



Food Banks of the Columbia Basin

AN IN DEPTH LOOK INTO THIS ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY SERVICE





The Study

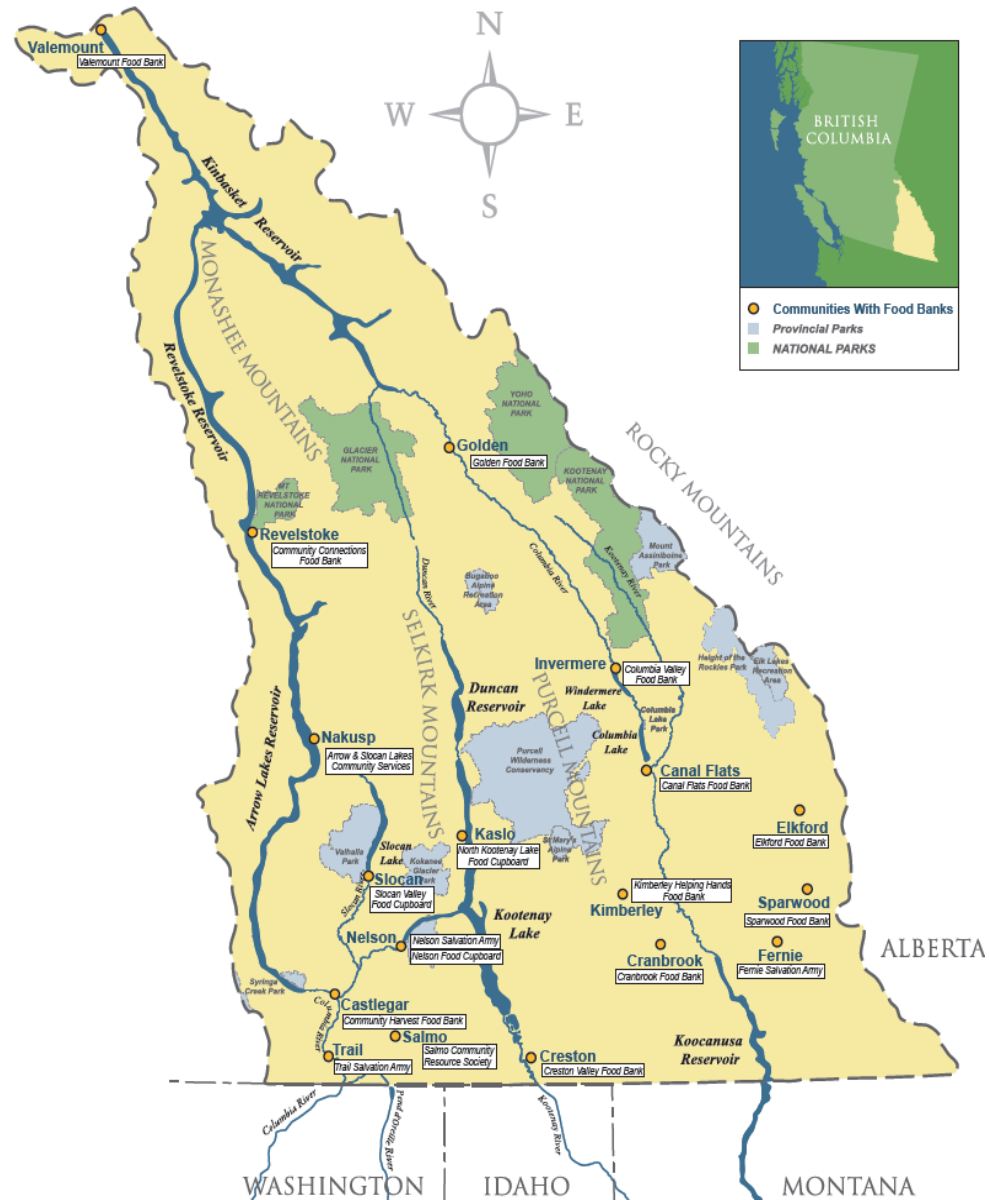
- 19 food banks across the Columbia Basin participated in the study
- Questionnaire was developed and administered by phone
- Purpose of the study:
 - Research initiatives including demographics of those that access the food bank, community capacity related to food security, and adjunct community programs
 - Structure and operations including costs associated with services
 - Funding Resources
 - Challenges and successes experienced



Project Partners

- Columbia Basin Trust
 - Community Initiatives & Affected Areas Program
- Participating food banks in the Columbia Basin







Key Finding

4175 individuals were provided food from a food bank in the Columbia Basin in March 2012

To put this into context, food banks across the Columbia Basin provided food to a **population similar to the size of the Town of Golden and Valemount combined.**

This happens every month in the Columbia Basin.



Canada's Food Banks

- The 1st food bank in Canada opened its doors in 1981 with the intent of providing short term emergency food services to the many individuals unemployed due to the recession.
- 3 decades later, food banks are still in existence and in fact they have grown!
- Food Banks Canada reports that today, there are more than 800 food banks and 3,000 food programs across the country providing food to ~900,000 Canadians every month.



Food Programs

Food banks primary role is to distribute food to those in need. This study demonstrated there is much diversity in the programs food banks offer including:

- distributing hampers of food and personal care products,
- preparing and serving meals from soup kitchens,
- operating snack programs,
- running community kitchens,
- organizing community gardens.



Additional Support

In addition, the people who turn to food banks often need other types of assistance. Food banks have responded and many now provide advocacy and other support such as:

- providing **skills training**, for example food preparation skills,
- helping people to **search for jobs** and transition into employment,
- raising **community awareness** about **hunger and poverty**,
- assisting with the search for **safe, affordable housing**,
- helping people find good quality, affordable **child care**,
- providing **referrals** to other social agencies and support services.



Need

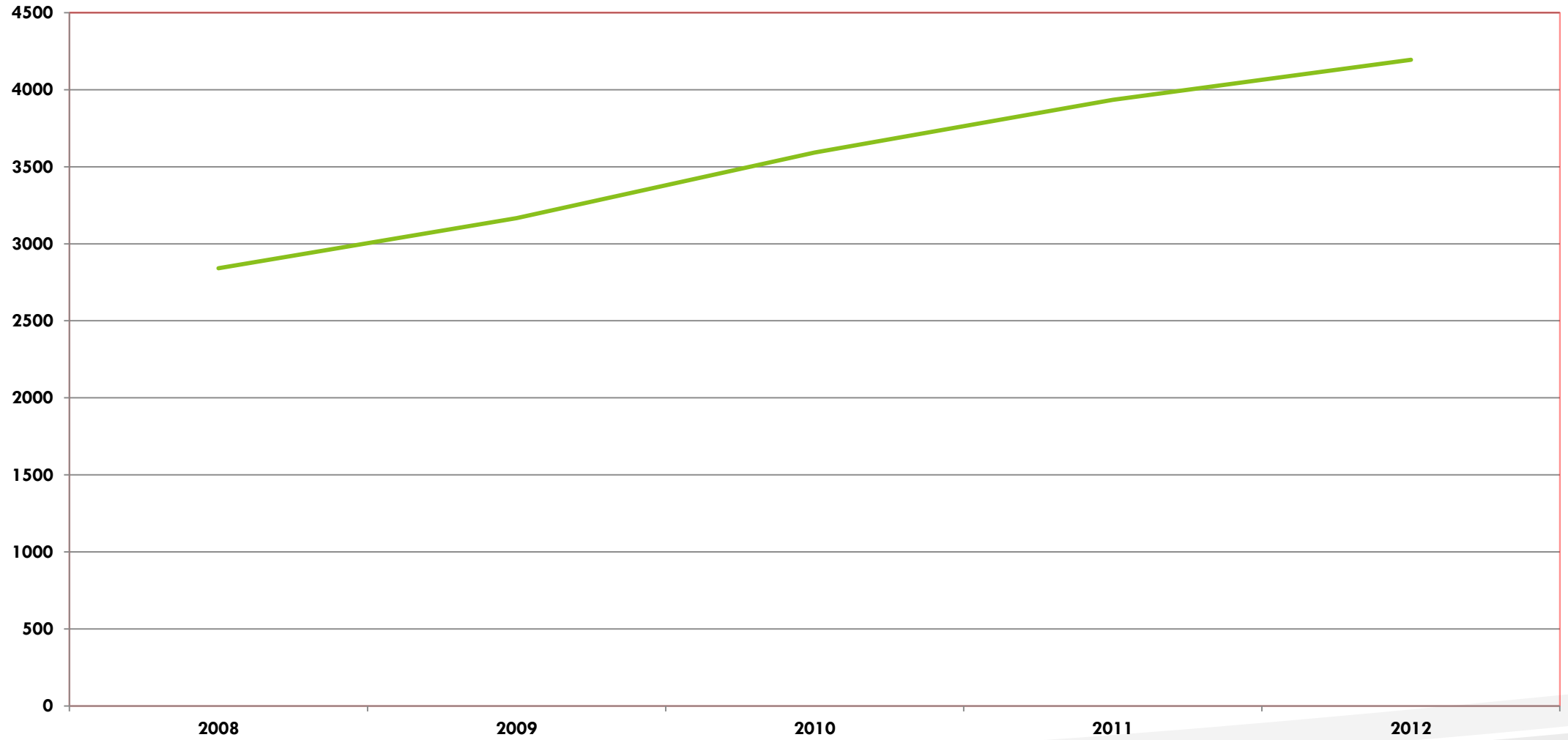
Low income is the key factor perpetuating the need for food banks. The strength of the local economy has a direct impact on food bank usage.

For many individuals making ends meet becomes a persistent challenge as they work seasonally or juggle several part time positions.

For others, their income is not likely to increase within the foreseeable future. They are living on a fixed income such as social assistance, provincial disability or pension income.

As a result food banks are a needed resource for many.

Total Individuals Accessing a Food Bank in the Columbia Basin 2008 - 2012





Demographics

HungerCount 2012 reports:

- The most common users of food banks in the Columbia Basin are single people representing 60% of households accessing food bank services.

In British Columbia:

- 29.5% of those assisted by a food bank are **children**
- 4.6% of those assisted are **seniors**



Demographics

HungerCount 2012 reports:

The majority of food banks in the Columbia Basin report the primary source of income for households accessing food banks is social assistance, provincial disability or pension income.

The Working Poor...

In Golden, 25% of households that accessed the Food Bank in March of 2012 were employed. In March of 2013, this number increased to 37%.

Golden and Area A's Vital Signs report:

“27% of the workforce (*in Golden*) is employed in the sales and service industry, with over half of the labour force working part time or seasonally.”



Resources: Food & Funding

Food Banks across the Columbia Basin are a community focused initiative. Their support lies fundamentally within their communities.

- **8 of the 19** food banks in the region reported **funding** as an ongoing challenge for their organization.
- **5 out of 19** food banks in the Columbia Basin reported **food shortages** in 2012.

There are **no federal or provincial government departments** that provide **core funding** for the work of food banks.



Sourcing Food

- Donations
- Food Sharing
- Buying Food
- Food Security Initiatives
 - Community Gardens
 - Plant a Row Grow a Row
 - Gleaning
 - Partnerships with Bear Aware

In an average month, food banks across the Columbia Basin spend ~**\$45,000 on food for food hampers** and meal programs.

This is in addition to food that is donated.







Funding

- Community Donations
- Programs through Food Banks Canada & Food Banks BC
 - CBC Day
 - BC Share Coupons
- Grants
- Revenue from thrift shops or other social enterprises
 - Kaslo Bulk Buying Club
 - Creston Valley Gleaners Society

Continued financial uncertainty is one of the greatest challenges facing many food banks.



Costs

- Food Costs
- Transportation Costs
- Rent & Utilities
- Staff Wages
- Administrative Costs

Operational expenses often compete for funds available to purchase food for food hampers.

Golden





The Golden Food Bank

The Golden Food Bank is the ***sole food bank*** in the Columbia Basin that reports paying ***market price for rent*** and ***utilities*** in addition to ***staff wages*** and other ***operational expenses*** without the support of a partner agency.





Operational Structure



- Social Service Hubs
 - Kaslo's North Kootenay Lake Services Society
 - Nakusp's Arrow & Slocan Lakes Community Services
 - Revelstoke Community Connections Society
 - Salmo Community Resources Society
 - Slocan's WE Graham Community Service Society
- Salvation Army
 - Fernie, Nelson and Trail
- Creston Valley Gleaners Society



Common Challenges

- Lack of sustainable funding
- Uncertainty of food and monetary donations
- Providing food of quality nutritional value
- Inadequate storage space including cold storage
- Operational costs
- Manpower for running the organization, staff and volunteers

The need for food bank services is evident by the 4175 individuals that turned to a food bank in March of 2012.





Moving forward

- The GFBS will **share and present findings** from the report widely throughout the Columbia Basin.
- **Seek local partnerships** that develop collaboration within social service providers, specifically working with organizations that are **addressing food security**.
- Work with organizations such as Columbia Basin Trust to reexamine their funding priorities. **Food banks need financial sustainability** to deliver one of humanities basic needs to the often voiceless members of our Basin communities.
- **Hold a seminar** for food banks throughout the Basin to share these findings and understand best practices in *fall 2013*.





The Future

*How can the Food Bank support the work you do
as a social service provider?*