

IMAGINING FOOD

IN BANFF



RESEARCH
REPORT 2018/19



BVFA
Bow Valley Food Alliance

With Thanks

Thank you to all of the individuals who agreed to participate in this research project:

Robert Ash - Fairmont Springs
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The Bow Valley Food Alliance would like to thank Dr. Lauren Kepkiewicz for her dedication and commitment to this research. Without her guidance and expertise this project would not have been possible.

We recognize that all of our food systems in the Bow Valley are based on Indigenous lands and in Indigenous food systems. We respectfully acknowledge and honour the many Indigenous nations who use these lands, including the ȩyāǎhé Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, Ktunaxa, Secwepemc, and Blackfoot nations.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

What is the aim of this research and how was it conducted?

This research project was designed in partnership with the Bow Valley Food Alliance (BVFA) to identify key food issues and strengths in the community of Banff. As a pilot project, this study conducted interviews with twenty-four Bow Valley residents who are working to address food issues, create local food cultures, and promote resilient food systems in Banff. Those involved in the study range from health professionals to volunteers to business owners to hospitality staff to educators to local food producers. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using Dedoose software. Initial analysis was presented to the BVFA during an annual meeting in August 2018. Before the final report was sent out, interviewees had the opportunity to review the research and clarify or change quotations used from their interviews. This approach is based on a commitment to building research that represents Bow Valley community members' thoughts and perspectives on food system issues, strengths, and changes.

What prompted this research study?

Since the BVFA was established in 2016, the group has discussed a range of food issues in the Bow Valley. While having these discussions, the group discovered that little research existed that records what these issues are and how they affect communities in the Bow Valley. Additionally, many of those engaged in community-based food programming expressed concerns that food insecurity in the Bow Valley has yet to be taken seriously by policy-makers as well as the broader community. In response to requests from the BVFA, this project uses community-based research to help fill these gaps, guide the work of the BVFA, and inform Banff community members and policy makers about key food systems strengths and issues.

Who funded and conducted this study?

This study was funded by a small grant from the Banff Canmore Community Foundation. It was conducted in partnership with the BVFA by Dr. Lauren Kepkiewicz who is a community-based researcher specializing in food movements, food sovereignty, and food systems in Canada. The BVFA was consulted throughout the research, guiding the research methods, questions, objectives, and analysis.



SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

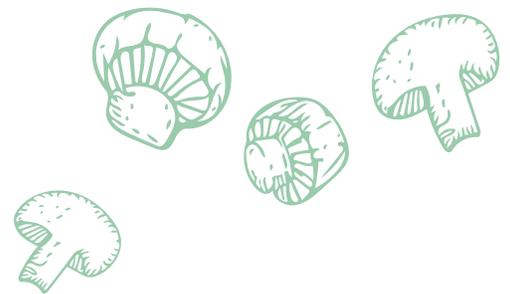
Based in conversations with people working and volunteering in food-related positions, this report outlines key strengths, issues, and recommendations related to food in Banff.



STRENGTHS

During the interviews, people explained how Bow Valley community members are working to address food issues in Banff. While many food-related strengths and supports were noted by interviewees, the below are those that came up most commonly during our conversations:

1. **Community lunches and dinners**
2. **The Bow Valley Food Alliance**
3. **Banff Food Rescue**
4. **Community growing spaces**
5. **Banff Farmers Market**
6. **Town of Banff**
7. **The hospitality industry**
8. **Partnerships**
9. **Food boxes**
10. **Grocery stores**
11. **Banff Food Bank**





The most talked about food related support were the community meals, including community lunches and dinners at the seniors' center, chili nights at Banff Park Church, Food and Friends in Canmore, and meals put on by cultural communities and organizations such as the Filipino-Canadian Organization in the Rocky Mountains (FORM). These meals provide a key space where Banff community members can access free/affordable healthy food as well as a space to share and gather around food. Several interviewees underlined the importance of cultural meals, explaining that these provide a welcoming place for diverse groups to meet.

In addition to community meals, interviewees spoke about how the Bow Valley Food Alliance (BVFA) has brought together different individuals and organizations who do food work in the valley. In doing so, the BVFA has forwarded conversations about food, built partnerships between different groups and municipalities, and supported the work of community-based food programming across the Valley.

One of the key community food programs mentioned throughout the interviews was the Banff Food Rescue, which was created and is run by Alanna Pettigrew. Interviewees explained that Banff Food Rescue meets different community members' needs due to its flexible hours and unlimited number of visits. In addition to providing access to healthy food, Banff Food Rescue

“

The [community] lunches give people a chance to celebrate their culture and introduce their culture and share their celebrations. They allow the rest of the community to celebrate with them...Most of the connections I've made here in Banff have been through the community lunches.

”

- Said

provides positive environmental impacts by limiting the amount of food waste put into the garbage stream.

Although people often spoke about the need for more growing spaces, they also highlighted the spaces that are currently available for gardening in Banff, including two Banff Community Greenhouses, a backyard garden share program, and the Banff Springs Greenhouse. They explained that these growing spaces help people learn about their food systems, access fresh healthy produce, create community, and promote environmental sustainability.

The Banff Farmers Market was another common strength mentioned by interviewees. In particular, interviewees underlined the market as one of the best spaces for community members to access fresh, healthy and sustainable produce. They spoke about the important ways that the market builds community, supports the development of local food businesses, and showcases diverse cultural foods.

Interviewees also talked about how the Town of Banff has supported many of the programs and initiatives mentioned in this section, including support for Banff Greenhouses, Banff Food Rescue, the Banff Farmers Market, and the BVFA. Multiple interviewees praised the attention that Banff Town Council has given to food issues with the hope that this focus will continue to develop and increase.

In addition to the Town of Banff, interviewees explained that the hospitality industry supports local food systems by purchasing from local producers, instituting waste recovery programs, and donating food and volunteer time to community-based food programs.

“ Food rescue is an example of how people can start something and get the community to rally around it. The way it’s run also makes a lot of sense for Banff because Banff is fast paced, it’s 24-7, its people coming and going for both long and short amounts of time. I think the food rescue has really figured out the secret of making food available to people - they have their doors open at night and you can come back as much as you want. ”

- Corrie

Another food system strength that came up within the interviews was the development of food-related partnerships across different organizations, businesses, and communities in the Bow Valley. Some of these partnerships include collaborations between different cultural groups, restaurants and local food suppliers, the non-profit sector and the Town of Banff, and burgeoning relationships between groups such as the BVFA and ȩyāhē Nakoda communities in Morley.

Interviewees also talked about how various food boxes, the Banff Food Bank, and the two grocery stores in town provide people with access to food. For example, interviewees noted that food boxes such as Organic Box (previously Farmbox) and Spud provide access to environmentally sustainable and ethical produce while the Good Food Box provides access to fresh produce at a reduced price. People spoke about the importance of having two grocery stores in town and explained their appreciation at being able to request different food items if they weren’t on the shelves. Interviewees also talked about the Banff Food Bank as providing access to food for food insecure individuals.

Interviewees mentioned several additional programs and businesses that address food issues in Banff including: BanffLife, Healthy Moms Healthy Babies, Alpine Edibles, the Christmas Hamper Campaigns, Valbellas, the Bare Minimum Project, the Bow Valley Naturalists, and the Straws Suck Campaign.





ISSUES

While Banff clearly has many food related programs and actors that strengthen food systems, interviewees also talked about the difficulties that can arise in a mountain town geared towards tourists. The nine issues that came up most regularly in the interviews include food challenges related to:

1. **Affordability**
2. **Spaces to grow, prepare, and gather**
3. **Availability of healthy, organic, and culturally appropriate foods**
4. **Access to and support for food programs**
5. **Feeling that food isn't meant for locals and local concerns are dismissed**
6. **Policies that promote sustainable, local, and healthy food systems**
7. **Community decision-making and ability to shape food systems**
8. **Education and information about food and food programming**
9. **Food waste**





“ You see the pressure of choosing between paying for rent and buying groceries as the cost of accommodation is not compatible with wages. ” - Kevin

The issue that interviewees most often spoke about was the high cost of food in Banff. Interviewees underlined how food costs are exacerbated by housing costs as well as low wages. When discussing the high cost of living, interviewees talked about the prevalent and discriminatory attitude in Banff that if you can't afford food and housing then you should move elsewhere.

Another common theme that arose in the interviews was a lack of space for growing, storing, and preparing foods. Interviewees noted a lack of public spaces to gather around food, pointing to the vital (but insufficient) role that community meals (i.e. at the seniors' center) play in providing space to build community. Of course, this lack of space runs parallel to issues of affordability, with high rents meaning that space is at a premium. Interviewees pointed out that this lack of space affects individuals' ability to grow, store, and cook their own foods as well as small businesses' ability to develop food services for the local community.

Additionally, interviewees highlighted a lack of availability of fresh, healthy, local, and culturally appropriate foods in Banff. Interviewees talked about how these were lacking not only for individual households but also for restaurants and community-based food programs. Some interviewees also talked about a lack of ecologically sustainable and organic produce in town, even amidst the services provided by the Banff Farmers Market, Organic Box, and Spud. Interviewees talked about this lack of availability as being the result of several factors including the location of Banff, lack of appropriate transportation, and insufficient local food production in the Bow Valley.

Next, interviewees underlined the difficulties involved in accessing food programs such as the Good Food Box, the Food Bank, and Food Rescue due to factors such as lack of transportation, stigma, types of foods available, and work schedules. In addition to the space constraints mentioned above, interviewees talked about how access to food programming is limited (or sometimes altogether absent) due to factors such as volunteer fatigue and funding.



“ I’d say people don’t feel like they have decision-making power over the food that’s available in Banff because it caters to tourists, four million of them. ”

- Dawn

Another challenge interviewees talked about was the feeling that food systems in Banff are primarily geared towards tourists rather than locals. Interviewees talked about how perceptions of Banff as a beautiful tourist town often meant that difficult issues such as food insecurity were ‘brushed under the rug.’ Related to this feeling that difficult food issues are often pushed to the side, interviewees talked about the need for more conversations and understanding about food issues within the community.

Building on the last point that Banff lacks robust public conversations about food issues, interviewees talked about how food is often not a central focus of municipal councils (even though interviewees were grateful that council paid attention to food issues when they arose).

As a result, some interviewees talked about how Banff lacks policies that support healthy, sustainable, and affordable food systems. Interviewees also talked about the lack of procurement policies that promote sustainable, healthy, local foods in institutions such as hospitals, schools, and the Town of Banff itself. In terms of existing policies, several interviewees spoke about how federal and municipal policies restrict people’s ability to grow food in the Bow Valley.

Next, interviewees underlined the feeling that community members lack control over food systems locally. When asked whether they thought community members were able to meaningfully contribute to decision-making relating to food in Banff, the majority of interviewees answered with a simple ‘no.’

Several interviewees talked about a lack of education in schools, at a family level, and more generally in regards to basic food skills such as growing, buying, and preparing food. Interviewees also talked about a lack of general knowledge around healthy diets and nutrition as well as food security, food insecurity, and how food systems work. A few interviewees spoke about a lack of information about food programs including how and where to access them. Among interviewees themselves, there was often confusion about how, when, and where people could access basic food services like the food bank in Banff.

Lastly, interviewees brought up issues of food waste on both commercial and household levels. For example, interviewees talked about food waste in hotels as well as the difficulties businesses face in finding adequate space to run organics programs. Several interviewees also talked about the high levels of edible food that ends up in the garbage.



“ The greenhouse plays many roles. Education, advocacy, growing food to eat...It also helps people develop a connection to our food system, helps them understand where our food comes from, how it’s grown, and helps people realize how tough it can be to grow things - how much space it takes up. People also come to the greenhouse to escape and destress...We estimate upwards of 50 pounds of produce can be grown from just one plot. If every single plot followed the same philosophy, we’d be looking at over a ton of food being produced for the Bow Valley just with these two greenhouses. ”

Andrew

RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to discussing key food issues and strengths, interviewees spoke about how they would change food systems in Banff. When asked what they would change, interviewees were encouraged to give voice to 'blue sky' aspirations alongside more practical day-to-day suggestions. These responses are organized below as a set of ten recommendations:



1. Increase food education

- a. Provide more public classes about how to grow, cook, and store food
- b. Increase the number of students learning about food and food systems locally
- c. Increase awareness about where food comes from, how it is grown/harvested, and who grows/harvests it
- d. Cultivate understandings about the histories and current food systems, including their social, ecological, and economic impacts
- e. Increase commercial and public awareness about food waste and food waste reduction
- f. Create an easily accessible webpage and/or database with information about non-profit community-based food programs in Banff (i.e. including program description, hours, how and where to access, etc.)



2. Grow more food in the Valley

- a. Designate land and rooftops for growing food
- b. Develop a kitchen-to-garden compost system
- c. Support small- and medium-scale commercial urban organic agriculture
- d. Encourage food growing spaces in private housing and commercial spaces (i.e. on rooftops, balconies, backyards, etc.)
- e. Increase residents' ability to grow/harvest healthy, sustainable, equitable, and culturally diverse foods



3. Support community food programs

- a. Create (and fund) full- and part-time positions at important food programs
- b. Build a community food hub
- c. Cultivate the successes and networks developed by the BVFA
- d. Increase funding and other supports for community-based food programs created and led by locals, particularly those that foster social justice, cultural diversity, community building, and environmental sustainability



4. Foster new and current partnerships:

- a. Between cultural groups
- b. Between producers, consumers, and businesses
- c. Between the Town of Banff and non-profits
- d. Between community members
- e. Between Banff, other Valley municipalities, and ȩyãhé Nakoda communities



5. Increase the amount of affordable, healthy, locally-grown, and sustainable foods

- a. Reduce food costs through consumer subsidies
- b. Subsidize small-scale local food producers
- c. Reduce/subsidize living costs
- d. Ensure staff accommodations provide access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food (i.e. via appropriate kitchen facilities and/or healthy, culturally appropriate, affordable staff meals)
- e. Increase residents' ability to access and grow healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate and sustainably-grown foods
- f. Support and build alternative shopping economies (i.e. food co-operatives, zero waste stores, etc.)



6. Create positive food policies

- a. Change policies that hinder gardening and animal husbandry
- b. Create policies that support a resilient food economy locally and decrease food waste
- c. Develop a food charter to help guide policy making
- d. Increase community members' ability to influence food policies locally
- e. Develop food procurement policies focused on access to healthy, sustainable, equitable, and culturally-appropriate foods
- f. Ensure health and safety policies support community food events and meals



7. Support diverse food cultures

- a. Foster greater understanding about different relationships with food
- b. Volunteer with cultural food events
- c. Provide funding options specific to cultural food events, programs, and businesses
- d. Celebrate diverse food cultures
- e. Challenge racism and classism in food systems



8. Develop more food-related spaces

- a. Develop guidelines and recommendations for new housing and staff accommodations that include communal growing, cooking, and storage areas
- b. Build a community food hub with a community kitchen
- c. Increase the number of spaces to gather and cook both outside and inside for community members and local entrepreneurs
- d. Increase the number of community gardens and greenhouses



9. Support small food businesses

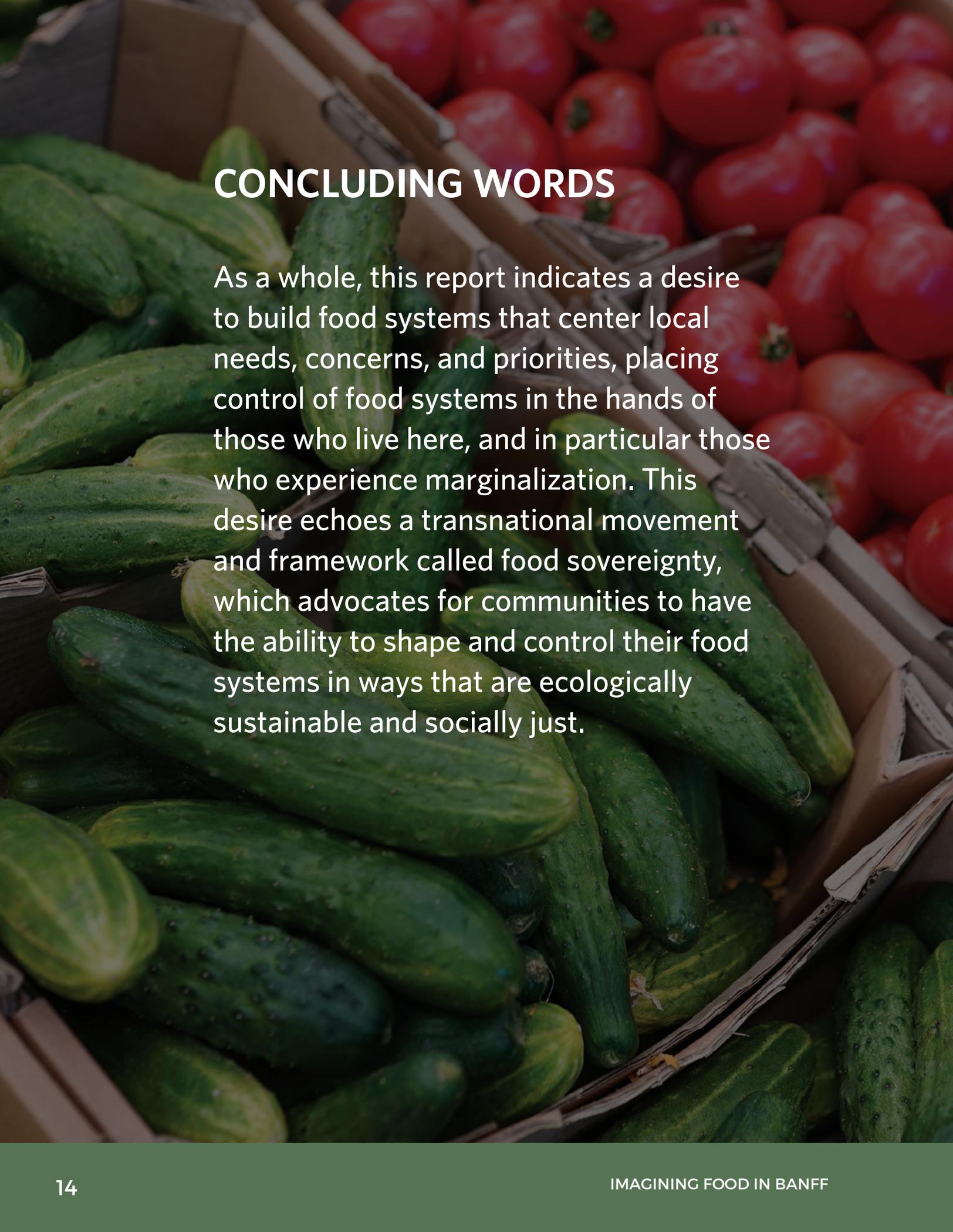
- a. Subsidize/provide land and other food growing spaces for local small-scale food producers
- b. Subsidize/provide workshops, training, and start-up costs for local entrepreneurs, particularly young people, newcomers, and marginalized communities
- c. Subsidize chef-driven restaurants geared to locals
- d. Increase the number and affordability of commercial kitchens
- e. Increase grants and other funding sources for local food entrepreneurs – particularly for young people, newcomers, and marginalized community members
- f. Support local business ventures with a focus on issues such as: food waste, local and sustainable food production, cultural foods, food system sustainability, education, and creating resilient and equitable local food systems
- g. Increase the number of food businesses owned and managed by marginalized groups living locally



10. Make food a priority in all community discussions

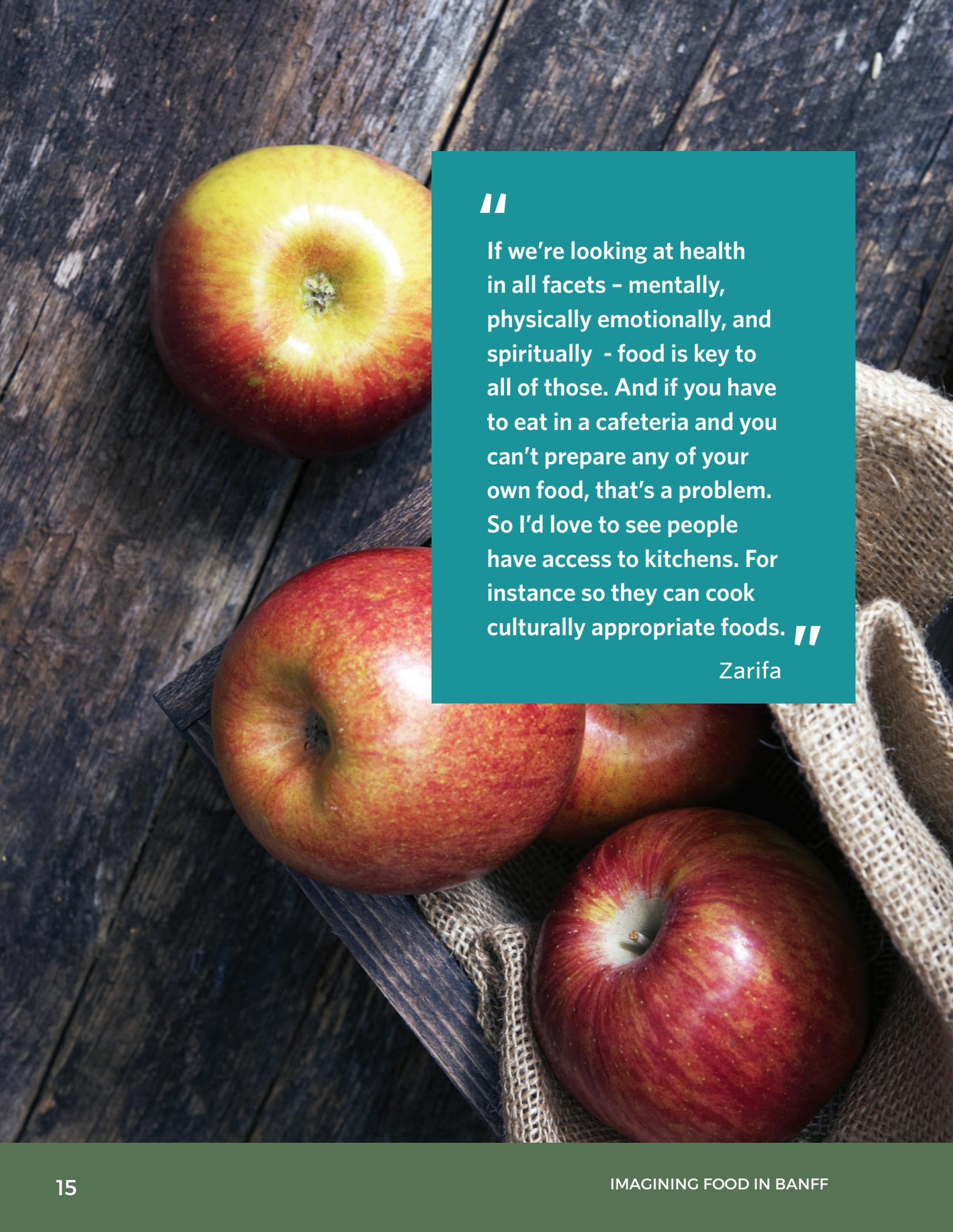
- a. Grow public conversations about access to food and food systems locally
- b. Include food in community conversations and consultations about issues such as housing, health, the environment, tourism, and community development
- c. Increase conversations relating food to social justice, ecological sustainability, and healthy living

Many of these recommendations reinforce and overlap one another. They include blue-sky ideas as well as more practical solutions. They are intentionally vague in relation to who might enact them, with the understanding that many different actors will need to come together to make change.



CONCLUDING WORDS

As a whole, this report indicates a desire to build food systems that center local needs, concerns, and priorities, placing control of food systems in the hands of those who live here, and in particular those who experience marginalization. This desire echoes a transnational movement and framework called food sovereignty, which advocates for communities to have the ability to shape and control their food systems in ways that are ecologically sustainable and socially just.



“

If we're looking at health in all facets - mentally, physically emotionally, and spiritually - food is key to all of those. And if you have to eat in a cafeteria and you can't prepare any of your own food, that's a problem. So I'd love to see people have access to kitchens. For instance so they can cook culturally appropriate foods. ”

Zarifa



for more information on the Bow Valley Food Alliance and to volunteer in one of our many projects please email:

Bowvalleyfoodalliance@gmail.com

or visit the Bow Valley Food Alliance Facebook Page:

[facebook.com/bowvalleyfoodalliance](https://www.facebook.com/bowvalleyfoodalliance)

