

Summerland Cultural Plan Task Force
Agricultural Community Conversation Summary
October 7, 2015

A small group of growers and producers met to discuss Agriculture's role in the cultural fabric of Summerland. They expressed their view of the current state of agriculture, what they would like to see and how to make it a reality.

Their belief was that Summerland was built on agriculture but the connection with the community is not what it was. "Agriculture is part of Summerland's identity. It is still there, we see it everyday, but there is a disconnect between what farmers do and what people think farmers do." This extends also to their connection to the Pacific Agricultural Research Center where the connection has also diminished. The decline of the Fall Fair was shown as an example of the disconnection between agriculture and the community due to not a lack of attendance but a lack of participation maybe. The wine industry is seen as having a successful relationship with the arts through agri-tourism. However not all growers see the benefits personally of this, mostly due to extra regulation and insurance.

Many ideas were given to increase the connectivity of agriculture to the community. These included:

- Feature agriculture prominently in all community events.
- Create a community celebration that recognizes all fruit varieties that were developed in Summerland by Pacific Agricultural Center (PARC)
- Develop a cultural map of all the fruit that is currently being farmed in Summerland
- Develop a Summerland Food Co-op, so local produce is always featured
- Develop a community kitchen, which can run canning workshops, etc.
- Feature an agriculture column in the local newspaper, written to be educational for a non-farming audience
- Erect signs on roads that run alongside orchards to indicate the type of fruit trees that are planted. (Signs could have QR codes directing people to more info.)
- Use Electronic highway signs to indicate what fruit is currently being picked.
- Set up field trips to local farms for Summerland schools, set up student work experience on local farms, increase classroom instruction relating to agriculture including the technology being used on farms.
- Develop Circle Farm tours: small farms, or through tour companies and B&B's
- Utilize the KVR: a tour could include stops at wineries, the Ornamental Gardens, PARC.
- Consider a partnership with PIB to offer tours on both sides of the canyon, either hiking or mountain biking

- Recognize farms as businesses. Set up a special membership category with the Chamber of Commerce – this increases a feeling of belonging in the business community.

There was also many ways suggested about how to achieve these goals including:

- Rezone for an Agricultural Industrial Park and downtown permanent Farmers Market
- Promote an Educational School in Summerland for agriculture/agribusiness which could include work co-ops with growers
- Municipality to hire an coordinator who would integrate agriculture in all events and help create new events; fruit festivals, Circle farm tours, partnership events with PARC
- Access funding for agri-innovation from SDCU, federal government grants and organizations such as OBWB.

The Task Force would like to thank the growers who attended this event for their valuable input.