



SHARING LOCAL FOOD STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Food security is a hot topic these days.

More and more, islanders are talking and thinking about our food - asking questions about where it comes from, how nutritious it is, and how to prepare it. Making use of local food instead of processed items shipped from the mainland benefits our health and is building connections between school students, other community members, and food providers.

Just a generation ago, it was common for schools to serve boiled hot dogs in white buns for a "special" lunch. Today, schools are serving their students regular meals of locally-caught and preserved foods like salmon and halibut, or carrots and chanterelles. Local food banks are distributing meat and vegetables from Haida Gwaii, and adult day programs are serving seniors lunches made of local ingredients.

Many organizations and people have been working through a variety of programs to make the shift to local food possible. The Gwaii Trust recognizes that food security - making sure everyone in our community has access to healthy food - is an important issue. Working with representatives from local food banks,

adult day programs, the Local Food to School programs, and others involved in this issue, we have committed significant funds to this area for the past several years, including \$181,000 spent in 2016. For this year, 2017, we have set aside \$185,000 for Food Security initiatives.

Money from the Gwaii Trust has helped provide food for the north and south end food banks, school lunches, greenhouses and gardens, a soup kitchen, meals on wheels, and has helped hire pantry coordinators for both ends of the islands. The Local Foods Pantry program, for example, has been running for the past year and a half. This innovative project was developed by the Local Foods to School Program with funding from the Gwaii Trust and Northern Health. Pantry coordinators Sarah Stevenson and Jenn Dysart have been working with schools, young people, food harvesters, food teachers, elders, farmers and community organizations to support more eating, sharing and learning about local food. For example, at Sk'aadga Naay elementary, the south end pantry team worked with others to develop learning experiences for 40 students in kindergarten and grade 5, such as juicing and drying carrots; cleaning, sautéing and freezing chanterelles;

and baking pumpkin muffins. Yum!

This program has also helped organize several field trips, giving students opportunities to learn first-hand about food harvesting and growing. Students from GidGalang Kuuyas Naay Secondary had the chance to check out Island Joe's tomato greenhouses, travelled to Copper Bay to learn about salmon fishing and processing, and spent an afternoon near Kagan Bay picking chanterelles. At Gudangaay Tlaats'gaa Naay Secondary, students worked with Marina and David Jones and Old Massett to process and smoke chum, and helped dig out a garden of rhubarb plants.

That's not all. The Pantry Coordinators have helped with hot lunch programs at local schools, coordinated bulk purchases from farmers and wild food harvesters, processed and stored local food so it is available for public programs, helped seed gardens and greenhouses, and facilitated food processing workshops for members of the public.

These exciting programs are continuing to develop and work towards a sustainable food system on Haida Gwaii. For more information about Gwaii Trust grants and programs, please visit our website at gwaiitrust.com.