



Food, Fragility, and Fortitude: **COVID-19 IN THE BOW VALLEY**



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WHY THIS REPORT?

Food sovereignty is the ability of communities to determine what their food systems look like

This report provides insight into the impacts of COVID-19 on food systems in the Bow Valley. It highlights inequities, gaps, and recommendations for achieving **food sovereignty** for all. In writing this report we draw on our experiences and learnings with a focus on BVFA regional coordination work from March 2020 to June 2021. During this time it became increasingly clear that we need regional food systems that do not rely on global supply chains, charity, and volunteers. We believe that food sovereignty is essential for creating these kinds of vibrant food systems that can withstand unexpected shocks.

To move forward, we believe that building strong relationships is essential at multiple scales and between different sectors and actors. We emphasize the need for municipalities to work with grassroots groups, non-profit organizations, and community members to develop a regional emergency coordination plan that understands how people's access to and connection with food determines their well-being during the best and worst of times. At the same time, we underline the vital, ongoing, and yet under resourced role that community-based organizations play in coordinating around food in the Bow Valley.

We believe this work of building trusting relationships between different groups, organizations, communities, and individuals is essential in creating community resilience. We ask that community decision-makers include our recommendations in their daily work and future planning so we can realize everyone's right to food.

Who is the Bow Valley Food Alliance?

The Bow Valley Food Alliance (BVFA) is a network of local food-focused individuals and organizations dedicated to addressing food sovereignty in the Bow Valley.

Our Mission

To create food systems that are healthy, socially just, collaborative, diverse and accessible. These food systems are based in vibrant regional economies, respect for the earth, reconciliation, intergenerational knowledge, education, and the Buffalo: A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Restoration.



PRE-COVID-19

Research and Community Consultations

The pandemic shone a light on food issues that were present prior to COVID-19 but not always visible to all community members – particularly those in more privileged positions. Below we highlight research related to Bow Valley food systems which demonstrates that access and cost of healthy food has long been a top area of concern for residents. Research also underlines how food insecurity is rooted in low wages, high housing costs, and inequities related to race, class, and citizenship. Relatedly, research has emphasized a lack of policies that support socially and ecologically just food systems in the Bow Valley as well as the feeling that community members are not able to influence what their food systems look like.

2018

Banff Canmore Community Foundation (BCCF) Vital Signs Report

Underlined that access to healthy food is a severe challenge for Îyârhe Nakoda Nations. 52% of survey respondents stated that increasing the affordability of healthy food was necessary to improve well-being in the Bow Valley.



Alberta Health Services (AHS) The Cost of Healthy Eating in Alberta Report

Highlighted that the average cost of food in Canmore and Banff is \$86.93 more per month for a family of four than the provincial average.

Provincial Average Cost	Canmore/Banff Cost
\$1092.30	\$1179.23

2019

Banff Community Social Assessment

Highlighted the cost of living as the top community concern, and prioritized the need to increase access to fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods as well as spaces to grow, prepare, and gather around food.

Imagining Food in Banff Report

Indicated a need to build food systems that centre local needs, concerns, and priorities. Noted that control of these systems should be placed in the hands of community members, particularly those who experience marginalization.



Bow Valley Food Charter

Emphasized the importance of local food systems based in social justice, vibrant regional economies, regenerative ecologies, intergenerational knowledge, collaboration and diversity, accessibility, and physical, mental, and spiritual health.



2020

Imagining Food in Canmore Report

Highlighted the importance of community gardens, community meals, waste reduction programs, the Mountain Market, food-related workshops, and cultural events. Outlined key challenges including social inequities and ecological degradation as well as a lack of: community influence over food systems; access to affordable local foods; spaces to cook, gather, and grow; support for local food provisioners; and policies that support sustainable equitable food systems.

Imagining Food in the Municipal District (MD) of Bighorn Report

Underlined food systems' strengths including local ranchers and gardeners, school food programs, community partnerships, and community spaces to grow and cook food. Highlighted challenges such as lack of affordable, sustainably-produced food as well as a lack of access to local foods, supports for local food provisioners, and food-related policies.

Pre-COVID-19 Food Programs and the Work of the BVFA

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, free, low cost and local food programs and services were well utilized in the Bow Valley. Community members' regular use of, and in many cases reliance on these services, highlight the challenges residents faced prior to COVID-19.

Pre-COVID food programs included emergency food supports, school breakfast and lunch programs, farmers markets, community growing spaces, food boxes, food rescue, and community meals. While these programs provided vital services to Bow Valley communities, there was a lack of coordination between them, including uncertainties around whether services were being duplicated and opportunities missed for collaboration. In 2016, the Banff Canmore Community Foundation convened a meeting to explore why grant applications for food programs were increasing, yet programming was not moving the needle on food insecurity. The BVFA was born out of this meeting. The BVFA first functioned as a networking space with a vision to connect and support local food groups, businesses, organizations, and community members. It then expanded to include community-based research, advocacy work, and the collective development of the BVFA Food Charter.

As a keystone document and guiding vision, the Food Charter is based on a series of community conversations that brought together different groups and individuals to articulate common values related to food. This process helped the BVFA connect with different groups to develop a collaborative approach to addressing food system inequities, including root causes of food insecurity. The Charter provides an essential road map for the BVFA to understand, connect, and address different food-related challenges and opportunities for creating socially and ecologically just food systems.

COVID-19 and the Work of the BVFA

When COVID-19 hit, the BVFA received an overwhelming number of queries for support from local organizations, businesses, and informal groups. Although the BVFA had no staff and limited finances, we drew on pre-existing relationships and expertise to provide as much support as we could. It quickly became apparent that the BVFA had to increase our capacity to address rising levels of food insecurity within our communities. With several BVFA members working off the sides of their desks, we scrambled to answer community requests for help, including requests to connect those with excess amounts of food (such as restaurants who had shut down) to those in need, support grassroots groups doing frontline work, organize meetings across municipalities, identify needs and gaps, write funding applications, and hire the first BVFA staff.

Although demand and need still exceeds our capacity, the BVFA is better positioned (at least for the next few months) to respond to community requests as a result of increased funding and dedicated staff time. We have been able to build strong relationships with equity-seeking groups who have provided some of the most meaningful emergency food aid at a grassroots level. We have seen how municipal emergency response services have depended on these groups, while at the same time these groups are often under-resourced, lacking connections to funders and operating within funding, volunteer, and non-profit systems that prioritize more formalized groups.

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Food insecurity was always present in the Bow Valley, but it wasn't visible to everyone, especially those in more privileged positions.

Dr. Lauren Kepkiewicz

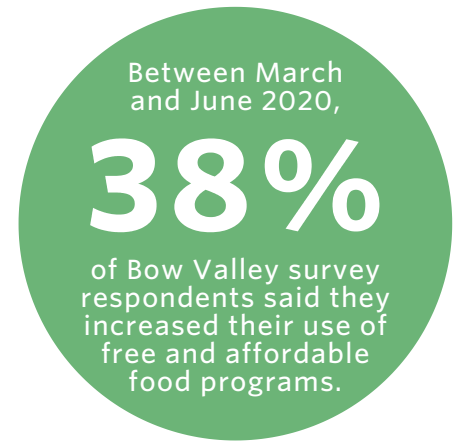
COVID-19

Food System Challenges and Vulnerabilities

The beginning of COVID-19 set in motion a variety of challenges and emergency food responses. While many of these challenges changed shape and form during the pandemic, both in terms of their level of severity and how they manifested at a grassroots level, many remained present throughout.

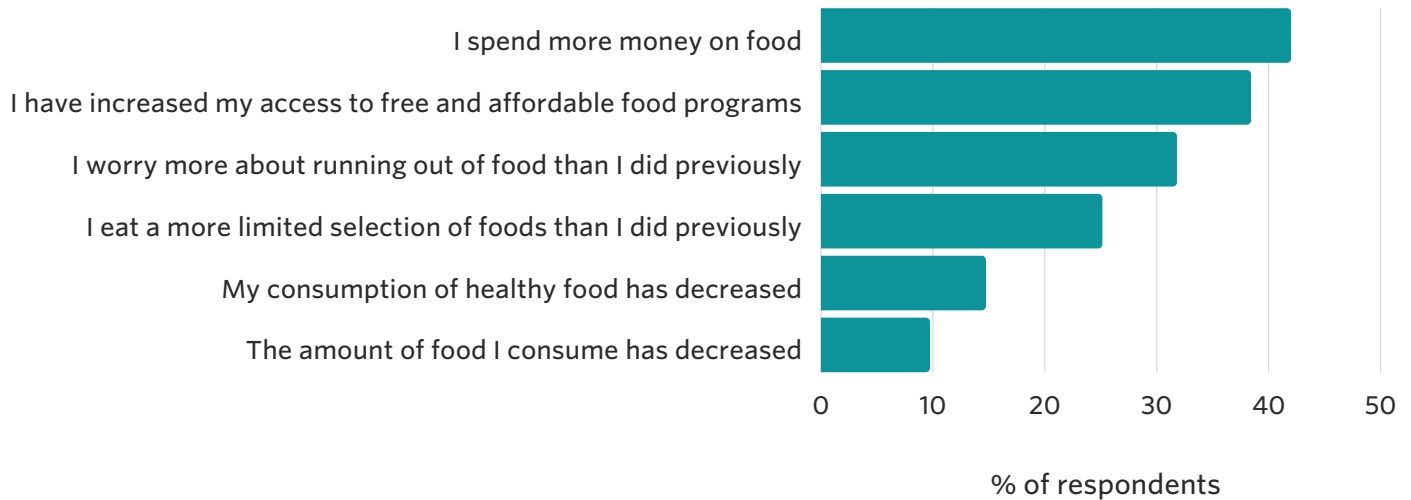
1. Unemployment, Housing, and Food Insecurity

Early in the pandemic, unemployment rates were reported at 85% in Banff and 50-60% in Canmore. This exacerbated food insecurity for those in already precarious positions as well as those who had no previous experience with hunger. When some businesses closed their staff cafeterias and accommodations, employees were left without work, housing, and meals. Staff accommodations that remained open did not always have cooking facilities, which was particularly problematic during the time when restaurants were closed. We also heard that those renting in high-end housing developments (particularly young families who were unable to find appropriate housing elsewhere), meant they faced the choice of paying for food or rent. While some were able to go back to work after a few months, many were laid off permanently and forced to either leave the Bow Valley and/or live with food insecurity. School and daycare closures exacerbated the situation as we heard that these closures increased food insecurity for families reliant on school and daycare meals to feed their children.



To provide an updated snapshot of the impact of COVID-19 on food issues in the Bow Valley, the BVFA conducted a survey in partnership with Dr. Lauren Kepkiewicz from the University of Calgary. This survey took place in the Spring and Summer of 2020 and received 259 responses from local residents based in Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, and the MD of Bighorn.

How has COVID-19 changed your relationship with food?



2. Disconnected and Distanced Supply Chains

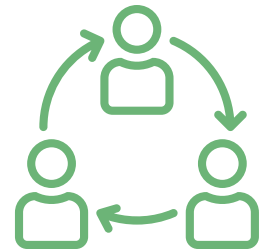
When the pandemic hit, restaurants shut down with fridges and freezers full of food while grocery stores had empty shelves. This situation highlights how restaurant and grocery store supply chains are separate with few or no intersecting points. It also underlines the Bow Valley's dependence on long and distant supply chains that are often unreliable during an emergency event. The situation was particularly chaotic as restaurants and food service companies tried to figure out what to do with the large amounts of food left in their kitchens due to COVID-related shutdowns. In Banff, it fell on the volunteer group Banff Food Rescue to figure out how to get this food into the hands of community members in an extremely tight timescale.



3. Coordination, Communication, and Collaboration

Until the BVFA intervened, municipalities worked independently of one another with no cohesive regional emergency food response plan. This led to confusion, incorrect information, and logistical challenges for groups trying to serve their specific communities. The reliance on digitally shared information in English increased information barriers for beginner English language learners and those without access to the internet (including a disproportionate number of community members who are homeless and/or seniors). It was particularly difficult to connect people with food supports when community members did not have access to a computer or telephone, as we heard was a challenge for some Îyârhe Nakoda community members.

We also saw a lack of emergency preparedness across the business sector, including some cases where employers failed to advise employees of available emergency supports and took no responsibility for staff well-being. Although the BVFA attempted to fill these coordination and communication gaps, we lacked resources and staff. We also lacked resources to collect the Bow Valley-wide data necessary to understand the radically changing context, which made it difficult to ensure programming adequately responded to gaps and reached those in need.



4. Volunteer-Run Programs

Many volunteer-run food programs closed or limited their services, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic when the need was extremely high (some remain closed at the time of writing and some have since closed due to lack of funding and volunteer resources). Volunteer-run groups who remained open often took on additional and sometimes unsustainable amounts of work. There was no coordinated regional plan for managing volunteers or central space available to act as a coordination centre between groups who remained open and no plans to replace closed food programs such as the Banff Food Bank.

Additionally, food-based organizations who were the most well-resourced tended to be led by a majority of white middle-class community members (including the BVFA) while groups led by racialized individuals tended to be less resourced, less recognized, and less celebrated. While we appreciate the work of all involved, our experience is that those with lived experience of food insecurity and other forms of marginalization are best positioned to deliver meaningful, dignified, and successful food programs as well as to direct broader decision-making processes such as emergency responses.



5. Funding

Many of the grassroots groups providing frontline emergency food supports were not registered charities, so they were not eligible to apply for COVID-19 response grants. Because the BVFA was in this situation, the Town of Banff acted as a fiscal host for multiple funds. This led to an additional level of administrative work for Town of Banff staff, including developing memorandums of understanding (MOUs), completing reporting, and ensuring fiscal transparency. The Town of Banff held the majority of the onus of applying for and hosting BVFA funding that was integral to emergency services that benefited municipalities across the Bow Valley. In addition, grant applications that prescribed solutions often did not meet community needs (particularly cultural communities). Applications often involved applying via electronic portals that were hard to navigate and with reporting requirements that were time consuming and difficult to fulfill. While the BVFA was able to provide some grant writing support and advocate for resources to be allocated to grassroots groups, we were limited in our capacity to do so due to a lack of funded staff time.



6. Limited Access to Local Food and Community Food Production

While global supply chain disruptions left grocery shelves empty, local food producers and processors lacked physical and virtual spaces to market their produce and prepared foods to Bow Valley community members. This was especially difficult in Canmore where the outdoor market was treated as a special event, meaning it opened late and closed early in the season. This closure negatively impacted local farmers, ranchers, and food processors who rely on the market to sell produce as well as Bow Valley residents who rely on the market as a primary venue to purchase local food. We heard that residents did not know where to buy local food and that those who wanted to grow their own food, often lacked space to do so. In many condominiums and apartment buildings, residents were not allowed to grow on balconies or in communal spaces. We were also approached by laid-off kitchen staff trying to set up their own meal delivery services but the lack of access to commercial kitchen space made this almost impossible. Overall, the absence of a regional plan to support local food producers, processors, and gardeners, left local food provisioners to fend for themselves and left community members wondering where they could buy and grow local produce.



7. Precarious Status

A range of community members' immigration and citizenship status negatively impacted their ability to access food supports. For example, some temporary foreign workers feared that their applications for permanent residency (PR) might be affected if they accessed food supports. Undocumented residents whose work visas had expired or who had been visiting family when borders closed, feared deportation if they used food support programs. While the BVFA did our best to communicate that there should be no risk of deportation or impact on PR applications as a result of using food supports, we saw firsthand the real fear and risks these communities experience as a result of broader political systems, rules, and regulations which place certain bodies in precarious positions.



Food Supports and Emergency Resources

In response to many of the challenges that emerged and/or were exacerbated during COVID-19, food organizations, funders, businesses, and municipalities pivoted, adapted, and innovated. We know that demand for Bow Valley food programs increased drastically during COVID-19, serving hundreds of residents each week. However consistent, accurate, and reliable data that adequately reflects the severity and type of needs and how they changed throughout the pandemic is lacking. Despite these challenges, we saw many new collaborations emerge that demonstrated how we might work across different sectors in ways that had previously seemed unlikely.



Community Food Supports

At the onset of the pandemic both volunteer-run organizations and local businesses stepped up to provide free, low-cost, and local food programs in response to drastically increased community demand. New programs emerged including free home delivery meals, grocery gift cards, and food hampers. Established programs like the food market run by Stoney Health Services in Mini Thni became an emergency food distribution centre for isolated families, schools, and homecare clients. New programs were created by local restaurants and catering companies who stepped up to serve free and low-cost pre-prepared meals to seniors, people who were isolating due to COVID-19, and those referred by social agencies - these services were expanded to all community members when funding was available.

Groups such as the Filipino Organization in the Rocky Mountains, the Canmore Filipino Canadian Society, and EthioCare as well as individuals from Tibetan, Moroccan and Japanese communities, did vital work providing culturally appropriate food supports throughout the community. They adapted, innovated, and created new programs. These programs were integral to supporting well-being for all as these groups were often able to reach those who faced multiple barriers to accessing food supports, and with whom more formalized organizations struggled to connect.



Knowing the service to receive fresh food once a month is a great relief, especially for a single mother myself. “No question asked” policy is also great as everyone has different financial circumstances and effect from the pandemic.

Bow Valley Good Food Box recipient



Local Food Producers and Suppliers

With the closure of most restaurants and hotels across the Bow Valley, local food producers and suppliers had to pivot rapidly to find new markets and create home delivery services while local community gardens adapted their practices to remain open for the growing season. Despite the absence of a regional plan to connect local producers and consumers, demand for local food soared as global food supply chains wavered. Suppliers with pre-established connections to local food producers had a much easier time meeting this demand as they did not have the same supply issues as large grocery stores who relied on disrupted global supply chains. Food boxes in the Bow Valley saw a huge upswing in home delivery orders and were able to meet the demand for local organic food due to their direct relationships with local and regional farmers.



Municipal Food Supports

Although there was no Bow Valley-wide coordinated plan, community development staff from the Town of Banff and the MD of Bighorn had vital experience working closely with the BVFA (as well as other community-based groups) on food-related issues prior to the pandemic and were deployed from day one to support emergency food responses. In April 2020, Canmore Family and Community Support Services added a Town of Canmore Emergency Social Services role to coordinate food supports, which was filled by a staff member who had been following the work of the BVFA. Municipal staff members who had a high level of involvement in the BVFA and had built relationships with food-related groups prior to the pandemic were well-positioned to connect with relevant groups and were integral in coordinating and mobilizing community groups throughout the pandemic. Additional support provided by municipalities included grocery gift cards, access to online information regarding food services, and funding for established food groups.



It's all about one-on-one relationships. The BVFA coordinator established trust because she is a person with a face and name, and she made the effort to go out of her way to connect with people on a personal level which made all the difference.

Natasha Lay, Bow Valley Immigration Partnership



Employer Food Supports

Food supports ranged from free meals for employees in staff accommodation to some staff restaurants remaining open to all staff regardless of their work status. Some employers redeployed staff to start food programs such as free food hampers and prepared meals, which were then expanded to the rest of the community. Our observations suggest that access to employer food supports were often correlated with factors such as: employers who kept in regular contact with laid-off staff regardless of their housing arrangements; employers with staff living in centralized staff housing; employee willingness to volunteer their time to run community-based food programs based out of restaurant kitchens; and employer desire for kitchens to remain open.



Local and National Funders

Access to funding was integral to the sustainability of all the emergency food support services. While there were challenges as noted above, local foundations and service groups clustered together to pool financial resources as well as innovating to speed up funding processes to better respond to community needs. Funding from local foundations also offered a means to sustain the longevity and quality of food supports started and run by the hospitality industry. In addition, the BVFA's membership in the Community Food Centres Canada Good Food Organization program provided pathways to funding not available to other Bow Valley groups. The BVFA itself distributed direct and unrestricted small grants to community-based groups who were on the frontlines of emergency food work but unable to access much of the available funding as they did not qualify as or have connections with a recognized fiscal host.

BVFA COVID-19 FUNDING SUMMARY

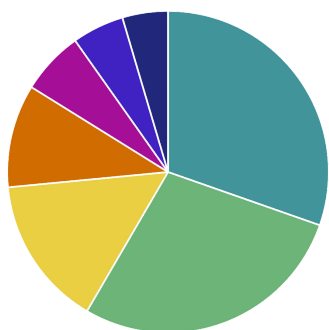
Between January 2020 and June 2021, the BVFA received the following funding to provide food services across the Bow Valley:

FUNDER	GRANTS
Banff Canmore Community Foundation	\$13,162
United Way	\$132,355
Bow Valley Christmas Spirit Campaign	\$10,000
Community Food Centres Canada	\$65,000

The BVFA would like to thank our funders for helping us provide support to programs across the Bow Valley.

We are also grateful to the Calgary Foundation, Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation, and the Rotary Club of Canmore for providing us with additional funding since June 2021 to allow us to continue to progress towards our mission.

The BVFA distributed the funds to a range of different programs across the Bow Valley:



Program Delivery Expense Breakdown

- Honorariums & Program Services - 31%
- Small Grants - 28%
- Prepared Meals - 15%
- Food & Food Hampers - 10%
- Grocery Gift Cards - 6%
- Local Food Producers - 5%
- Other Program Delivery - 5%

We partnered with and provided grants to:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| A Fork in the Road | Filipino Organization in the Rocky Mountains | Rogers Farm |
| Alpine Edible Schoolyards | Improvement District 9 | Santas Anonymous |
| Aroha Pies | Into the Wild | Settlement Services in the Bow Valley |
| Banff Child Care Centre | Iyahrhe Nakoda Food Bank Society | Shirley's Greenhouse |
| Bow Valley Good Food Box | Moroccan, Tibetan and Japanese groups | Squirrel Condos |
| Bow Valley Recipe Exchange | Mountain Fire Foods | St. George-in-the-Pines |
| Bow Valley Root Cellar | Municipal District of Bighorn | The Grizzly House |
| Bowstrings Banff | Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy | The Life of Food |
| Canmore Filipino Canadian Society | Out of School Club | Ti'nu Affordable Housing |
| Communita Cafe | Quatro Asian Bistro | Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies |
| EthioCare | Quikieh Asian Grocery | YOWZA! Creative & Catering |
| Family Resource Network | | |

We would like to offer our gratitude to all of these groups for the work they have done within our communities. We would also like to thank the Town of Banff and the MD of Bighorn for acting as a fiscal host for the BVFA in order to distribute these grants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no one solution that will solve hunger and inequitable global, national, and regional food systems. Rather progress will require multi-pronged solutions that occur across various jurisdictions and scales. The following recommendations are based on our observations, experiences and learning within the context of COVID-19, with many that apply to building vibrant local food systems in any circumstance. We ask that anyone interested in implementing these recommendations, use the BVFA Food Charter as a framework to meaningfully enact them. Our key recommendations are:

1. Develop an Emergency Food Response Plan

Develop an emergency food response plan that is municipally-led and regionally collaborative to work on essential food needs across the Bow Valley. This must include dedicating time and resources to develop a plan for: a) addressing communications challenges such as digital inequity; b) creating an emergency volunteer response team (i.e. that is ready to recruit and organize volunteers during an emergency) and c) gathering data to understand needs, gaps, and opportunities, with the expectation that the context may change quickly and continuously. Ensure planning includes multi-sectoral representation, including service industry employees, equity-seeking groups, and community-based organizations. Develop accountability mechanisms with marginalized community members to ensure that their needs are met, including by large employers, municipalities, and community-based groups. Use a social justice and equity framework to develop and put the plan into practice.



2. Create an emergency food fund

Create an emergency food fund to support sustainable and equitable food systems in preparation for and during emergency situations. This must include funding for: a) direct and unrestricted funding for grassroots groups who are prevented from accessing more formalized grants and b) honorariums and contractor fees to ensure diverse representation in developing the emergency food response plan (outlined above), rolling out this plan, and ensuring it is accountable to marginalized community members.



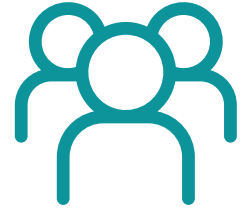
3. Build Better Relationships Between Municipalities and Community Groups

Because municipalities lead emergency responses, they need to better understand and build relationships with community-based food groups so that when an emergency occurs, these groups can work together to ensure no one in our communities go hungry. Ensure that municipal and non-profit staff working directly with community groups and members during an emergency are well resourced and that their positions are not cut, underpaid, and overworked. Improve communications, transparency, and respect between municipalities and community-based groups based with the understanding that both have integral roles to play during emergencies and more generally.



4. Build Bow Valley Food Hubs

Build Bow Valley food hubs that provide spaces to: a) connect food-related groups and individuals, including non-profits, cultural groups, food provisioners, food start-ups, small and medium-scale businesses, community volunteers, and community organizers; b) provide community kitchen space and educational workshops; c) connect with relevant groups provincially, nationally and internationally; d) conduct critical research, including who is excluded from current food systems/food supports and why this is the case; e) advocate for fair wages, equitable working and living conditions, and food sovereignty. Build hubs led and designed with and by equity-seeking groups using a social justice and food sovereignty framework.



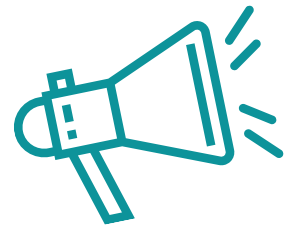
5. Support Small and Medium-Scale Local Food Producers, Businesses, and Community Growing Spaces

Support small and medium-scale local food producers, businesses, and community growing spaces by: a) developing regional food supply chains; b) creating local food retail and marketing hubs (virtual and in person), including reclassifying outdoor markets with produce vendors as essential municipal services (not as events); c) creating a regional food plan that connects producers with consumers; d) advocating for progressive food policies; and e) working with residents to ensure that condominium boards, property management companies, and developers provide adequate growing spaces.



6. Support and Amplify the Work of Equity-Seeking Groups in the Bow Valley

Support and amplify the work of equity-seeking groups in the Bow Valley by: a) creating space for existing and future leaders from these groups to contribute to key decision-making processes. This will likely begin with the understanding that current community consultation processes do not adequately reach out to marginalized community members (i.e. particularly those that require virtual applications to participate and/or that hold consultations during working hours without compensation); b) building strong and trusting relationships between diverse groups, organizations, and agencies with the understanding this is not just the work of specialist agencies; c) advocating for programs and funding that meet the needs of marginalized community members; and d) funding grassroots programs and events led by these groups.



7. Support Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Support Indigenous food sovereignty by: a) supporting and funding the work of Iyârhe Nakoda community members leading Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives; b) strengthening relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups and individuals; c) compensating Indigenous community members for their time and expertise in developing regional food hubs and emergency plans; d) creating actionable ways for non-Indigenous residents to take responsibility for the ways that colonialism has impacted Indigenous food systems in the Bow Valley; and e) collaborating with and funding Indigenous designed and led programs that work to address inequities caused by colonialism.



8. Build Equitable Volunteer and Non-Profit Networks

Build equitable volunteer and non-profit networks that address the ways that existing volunteer and non-profit cultures reproduce inequities including (but not limited to) race, class, and gender. Amplify and support the work of volunteer groups who may not be seen or considered by the broader community. Meaningfully involve volunteer groups in the planning and development of an emergency response plan, and in particular an emergency volunteer response plan.



9. Simplify Funding Systems

Simplify funding systems by offering direct funding to grassroots groups. Ensure community-based leaders and equity-seeking individuals are in decision-making roles on funding committees and involved in the design of application systems. Provide direct unrestricted funds to grassroots organizations whose experience on the ground is used to best serve communities' needs (i.e. rather than tying financial aid to particular projects).



Concluding Thoughts

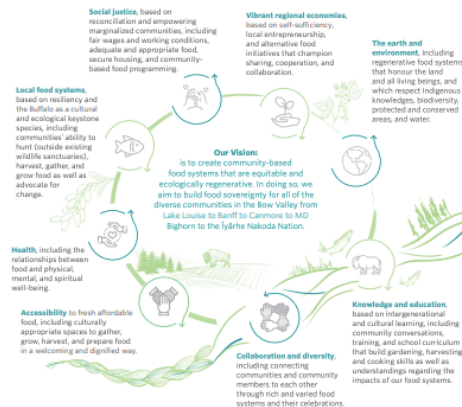
While emergency food programs have been imperative for Bow Valley communities' well-being throughout COVID-19, we know that in the long-term they do not and cannot address food systems' inequities, including root causes of food insecurity, precarious living and working conditions, disconnected supply chains, and food systems' relationships structured by racism, colonialism, and other systems of oppression. It remains very clear that if our aim is to create equitable food systems, we must enact solutions that engage with all aspects of our food systems such as food production and provisioning, transportation, processing, access, and waste.

In this context, we have learned that building relationships, including having an established and ongoing framework for coordination across the Bow Valley, is integral both in responding to situations like COVID-19 as well as creating vibrant food systems more generally. However, we have seen that relationship building is often sidelined and expected to occur off the sides of our desks. Trusting relationships need to be in place before unforeseen events like a global pandemic occur. Building relationships requires time, energy, capacity, and intention, and can be difficult when people don't have enough to eat and are scrambling to make ends meet.

Moving forward, we believe that the Bow Valley Food Charter provides a space for relationship building as well as addressing food systems inequities. We encourage all municipalities, institutions, and organizations to adopt the Charter to use for decision-making and future planning. This work will continue to be challenging as it requires collaboration and cooperation across all sectors as well as changes to institutionalized systems. However, when we combine what we already know with lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, we can forge the way to building socially and ecologically just food systems for everyone in the Bow Valley.

BOW VALLEY FOOD ALLIANCE FOOD CHARTER

As signatories to the Bow Valley Food Charter,
we value:



With this work we aim to honour
and support the spirit of The Buffalo:
A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Restoration.

We, _____,
join others in the Bow Valley community in adopting this Food Charter.
Signature: _____ Organization: _____
Date: _____ Place: _____





Further Reading

- [Banff Canmore Community Foundation. \(2018\). Vital Signs Report. Banff Canmore Community Foundation.](#)
- [Bow Valley Food Alliance \(2019\). Bow Valley Food Charter. Bow Valley Food Alliance.](#)
- [Gerrits, A., Harrison, J., Pryor, R. \(2019\). 2018 Banff Community Social Assessment. Town of Banff.](#)
- [Kepkiewicz, L. \(2019\). Imagining Food in Banff. Bow Valley Food Alliance](#)
- [Kepkiewicz, L. \(2021\). Imagining Food in the MD of Bighorn. Bow Valley Food Alliance](#)
- [Kepkiewicz, L. \(2021\). Imagining Food in Canmore. Bow Valley Food Alliance](#)

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