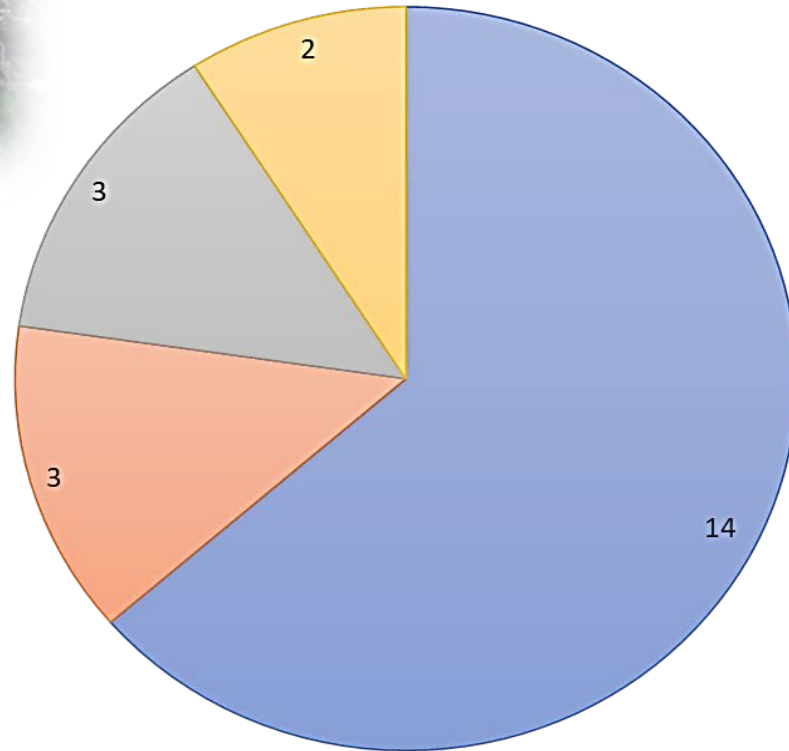
# The Voices + Knowledge Sharing







# of Participants



■ Non-profit Food Related   ■ City of Prince George   ■ Food producers / Farmers   ■ UNBC Researcher

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This graph represents the primary ‘hat’ that each of the participants wear, although many of the participants ‘wear many hats’. For example, several of the participants in the non-profit food related ‘sector’ are also involved in food related research and in farming.

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**The diversity is a strength!**

# Key Findings Specific to the Professional Planner

The research key findings were organized into 22 primary themes, that were then clustered into **priority themes specific to the professional planner:**



- 1) Food and culture are intertwined
- 2) Indigenous food security
- 3) Respect
- 4) Consumer awareness and education
- 5) Land stewardship and access
- 6) Where do we sell local food?
- 7) Food production infrastructure
- 8) Policy makers
- 9) Community food security: capacity and funding



# Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #1

1. Food and food culture are intertwined and are a foundational part of a community member's culture and their society.

*“food is the glue of our society...breaking bread together has always been seen as both a social and political statement in many cultures ...How we interact with each other and create community in a new deep food culture’.*

From an RPP perspective, the above emphasizes what many of us have already noted in our practice; **food is more than subsistence**. Our work must emphasize the presence and availability of food, that not everyone has ease of access and therefore food security concerns must remain at the forefront in all that we do (i.e., ensuring there are no land use restrictions on home gardening, backyard chickens, apiaries, etc.).



## Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #2

**2. Indigenous food security** – can be quite different from other food security work.

*‘Indigenous food sovereignty, ... and historical cultural food practices, .... and the traditional knowledge around gathering, harvesting and preserving foods is foundational to Indigenous survival ... we would harvest all of the traditional foods and then we would share it with each other, and we would have feasts and potlatches...so nobody went hungry’*

What is relevant to the RPP is that while some Indigenous food sovereignty issues will need to be addressed separately, more general food security activities also need to be thoughtfully inclusive of Indigenous cultures.



# Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #3

## 3. Respect

Respect was identified as a key area of food security. Food security work must build respect into everything, recognizing and preserving the dignity of all. **Food insecure people cannot be shamed for seeking food security support.**

As RPPs we have a collective awareness about the importance of **'meeting people where they are at'** and creating and maintaining **our engagement spaces as inclusive and non-judgmental**, while also ensuring that respect is at the forefront in all that we communicate and do. **The right to dignity** is one RPPs are encouraged to remember in their work with food security.



# Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #4



## 4. Consumer awareness and education

There is a need for education for consumers, as people rarely understand how food is produced or **the amount of time and effort required to produce food.**

For example, flooding events, blocked transit routes resulting in empty supermarket shelves, consumers expected farmers to be able to quickly increase the amount of vegetables and other local foods ... consumers expect food to be cheap, and available all year round ...locally produced food might be more expensive, and only available seasonally, although fresher and supporting local community members, is **a critical part of consumer education.**

**RPPs can support** the identified requirement for awareness and education by way of incorporating supporting information into local government communication materials where citizens may access information.

# Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #5



## 5. Land stewardship and access

Locally produced food requires access to local arable land ... and ensure that arable land remains available and capable of agricultural production, rather than being lost to development. Land stewardship is thus foundational to creating food security/sovereignty.

**RPPs have a notable role in the preservation of arable land for food growing** versus other forms of development by way of the planning process. Granted, there are numerous additional parties who also play a notable role in this process, of specific note elected councils. There requires an ongoing communications and education effort to empower elected councils, senior management, and the citizenry to be aware of and appreciate the requirement to preserve arable land for food growing.

## Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #6

6. **Where do we sell local food?** Farmers' markets can't feed everyone.

*'The farmer's market is a very good thing. But it also doesn't really add to the pot in terms of food security, for the pounds of food...'*

*'...it would be advantageous for [growers] to just figure out the [food] pipelines to get their products into those stores, who already have marketing, who already have all of the statistics to know what the families are going to buy, at what time of the year.'*

RPPs have the ability to contribute to enhancing and enabling local food market access through the various planning processes and plan outcomes. Being mindful of the requirement for access, infrastructure, and network connections amongst food growers, producers, and consumers by way of strategic policy development empowers the RPP to enable and support local community-based food security.





# Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #7



## 7. Food production infrastructure

The need for appropriate infrastructure necessary to create functional community food security ... including both physical (centrally located spaces with the necessary facilities such as community kitchen, gathering / classroom area, processing and manufacturing space, cold and dry storage, etc.) and virtual infrastructure that establish and maintain food-focused networks, connections, and supports.

**RPPs can support** the requirement for food production infrastructure by way of incorporating this required infrastructure in development plans. More specifically, **including the food security lens in all community amenity planning**, development and access can then inform the location, design, and infrastructure management decision making.

# Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #8



## 8. Policy makers

Government investment in local community food security is critical, particularly at the local and regional level, as is acknowledging and respecting the different needs in different regions.

***‘Conducive policy environment is a priority – we need provincial, regional, municipal governments to speak and support the needs for regional food security’.***

RPPs can serve as primary food security policy champions regardless of the areas of planning we focus upon. For example, the zoning focused RPPs have the potential to identify where arable land exists within a defined area for zoning and work towards formally recognizing these lands as potential growing lands by way of urban farming, community gardens, etc.

# Key Findings Specific to RPPs - #9



## 9. Community food security: capacity and funding

Food security work is generally done on a volunteer basis ... many groups and key people are reaching their limits and see few successors.

*'You need to dedicate time and money and people ... food security work feels like the thing everyone's doing off the side of the desk ...' '...whether it's infrastructure, whether it's land, whether it's resources, whether it's engagement, it comes down to money.'*

**RPPs can support** the requirement for continued resources by way of specific and strategic inclusion of desired initiatives in the OCP .... food security focused entities can use these specific mentions in the OCP (and other plans) as leverage points in their funding applications. **RPPs can also** serve as advisors to these entities in their efforts to pursue funding, informing about the policy allowances and potential.



# Conclusion

*“To achieve full food security, I can imagine how to get there, it's huge, right? It's changing society, it's changing behaviors, it's changing the capitalist system that we operate in, really to truly get food security’.*

With the RPP as the lead support moving forward on regional food security initiatives, with a community understanding of food security, relying on local expertise and knowledge, **our profession can encourage** governments to provide funding, infrastructure, and other resources, **suggest steps towards** translating community passion and dedication (including by way of land use and community plans) into **collective improvements to long-term and effective local food security initiatives.**

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# With Gratitude To

All those who participated in our work; Everyone at the Table for their partnership and guidance, the UNBC Office of Research, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council who funded this project.

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# Publications

- Healy, T., Booth, A. and Callihoo., C. “Who’s at the Table: An Exploration of Community-Based Food Security Initiatives and Structures in a North-Central Canadian Context” (CDJ-2022-090), *Community Development Journal*, revise and resubmit.
- Callihoo, C., Healy, T., and Booth, A. “Why Community-Based Food Security is Relevant to Registered Professional Planners and the Essential Roles RPPs Play in Supporting Community-Based Food Security”, *Plan Canada*, pending (Summer 2023).

**SURVEY MONKEY!!**