

WHO WE ARE

Qqs (Eyes) Projects Society is a Heiltsuk charitable non-profit which has operated youth and family programs both in the community of Bella Bella and out on the land since 1999.

We have a broad mandate to support community-identified projects and programs related to culture and language, stewardship, education, and wellness.



HEILTSUK INTERAGENCY DIRECTORS

Leaders from across Heiltsuk social organizations meet weekly at an Interagency Directors Committee table to break down silos and plan collaborations and wraparound services for our community.

In September, this table met with frontline workers and community members to initiate the development of a comprehensive mental health strategy to support our Heiltsuk community.

One of the short-term priorities arising from this process was a Heiltsuk food security assessment to help us understand the unique pressures our community members face when it comes to accessing nutritious food.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Qqs (Eyes) Projects Society volunteered to spearhead this initiative on behalf of the Interagency Directors.

We designed a community survey which was delivered door to door, ultimately giving us data from 92 households in Bella Bella (out of ~350).

The results are discussed in brief in the following slides.



SURVEY CONTENT

The survey addressed 6 categories of information: local food programs, gardening, traditional foods, dietary restrictions, local shopping options, and a community food security snapshot.

We hoped to assess:

- 1) how familiar people are with the programs and services already available to them,
- 2) how many households are growing their own food and what kind of support they need,
- 3) how people are accessing traditional foods and what would support them to eat more,
- 4) how many households are managing dietary restrictions and what they need to succeed, and
- 5) what kinds of additional local food options are of interest to community members.

The community food security snapshot asked respondents to rank Bella Bella based on recognized elements of a food secure community to give us a simple “report card” we can replicate in the future to track our progress.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS (I)

When invited to review a list of 34 existing programs and services that connect people with food to rank their level of familiarity, we learned that knowledge of what is currently available is MIXED.

34% are categorized as having a HIGH level of awareness

38% are categorized as having a MODERATE level of awareness

28% are categorized as having a LOW level of awareness

In terms of open-ended feedback, we received a long list of desired programs and services with the most common request being a zero-barrier food bank. This will be implemented by December 1.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS (2)

The gardening portion of the survey invited respondents to share whether they grow any of their own food, and if so, whether they began the practice during the pandemic or accessed any of the existing supports for local gardeners.

We learned that roughly 1/3 of households are already growing a portion of their own food, and another 1/3 want to begin gardening.

With a clear picture of the barriers and goals people shared, we are mobilizing a plan for 2021 that builds on our 8 years of food security support programs and our decentralized “Granny Gardens” initiative that arose during the pandemic.



OVERVIEW OF RESULTS (3)

In the section of the survey concerning traditional foods, we wanted to assess:

- What traditional foods people are eating and how often
- What they want to eat more of
- What the barriers to access look like
- How they're accessing traditional foods (harvesting, trading, or buying)

Notably for the CCRD and the communities represented at the table, we learned that 51% of respondents rely on cross-community trade for some portion of the traditional foods in their diet and desire logistical supports to do so in a safe and reliable manner.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS (4)

In the section of the survey concerning dietary restrictions, our goal was to understand what proportion of households are managing medical or voluntary dietary restrictions and whether they have adequate support and access to local, affordable groceries.

We learned that more than half of households are managing restricted diets and virtually none feel they are set up for success with the local supplies and resources available to them.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS (5)

In the section of the survey local shopping options, we wanted to understand how we might support shifts toward a more dependable local economy in the region. Notably, across all our respondents:

78% expressed interest in meat products sourced from the Bella Coola Valley

80% expressed interest in produce sourced from the Bella Coola Valley

84% expressed interest in seeing locally-grown produce in the Band Store

63% expressed that they would benefit from logistical support to help them organize cross-community trade

Specifically, we had strong feedback requesting that our community begin to explore opportunities to develop relationships with more local suppliers, and expressing the need for accessible options like a refrigerated unit on BC Ferries to help move perishable foods between communities.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS (6)

In the Community Snapshot, we had people rank Bella Bella based on statements related to recognized elements of a food secure community: Accessibility, Affordability, Availability, Adequacy, Awareness, and Appropriateness.

We ranked less than 5/10 on these elements, but now have a clear tool to reassess progress once we begin to address the issues and recommendations captured in the full report.



NEXT STEPS

The final report includes 25 specific recommendations which we are currently discussing at our Interagency Directors table so we can attach leads and timelines to the work.

These recommendations range from a micro-grant program to support local fishers with repairing their boats and gear – to a local butcher and traditional foods marketplace – to a seed bank – and much more.

Implementing the report fully will likely take 3-5 years, but much of the work can begin immediately.



SPACE FOR THE CCRD

Because some of the recommendations relate to regional resources and trading opportunities, we'd love to see support from the CCRD in the form of:

- Assisting us in networking with businesses and food systems leaders in the Bella Coola Valley and beyond who might be aligned with our Heiltsuk goals
- Providing a letter or motion supporting this work to assist us with fundraising efforts, or endorsing the full report
- Being prepared to discuss with Heiltsuk Tribal Council the feasibility of logistical supports for regional trade and commerce in the form of accessible refrigerated space or refrigerated trucks on BC Ferries or other transportation options that would benefit all CCRD communities, including Heiltsuk

QUESTIONS?

