

# 2013

## **Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market Association**

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## **2013 PLANNING SESSION**

The 2013/14 BVFMA Board of Directors met on March 27, 2013 for a Planning Session facilitated by Taylor Bachrach from Bachrach Communications. The Planning Session was intended to build on the Strategic Plan that was compiled in 2010. Key opportunities were defined during the Planning Session. The opportunities were prioritized by the participants and strategies for the first three were discussed in more detail: 1) finding a new indoor market location, 2) better defining Make, Bake, Grow, and 3) expanding the Market Manager's position.

## INTRODUCTION

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The Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market Association (BVFMA) was established in 1996. It operates an outdoor market at the Central Park Building parking lot on Saturdays from 8am to noon from May to the end of September. For the last few years it has also been operating indoor markets from October through to April, first at the Elks Hall and then at St. Joseph's school. The indoor markets have shorter hours and operate from 9:00am to noon.

The Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market Association has experienced steady and stable growth from its inception. In 2009 the BVFMA underwent a strategic planning process that was completed in 2010. The goal of the strategic planning process was to increase organizational capacity to accommodate growth (i.e., increased demand from consumers and increased interest from vendors), and to help the BVFMA become a stronger more visible community service organization. The BVFMA strives to contribute significantly to farm incomes and to the economy and culture of the Bulkley Valley.

The mission statement that was decided on by the BVFMA membership was:

"The Bulkley Valley Farmers Market Association provides an opportunity for people to buy and sell products that have been locally made, baked or grown; and enjoy a quality experience that facilitates community education and development."

The vision was a community in which:

- Locally produced goods are people's first choice;
- Local production is economically viable and meets local needs; and
- A vibrant, well-organized, year-round market is fully supported by the community.

In March of 2012, prior to the Annual General Meeting, it was proposed that the Board of Directors go through a facilitated planning process to help the Association develop its more current opportunities. This report is a summary of that Planning Session, held on March 27, 2013.



**Figure 1. The BVFMA Board of Directors and Market Manager (from left: Kala Hooker, Jonathon Knight, Ursula Yeker, Lyn Nugent, Dmitri Cody, Manfred Wittwer, Marlene Thimer, Lesley Jackson, Amanda Forstbauer-Bourrie, and Megan D'Arcy). Absent: Bob Chapman.**

## REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN

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In the original strategic planning process, goal areas were chosen based on discussion with the 2010 BVFMA membership. These goal areas were reviewed at the beginning of the Planning Session undertaken on March 27, 2013 by the current Board of Directors and Market Manager: Manfred Wittwer, Kala Hooker, Megan D'Arcy, Lesley Jackson, Lyn Nugent, Marlene Thimer, Amanda Forstbauer-Bourrie, Jonathon Knight, Ursula Yecker and Dmitri Cody.

### GOAL AREA 1: COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

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The focus of this goal was to build relationships with BV Farmers' Market stakeholders such as the Town of Smithers, the Smithers Chamber of Commerce, the Central Park Building tenants and the Main Street merchants. It was recognized that the growth of the BV Farmers' Market would be facilitated by having good communication and healthy working relationships with its partners.

A Community Liaison committee was thus established that has been very successful. Communication with the Town of Smithers and the Smithers Chamber of Commerce has been greatly improved through this committee. Other initiatives by this committee include the 2012 Business Open House, and outreach to the schools in the district with breakfast programs.

Portions of a Marketing Strategy, such as the posters, brochures, website and paid advertising have been accomplished, but a formal marketing plan that was approved by the membership has not been completed. The Marketing committee has had trouble following through due to lack of resources. A new Marketing committee has been struck in 2013 that plans to give better structure to ongoing marketing initiatives, and formalize a marketing strategy. A draft document will be prepared and presented to the Board of Directors later this spring.

Two Special Events Coordinators were selected in 2010. As interest grew in the different Special Events, a committee was eventually formed that is still in operation. The Special Events committee includes a volunteer that coordinates the music for each market. This year the Special Events committee is working on a more structured planning approach and is also reviewing each of the Special Event Days to see if they can be improved on. The market currently celebrates seniors, kids and Aboriginal Day. There was also a Garlic Day in 2011. One idea that came forward in this Planning Session was to encourage/cultivate volunteers to help with event planning and operation (this has been done successfully in previous years).

### GOAL AREA 2: INFRASTRUCTURE

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There were three main focal points for infrastructure in 2009/2010. The first was to secure a use agreement for the market's current location in Central Park. The final Strategic Plan was presented to the Town Council in 2010, with the message that the BVFMA was very interested in working with the Town of Smithers. Although there was some communication from the Town office that an agreement was being worked on, nothing has ever materialized. The BVFMA followed up but with no success. Since then there have been two delegations from the BV Farmers' Market to Town Council. At present it is understood that the Smithers Town Council has mixed feelings about the current location of the BV Farmers' Market. It was hoped that the Central Park planning process would be given high priority by the Town of Smithers. At this time, however, it does not seem like a plan for the Central Park will be started within the next year. The BVFMA is currently working

under the assumption that the Town of Smithers will give the Association notice if it is no longer acceptable for us to use our current space.

The other two infrastructure issues that required attention were insufficient electrical outlets and inadequate storage facilities. An external electrical panel was added to the train in 2010. This solved the lack of outlets/power problems so the generator was put into storage and eventually sold. One of the vendors (new to the market in 2010) required additional power, so subsequently had a 220 volt plug installed in the same panel at their cost.

Although the BVFMA did look into putting a small structure on the site for storage, ultimately the solution was found by using the bottom compartments of the train and some extra space in the bottom of the Central park building. There is currently a room for rent in the Central Park Building that the BVFMA could potentially also use for storage. This issue may have to be revisited as the community radio station is now located inside the train and wish to build a deck off the market side.

### **GOAL AREA 3: ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH**

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The Bulkley Valley Famers' Market Association became a registered society in June of 2011. Work is currently being done by the Constitution committee to update the bylaws.

Although the BVFMA did have some cash in the bank at time of the strategic planning process, it was clear that we were not increasing our cash flow to any appreciable extent. This limited the opportunity to increase the job description for the Market Manager, or put money toward paying for bookkeeping/administration. The Association thus voted to increase stall rental fees at the next Annual General Meeting. An additional increase was proposed and passed at the 2013 Annual General Meeting. Each increase was \$5.00 from a starting stall rental fee of \$10.00, for a total increase of 200%. This increase, along with the substantial growth of the market, has meant that the Association has increased both its standing bank balance and annual cash flow.

The market manager's workload has increased due to growth of the BVFMA vendor base and the increased number of indoor markets, but essentially the job description has not changed over the last 3-4 years.

The BVFMA does not work from an annual calendar at this point in time. There are some dates that are pre-determined by past decisions, like the first outdoor market always falling on the Mother's Day weekend in May. The Special Events committee was trying to keep the different Special Day's around the same time of year, but that did not work for 2012. The Special Events committee sets the dates for the summer early in the spring and then passes this information on to the Board of Directors and the Marketing committee.

The organizational structure that was proposed in the Strategic Plan has been mostly established and followed, with some changes to the types of committees over time. This was originally brought forward as a focal point for the Association to spread the workload so that the overall organizational health did not rely on a small group of individuals. The fine-tuning of the BVFMA organizational structure is an ongoing process – it was suggested during this Planning Session that the committees be carefully scrutinized for their efficiency to ensure they are a good use of time and other resources. The current Board of Directors is still operating as a working board, but would like to move the Association towards a governance board structure.

## **GOAL AREA 4: VENDOR BASE**

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The goal to update the vendor orientation package was achieved first by including a background/policy document with the market rules, and then by changing the market rules to include this information. Originally the orientation package was going to be more formal (e.g., have all materials in a report folder with the BVFMA logo). This has not been accomplished. Revised Market Rules, the membership form, and Food Guidelines for Temporary markets (if required) are currently given to each new member by either the Secretary/Treasurer or the Market Manager. These documents are also available from the website.

Many years ago the BVFMA hosted a new vendor workshop specifically targeted to produce vendors that was very successful. Subsequent to the 2009/10 planning process a general 'new vendor' workshop was held in conjunction with a series of workshops held by Northern Root Community Garden. Attendance was very low; however with thorough advertising and a more focused approach perhaps it would be worthwhile to revisit this idea.

## S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

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### STRENGTHS

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- Support from clientele, especially return customers
- Brings together WHOLE community
- SOCIAL! (commerce can be a bi-product)
- Quality of product. Big time!
- Destination market
- Face-to-face interactions between customers/producers
- Dedicated vendor base (and diverse! Variety!)
- Location! Visibility, access, shape of space, logistics (power, washrooms, storage)
- Well functioning board of directors – working board
- History, consistent growth
- Good market manager

### WEAKNESSES

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- Lack of parking
- Not enough money
- Sharp distinction in market from season to season means inconsistent customer experience (e.g., summer to winter)
- Other priorities compete for vendors, board's time as season progresses
- Distribution of workload
- Questions around efficiency of committee structure
- Segments of community missing from the market
- Space insecurity, especially for indoor market
- Some issues around product integrity (but it's the exception)
- Lack of farmers? On par with rest of BC but could have more

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## THREATS

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- Potential for loss of Central Park location (Town Council)
- Indoor market homelessness
- Northern Health & potential liability (capriciousness)
- Adequacy of insurance coverage
- Competition increasing in 'local' market? Good for vendors/farmers, but could affect market traffic

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## OPPORTUNITIES\*

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- Find kick-ass winter market location (14)
- Define Make, Bake and Grow and discuss formation of a market jury (12)
- Expand Market Manager Position (11)
- Re-configure market layout to accommodate more vendors (8)
- Grow number, diversity of farm vendors, products (8)
- Sponsorship from private businesses (0)
- Expanded grant funding (3)
- Partnering to educate customers (5)
- Market share research (7)
- Evolve board structure (7)
- Improving market access by promoting non-car transport (3)
- Review market rules (3)
- Incentivize vendor consistency at the indoor markets (i.e., reward commitment to slow months) (0)

\* The number of green stickers placed by participants is in brackets. Each participant was given 10 dots.

## INDOOR WINTER MARKET LOCATION

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St. Joseph's School has already advised the BVFMA that it will not be able to use their gymnasium due to the large degree of wear and tear caused by the market on the finish of the flooring. Unfortunately the rental fee that St. Joseph's currently charges (\$150 per market) does not cover the cost of regularly re-finishing the floors.

As such, the BVFMA is looking for a venue to host its indoor markets. Ideas that were put forward included:

- Check cost of roll-out floor covering for school gyms
  - Smithers Senior Secondary has protective flooring that they use for craft fairs, etc. We could check and see if it's possible to rent the flooring from them, although there are issues with transport etc.
- List of large, heated buildings:
  - Friendship centre
  - Schools (apart from St. Joes)
  - Christian Elementary School on Walnut
  - Smithers Seniors Secondary Foyer
  - NWCC
  - JW church on Hwy 16
  - Toyota (probably too small)
  - Fall Fair grounds has one heated hall, but last season they were reluctant to rent it to the BVFMA for indoor markets as they use it to store RV's all winter.

It was commented that we need to find an appropriate location by June in order to plan for the indoor markets properly. The BVFMA is interested in having indoor markets every weekend in October, at least three in December (if not all of them), and then every two weeks in November and from January through to April. It is important to be consistent with setting dates as it makes it easier for customers to remember when the indoor markets are taking place. Lyn agreed to spearhead the search by doing the initial phoning to potential venues, starting with the Friendship Centre.

## DEFINE MAKE, BAKE AND GROW & CONSIDER JURY

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Although the majority of the products sold at the market are good to excellent quality, as the number of new vendors have increased there has also been increased problems with people bringing product that does not fit the spirit of Make, Bake, Grow. The current system for determining if vendors meet the Make, Bake, Grow rule is as follows:



- the Secretary/Treasurer or the Market Manager initially speak with the potential vendor and determine if their product meets Make, Bake, Grow verbally
- if someone wishes to bring a product that is questionable (e.g., how much is made, does it fit the objectives of the market), then that situation is brought to the attention of the Board of Directors
- if someone has been admitted to the market, but then either shows up with questionable product OR questionable product appears on their table after a certain period this is first dealt with at the Market Manager level and then at the Board level if necessary

Less frequently, some people have approached the BVFMA wishing to attend as a vendor by offering a service such as massage, assembling photo CD's, etc. In previous years these potential vendors were told that they could not come to the market, but that the market would develop a services policy. This has been passed to the Constitution committee.

It is clear from some of the issues arising that two changes need to be made:

1. the BVFMA needs a better working definition of Make, Bake, Grow that is easy to apply; this definition needs to be presented to the members ASAP, to be implemented in 2014 (we already have memberships and pre-payments for stall fees paid), and
2. the BVFMA needs to explore a jury system and come up with working criteria, again for implementation in 2014. This system is used by the majority of Farmers' Markets present at the BC Association of Farmers' Markets conference, although the format of each system is variable.

Other points of discussion:

- 'Make' definition is the most challenging and may require subjective language
- it was commented that there should be a creative element to Make & Bake
- Kelowna FM uses language "substantially changed" to evaluate 'Make'
- perhaps the focus needs to be more on the creative aspect of the product, as much as on its function
- a point system could potentially be used to new applicants to assist in the evaluation of whether they comply with the Make, Bake, Grow rule
- there needs to be fairness and consistency in applying rules
- current vendors who may not meet the Make, Bake, Grow rule would be encouraged to evaluate their production protocols to more closely reflect the objectives of the market

The Make, Bake, Grow committee (current Chair is Jonathon Knight) will work at defining Make, Bake, Grow and report back to the Board of Directors.

## EXPAND MARKET MANAGER POSITION

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Review of Strategic Plan:

Current	New
Market day logistics	Additional advertising (currently the Market Manager assists with advertising by putting around posters, disseminating brochures and contacting vendors)
Fee collection	Assist marketing committee with implementation of marketing strategy (this would go beyond advertising as described above)
Fielding calls & emails	Provide in-market education by coordinating info/market manager booth (may be assisted by volunteers)
Adjusting layout	
Enforce rules	

The current Market Manager, Dmitri Cody, was part of this discussion. He felt that the Market Manager position was 75% 'tool' and 25% 'visionary', meaning that 75% of the job was comprised of tasks that must be carried out for the market to run efficiently and to maximize its potential. The remaining 25% is creative problem-solving that is also part of the market manager's job and is essential as the job is so dynamic.

In addition to the tasks identified in the above table, paying for the Market Manager to attend the BC Association of Farmers' Markets Annual General Meeting and Conference was discussed. It was decided to defer the decision of adding this to the Market Manager's job description until it can be determined how many additional hours the BVFMA can afford.

The new tasks that would be allocated to the Market Manager are focused on marketing. As such the plan established at the meeting was for the Chair of the Marketing committee (currently Lyn Nugent) to present a draft Marketing Strategy to the Board of Directors. Once the plan has been approved, the Marketing Chair and the Market Manager will work out how much extra time would be added to the Market Manager's workload by assisting with the implementation of the plan. If the number of hours would exceed 16 hours per week during the summer, and 10 hours a week during the fall/winter/spring, then this will be communicated to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors can then evaluate this estimate and determine if the Association can afford to pay the Market Manager to implement the Marketing Strategy. The stall rental increase approved in 2013 was designed to increase the amount of paid hours the market can afford.