

# Community Gardener Gathering 2017

*Working Together to Grow More 4:  
Growing a Food Secure Yukon*

**MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup> & 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2017**

Seniors Residence, Yukon College  
Whitehorse, Yukon





**Arctic Institute of  
Community-Based Research**  
*For Northern Health and Well-Being*

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*The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the funding agencies.*

**Growing Forward 2** 

A federal-provincial-territorial initiative



**Council of Yukon  
First Nations**



**Public Health  
Agency of Canada**

**Agence de santé  
publique du Canada**

## Executive Summary



The Arctic Institute of Community- Based Research and partners hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> annual community garden gathering March 14-15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at the Yukon College Seniors' Residence in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Fifty community gardeners from across the Yukon gathered to network and share with each other and learn from expert Yukon growers. Nine of the 14 Yukon First Nations were represented and participants came from eight Yukon communities in addition to Whitehorse.

Participants were keen to discuss tips and tricks for dealing with pests, building soil and compost, saving seeds, and more.

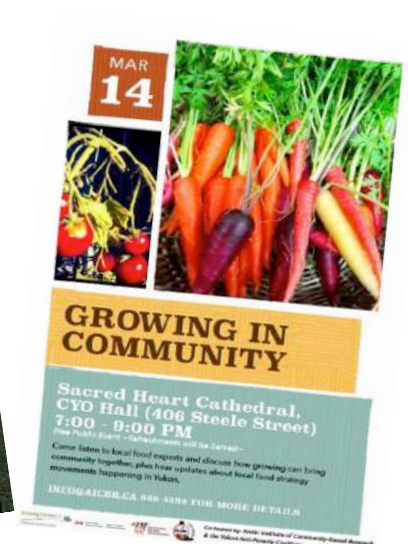
The first evening, AICBR also co-hosted a public event, called 'Growing in Community', which brought together 32 people on a snowy evening to listen to six presentations and have a fruitful discussion on how growing can bring community together and help us be more self-sustainable.

The gathering closed with an opportunity to visit two local farms and learn about operations.

Thank you to everyone who made this year's gathering another great success!

## Topics Covered:

- Building Soil
- Community Composting
- Community Successes and Challenges to Community Gardening
- Greenhouse Design and Extending the Growing Season
- Market-Gardening & Value-Added Products
- Food Pricing and Valuing Food in Yukon
- And more!



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## ~ Day One ~

### Yukon Community Gardens

After an opening prayer to start the gathering, we began our day with presentations from various Yukon community gardeners and had a discussion on the key challenges and obstacles that community gardens face.



### Downtown Urban Gardeners (DUGs)

2017 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of DUGs! **Randy Lamb** shared the history of Whitehorse's oldest community garden and spoke about key lessons learned.

The Garden was established as a non-profit in 1997. Being a non-profit provides a means to access funding (i.e. Growing Forward, Lotteries, Community Development Fund). There are currently 66 raised beds with over 70 members.

#### Key To Success

- Access to good soil & consistent water supply
- Make your compost onsite and feed your soil
- Secure location
- Befriend your neighbours and give back to the community (i.e. with surplus food, berry bushes)
- Vibrant coordinator who encourages involvement; "work bees"
- Champion volunteers/ Strong core group
- Find out what people like to do and pair them up
- Use a gardeners contract
- Share seeds

#### Challenges

- Resources and funding
- People power and lack of volunteer commitment
- Vandalism and theft – put them to work!
- Lack of water, power
- Climate change

**Check out resources at:**

<http://dugsyukon.blogspot.ca/>

## Mount Lorne Community Garden

**Agnes Seitz** from the Hamlet of Mt. Lorne shared the model they use ‘a community of gardens’. In this community, a community garden does not make sense because properties are spread out with many small-scale gardens, farms, and homesteads. Mt. Lorne has a strong community centre where they bring the community of growers together for workshops, a garden market, community kitchen, equipment sharing, work bees, the ‘Ingestible Festival’, a community-teaching garden, and more. The community does garden tours and learns and shares with each other throughout the year. They also have a more serious growers group who meet monthly.



### Mt. Lorne's Vision for Growing in Yukon

1. **Backyard gardens** – nutritious, fresh, biodiverse, fostering the next generation of growers
2. **Neighbourhood and community gardens**
3. **Small sale community supported farms** – holistically managed – with animals and dairy
4. **“Food Forest”** projects – combining berries, medicinal plants, perennials (using permaculture principles of layers, gathering places, communal spaces, and growing plants to keep up fertility)
5. **Tending the wild** – protecting and restoring wild food systems



*If a ‘community garden’ is not working or practical in your community, you can consider the model, ‘a community of gardens’ as an alternative.*

*We want to “create change at intersection of land-food-community”*

*“Food resilience is about relationships we build with our land, food and community”*

*“Relationships with the people we have and the people who grow food together, that’s what keeps us safe”*

- Quotes from Agnes at the Gathering





## Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Teaching and Working Farm

*“On the land, we learn to grow our food”*

**Dexter MacRae** and **Darren Bullen** shared the story about Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's Teaching and Working Farm in Dawson City. The farm began in 2014 with a partnership between Yukon College and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) First Nation. The goal of the farm is to be sustainable and operate year round on TH's traditional territory. In 2016, they had 20 students/workers enrolled in the farm school aged between 17-62 years old, 16 were Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in members.

Students live and do their studies on the farm with hands-on training, paid practicum, and classroom-based learning.

Surplus produce is sold or given away in the community. At the Harvest Ceremony in 2016, over 300 people attended the celebration. The farm has big plans over the next few years to expand and grow, with an anticipated 50 acres to be developed!



### Path to Success

- Investing in people
- Increasing food security
- Bringing community together

## Root-Zone Heating

Avid gardener **Chris Bartsch** shared his tool for increasing production in Yukon. Heating the roots of plants through a passive solar heat system will increase growth and production. His system is highly efficient, using only solar energy and water to heat the roots of plants in a garden bed. The group was very interested in his technology and we all look forward to future developments as he further develops the idea!



Tomatoes outdoors in Yukon?...Wow!

*“Plants like to have warm feet!”*  
- Chris Bartsch



Agnes cautioned that there is no “magic bullet” to gardening. Warmer plants will attract more pests. It is important to watch, assess and decide what the trade-offs are to different ways of growing.

## Bits & Bites

### Get Kids Growing

- Connect community gardens with schools/daycares.
- Provide hands-on learning.
- Kids teach the parents.
- Schools have large spaces for growing (access to land).
- Partnerships are needed to help take care of the gardens over the summer (i.e. with community gardeners, farm students, summer camps, etc.).
- Kids growing food builds community!



### Spot/Scab-Free Potatoes

- Different varieties are resistant to scab (Chieftain, Norland, Viking, Gold Rush, Russet Burbank). Yukon Gold and Red Pontiac are susceptible to scab!
- Soil pH – If alkaline, more vulnerable to scab. Use peat moss and sulphur to make soil more acidic.
- Plant only scab-free potatoes.
- Moisture control – When potatoes are flowering, drying out promotes scab. Water consistently when they are flowering and avoid cold water.
- Try to rotate crops.
- Applying manure can cause an increase in scab.
- Do not put potato scraps in compost, it will re-inoculate future potatoes.

### Vandalism

What to do in the face of vandalism? Alice Boland shared the sad story of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation's community garden, whose equipment was recently stolen, jeopardizing the entire operation. Here are some tips for how to deal with this situation:

- Start a “go-fund me” campaign for emergency start-up.
- Use security cameras and invest in security patrols.
- Keep the area well lit.
- Always have people in and out of the garden at irregular times.

**Most importantly:** Get youth and the community involved and engaged with the garden! Reach out through “work bees”.

### Wormy Onions

- Chives, scallions, sweet onion are susceptible to little maggot flies.
- Cover with floating row cover for May/June.
- Spread soil with diatomaceous earth.
- Grow leeks instead!
- Try Russian spring onions – very hardy and more resistant to the worms.





# Building Soil from the Ground Up!

## Soil Experiences

Soil experts **Bart Bounds** (Elemental Farms), **Heidi Marion** (Foodscapers), and **Agnes Seitz** (Mt. Lorne) shared their experiences with building and managing soil quality and talked about the essentials of having good soil.



## Green Manure

- Winter rye (hormones and chemicals that suppress weeds)
- Peas; Fava beans; Legumes (cut down before the produce fruit) (nitrogen)
- Buckwheat (nutrients)
- Alfalfa (for deep rooting)
- Comfrey (nutrients, nitrogen)
- White Dutch clover (nitrogen)
- Chamomile (nutrients)
- Chickweed (nutrients)



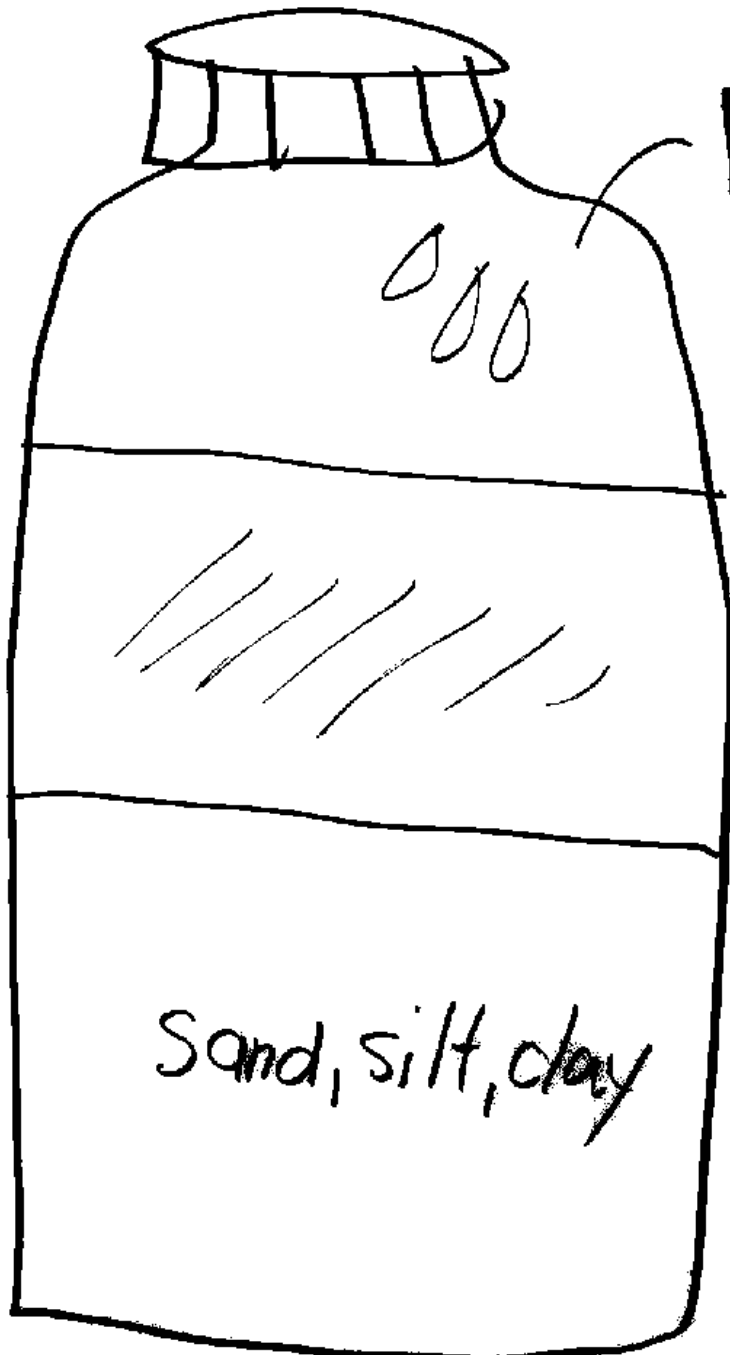
Broadfork for loosening the soil.

Photo: <http://www.allsun.com.au/BroadForkL.html>

## Soil Building Essentials

- Compost! Every year build your soil by adding compost.
- Use green manure (GM) to regenerate soil: grow plants specifically to feed your soil. “Chop & drop”; GM breaks up soil, adds organic matter and is a home for microbes and worms.
- Worm castings are full of humates and folic acids, which help soil hold everything together.
- Tillage radish helps aerate the soil.
- Add mulch to your soil to cover and protect it from heat, wind and drying out.
- Rotate crops annually.
- Till shallow and don't over mix. Use a *broadfork* to loosen and aerate the soil.
- You can learn from your soil by observing, tasting, exploring texture, and watching your plants.
- Do a soil texture test to determine portions of sand, silt, and clay.
- Apply rock dust for micronutrients.
- High pH, use peat and elemental sulphur.
- Add microorganisms (EM), which feed soil nutrients to the plants.

# SOIL TEXTURE TEST



1 tsp dish soap

$\frac{2}{3}$  water

$\frac{1}{3}$  soil

SHAKE 10 MIN

# COMPOST CHEAT SHEET

for garden compost

- BROWNS**  
(Carbon feed stock)
- paper shred 175:1
  - brown leaves 60:1
  - straw 75:1
  - cardboard 200:1
  - pine needles 80:1
  - saw dust 325:1

**C:N**  
Carbon:nitrogen

**30:1**  
compost ratio by composition

**4:1**  
compost ratio by volume (just a starting point.)

**GREENS**  
(nitrogen feed stock)

- food scraps 20:1
- green manure 15:1
- green grass clippings 20:1
- coffee grounds 20:1
- hair



Compost should be moist but not soggy

add H<sub>2</sub>O during assembly

turning accelerates compost

**STINKY?** signals anaerobic bacteria... turn + add browns

**DRY?** signals too much browns... or you may need to add H<sub>2</sub>O.

**HELP:** [composting101.com](http://composting101.com)



# Community Composting

Yukon Government Agrologist, **Randy Lamb** shared with the group some perspectives around establishing a community-led compost. There are many different types of composts and community models that can be small or large-scale.

## Why Compost?

- Redirects food scraps, yard trimmings, etc. into the ground.
- Promotes waste management and addresses environmental concerns.
- Builds healthy soils and supports local food production and food security.
- Develops a culture of composting knowhow in the community.
- Can create jobs and skills.
- Promotes social inclusion and empowerment within the community.

## Community Models

- Individual backyard bins
- Community gardens
- Farms
- Schools
- Drop-off networks
- Collection entrepreneurs
- On-site and off-site composters
- Demonstration sites
- Home base or homesteader hubs

## Compost Systems

- Turned Windrows
- Bin Systems
- In-Vessel Composting
- Vermicomposting
- Passive or Static Pile
- Aerobic or anaerobic
- Animal feed (food scraps)

## Resources

- *Growing Local Fertility: A Guide to Community Composting.* [www.highfieldscomposting.org](http://www.highfieldscomposting.org)

If you need additional information you can contact Randy or Brad at the Agriculture Branch.

Randy Lamb: [randy.lamb@gov.yk.ca](mailto:randy.lamb@gov.yk.ca), 393-7410

Brad Barton: [brad.barton@gov.yk.ca](mailto:brad.barton@gov.yk.ca), 667-3417

They can help find more information about composting, put you in contact with some local compost experts or look at funding options for your compost project.

## Greenhouse Design in the Yukon: Extending the Growing Season

**Bob Sharp**, retired teacher and greenhouse designer extraordinaire held an interactive workshop on Tuesday afternoon, sharing his cold-frame greenhouse design. He reviewed the importance of understanding what plants need to grow and under what conditions.



### Other Resources:

<http://yukongreenhouse.weebly.com/>

<http://researchgreenhouse.weebly.com/>

<http://solargrowing.weebly.com/what-are-solar-growing-greenhouses.html>





MAR  
**14**



# GROWING IN COMMUNITY

**Sacred Heart Cathedral,  
CYO Hall (406 Steele Street)  
7:00 - 9:00 PM**  
*Free Public Event ~Refreshments will be Served~*

Come listen to local food experts and discuss how growing can bring community together, plus hear updates about local food strategy movements happening in Yukon.

**INFO@AICBR.CA 688-3393 FOR MORE DETAILS**



Co-hosted by: Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research & the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition



## Growing in Community: An Evening Panel

Thirty-two people came together on a cold, snowy Tuesday night to talk about how growing food in Yukon can build community. The following presentations were made, followed by group discussion.

**Kim Hickman, Yukon Government-Health Promotion** spoke about the school fundraiser initiative, *From the Ground Up*, which is about more than just raising money it also feeds community. Since 2012, more than 200,000 pounds of vegetables have been sold. In 2016, over 600 20-pound boxes of vegetables (carrots, potatoes, beets, and cabbage) were donated. The initiative's benefits go beyond school walls and reach producers, families, the larger community, and vulnerable populations. [www.fromthegroundup.ca](http://www.fromthegroundup.ca)

**Alice Boland** spoke about the history of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Community Greenhouse and Garden. It has been in operation since 2000. The main produce feeds the community and surplus feeds other Yukon communities including Pelly Crossing, Whitehorse, Mayo, Carcross, and Haines Junction. Children and youth are an essential part of the greenhouse and Alice is always willing to share her expertise to help others grow food.

**Carrie Boles** shared the growing experiences of the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre at the Whitehorse Downtown Community Garden. Produce from the plots are used in the Centre for its programming.

**Sarah Ouellette** spoke about the importance of experiential education and the *Kids on the Farm* initiative, which brings schools to farms for hands-on experiences with growing and producing food. Farm tours get students excited about farming and food, as well as learning where their food comes from. In 2016, there were 36 farm tours. Experiential education is a mechanism for community building, where relationships between farmers, students, teachers, chaperones and others are built and strengthened.

<http://kidsonthefarm.yukonfood.com/>



**Randy Lamb, Yukon Government-Agriculture Branch** spoke about the Yukon Government's *Local Food Strategy*, which was approved by Cabinet in the summer of 2016. It is a five-year plan with 14 strategies; eight of which directly relate to addressing food security. The strategy represents interests of communities in Yukon, government groups, First Nations, NGO's, municipalities, and others, and is a tool to get everyone talking about food security. <http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture/yukon-local-food-strategy.html>

**Jody Butler Walker, Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research** spoke about the *Yukon Food Security Roundtable*, which was held in May 2016 and brought together over 80 people to come up with a common understanding and vision for Yukon food security. She spoke about the importance of working together and breaking down silos. Jody emphasized that, "when we work together on complex issues, we are able to come up with more robust, sustainable solutions." <http://www.aicbr.ca/yukon-food-security-roundtable-1>

**Jordan Stackhouse and Larissa Lychenko, City of Whitehorse** spoke about the City of Whitehorse's *Local Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy*, which will go into the Official Community Plan and be a part of the City's Sustainability Plan. A "What We Heard" document on initial feedback into the strategy is available online and they are currently writing the draft strategy and recommendations, which will be available for public consultation this spring. [www.whitehorse.ca/localfood](http://www.whitehorse.ca/localfood)



## ~ Day Two ~

### Elders Panel

Long-time gardeners **Ingrid Wilcox**, **Michael Brauer**, **Chris Bartsch**, and **Agnes Seitz** gave the gathering participants an opportunity to ask them about tips and tricks for growing.



### What do we do to get rid of aphids in the greenhouse?

- **Michael:** Discourage them before they arrive by spraying plants with a **weak dish soap** solution.
- **Ingrid:** Spray infested plants with **whole milk**. Aphids cannot digest the milk proteins and will blow up! This will not remove the eggs, so repeat treatment for a few weeks. Once aphids are gone, spray with water to clean the plants and to remove the sour milk smell. This treatment also works for powdery mildew.
- **Chris:** **Ladybugs** love aphids and will eat them.
- **Agnes:** Some plants attract aphids. Use pots of **calendula** and **marigold** to collect the aphids and then move them out of the greenhouse.

#### Summary:

- Aphids tend to come on store-bought plants. Plant your own from seeds. **Quarantine** plants from the store.
- **Fortify** plants with microbial spray/compost and watch the conditions of the greenhouse. Aphids are a response to a weakness/problem.





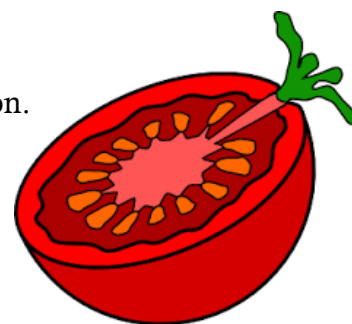
## Tips for Saving Seeds

### Seeds that are good for saving:

- Arugula
- Basil
- Beans
- Carrots (biennial)
  - Chives
  - Lilies
- Mustards
- Nasturtium
- Parsnips
  - Peas
- Potatoes
- Pyrethrum
- Siberian irises
  - Tobacco
- Tomatoes

### Saving Tomato Seeds

- Identify the tomato you want (prime fruit). It has to be mature, almost at the point of rotting.
- Scoop out seeds.
- Put the whole mess in a jar with water.
- After two days, seeds will separate from gelatin.
- Separate “bad ones” (those that float) and keep the ones at the bottom of the jar.
- Let dry on paper towels.
- Store in a dry and cool location.



Some seeds are not good to save. Ingrid shared how she did not have luck with squash, zucchini or cucumber. Hybrid seeds will not breed as well. Heirloom seeds are good, but be careful to make sure that the variety is suitable for Yukon's growing conditions. Open-pollinated seeds are also good for saving.

When saving seeds, it's important to keep them dry and absorb all the humidity. Double-pack them.

## Voles and Rodent Pests

- Use fox urine around your plants (<http://www.amazon.com>)
- Voles tend to be cyclical in nature.
- Voles like ground cover and mulch, so keep your ground covers short.
- Encourage birds of prey/predators to live in your garden; build branch tripods for them to perch and hunt from.
- Plant bulbs with hardware cloth or wire underground so that they cannot get to the bulbs.



# Localizing the Economy-Market Gardening

## Value-Added Products & Approaches

**Joan Norberg** from Grizzly Farms shared her story of how the farm got into taking products they were growing and developing them into value-added products; something they could sell for more profit and could reach a wider market.

Joan uses what they have and creates products that customers love; for example, her famous strawberry rhubarb jams! Joan's advice to the gardeners included:

- Grow things you can rely on.
- Use what you have and build on it.
- Be consistent.
- The best way to sell a product is to let people try it.
- Include a list of ingredients on your products.
- Talk to others who are also producing similar products to set your pricing.
- Don't undercut your time and energy spent making the product.
- Feedback from customers is key.
- Presentation adds value.
- If you are selling in a temporary market, you do not need a commercial kitchen.

**Shiela Alexandrovich** from Wheaton Valley Farms shared her story of how she has used creative ways to build income from her homestead. For 15 years, Shiela ran a CSA (Community Shared Agriculture) program, providing weekly produce to pre-paid customers. She also uses other products from her farm such as wool, to create sellable art. Wheaton Valley Farms offers workshops and hosts classes through the Kids on the Farm program. Shiela spoke about the importance of layering within the farm and to not just rely on vegetables to make an income. Other advice included:

- Variation is key.
- Volunteers are important for "new energy".
- Put your values and ethics of what you believe as the core ingredient to all that you do (this prevents burnout).
- Everyone needs to grow food. Don't underestimate the value of food that people produce in their backyards.
- Use all parts of the plant and reduce your waste. Make pesto mixes, smoothie mixes with chickweed, vegetable tops; dry greens and sell as a vegetable salt, use in soups, etc. Be creative!

## The Value of Food

**Kate Mechan**, Elemental Farms and Growers of Organic Foods Yukon spoke to the group about marketing and value of foods. She built on what Shiela discussed and spoke about the importance of values and that it is about how people value themselves and what they do, that is important. It is important to be confident and proud of your products. Local producers are feeding people good food, feeding community and educating about growing food. It is important to present food professionally and share with the community why buying locally produced foods is so important. Here are some reasons why local, fresh food is valuable:

- Greater nutritional values, no preservatives or chemicals
- Eliminates transportation costs and reduces carbon footprint
- Supporting local economy
- Opportunity to build relationships with farmers and producers
- From a First Nations perspective, food from the land is sacred. Put love into it and make it spirit food.

Kate also spoke about the importance of a sharing economy. Norma Kassi added that with climate change it is very important for Yukon First Nations to look seriously at what will replace traditional foods and to start growing their own. It is essential that everyone shares and learns from each other. Share skills and get communities growing more food. It is a very exciting time.

## Building a Network

Norma Kassi led a group discussion on how best for community gardeners to stay connected, particularly for the First Nation communities. Key points from that discussion included:

- Start a Facebook Group for Community Gardeners.
  - Makes knowledge accessible online, growers can post questions
  - Needs to be administered and managed
  - Youth could be involved
- Have the opportunity to visit different communities and see their gardens firsthand.
- Have a list of experts and their areas of specialty.
- Use CBC/radio call-in show to share knowledge and ask questions re: growing food.
- Develop a program for youth to participate in during the gathering; start them young to get them excited about producing food.
- Share more traditional Indigenous knowledge about our food.



## Farm Tours

The Garden Gathering ended with tours of two local farms. Many thanks to Bart and Kate at **Elemental Farms** and Tom at **Aurora Mountain Farm** for hosting!

**Thank you to everyone for making this year's Gathering a GIANT success!**



*We wish everyone all the best with the  
coming growing season!*



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