

BOW VALLEY FOOD ALLIANCE FOOD CHARTER

As signatories to the Bow Valley Food Charter,
we value:

Social justice, based on reconciliation and empowering marginalized communities, including fair wages and working conditions, adequate and appropriate food, secure housing, and community-based food programming.

Vibrant regional economies, based on self-sufficiency, local entrepreneurship, and alternative food initiatives that champion sharing, cooperation, and collaboration.

The earth and environment, including regenerative food systems that honour the land and all living beings, and which respect Indigenous knowledges, biodiversity, protected and conserved areas, and water.

Local food systems, based on resiliency and the Buffalo as a cultural and ecological keystone species, including communities' ability to hunt (outside existing wildlife sanctuaries), harvest, gather, and grow food as well as advocate for change.

Our Vision:
is to create community-based food systems that are equitable and ecologically regenerative. In doing so, we aim to build food sovereignty for all of the diverse communities in the Bow Valley from Lake Louise to Banff to Canmore to MD Bighorn to the Îyârhe Nakoda Nation.

Health, including the relationships between food and physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Accessibility to fresh affordable food, including culturally appropriate spaces to gather, grow, harvest, and prepare food in a welcoming and dignified way.

Collaboration and diversity, including connecting communities and community members to each other through rich and varied food systems and their celebrations.

Knowledge and education, based on intergenerational and cultural learning, including community conversations, training, and school curriculum that build gardening, harvesting, and cooking skills as well as understandings regarding the impacts of our food systems.

**With this work we aim to honour
and support the spirit of The Buffalo:
A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Restoration.**

We, _____,

join others in the Bow Valley community in adopting this Food Charter.

Signature: _____ Organization: _____

Date: _____ Place: _____



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A **Food Charter** is set of principles outlined by a community that articulates what they want their food systems to look like, including how they grow, harvest, process, distribute, prepare, eat, and dispose of their food. Food Charters have been adopted by many communities across Canada, including small municipalities, like Salmon Arm, mid-sized cities, like Medicine Hat, major cities, like Toronto, and regions, such as the Shuswap. While these Charters are often presented and signed by municipalities, signatories also include businesses, public institutions (such as schools and hospitals), non-profit organizations, and individuals.

Reconciliation as defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is the *“ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships”* including learning how to live together through sharing, gathering, talking, and changing day-to-day actions in a meaningful way. According to the Honouring the Truth and Reconciling the Future Report (2015), reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples *“requires reconciliation with the natural world”* and cannot occur if human beings *“continue to destroy the natural world.”*

The Buffalo: A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Restoration is one of the largest modern treaties. It highlights the necessity of conservation, culture, economics, health, education, and research in relation to upholding the Buffalo as the foundational way of life. At its core, the Treaty calls for the revitalization of relations with the Buffalo so that all parties to the treaty and the Buffalo:

“will once again live together to nurture each other culturally and spiritually. It is our collective intention to recognize BUFFALO as a wild free-ranging animal and as an important part of the ecological system; to provide a safe space and environment across our historic homelands, on both sides of the United States and the Canadian border, so together WE can have our brother the BUFFALO, lead us in nurturing our land, plants and other animals to once again realize THE BUFFALO WAYS for our future generations.”

KEY TERMS

While we realize that some of the language in this document may be new to some, we believe it is important to use terms that express the complexities and nuances of food in the Bow Valley. The surrounding definitions are some of the key terms we believe are important to introduce and use within our community. We also want to note that all of these terms came from community members during the community conversations.

Indigenous knowledges are based on relationships and value place-based, lived, emotional, and spiritual ways of being and knowing. As Dr. Leroy Little Bear notes, “Knowledge, from an Indigenous perspective, is the relationships one has to ‘all my relations.’” As one of the people involved in bringing together The Buffalo Treaty, Dr. Little Bear explains that Indigenous knowledges can work with and enrich western science by extending beyond empirical measurements. Because Indigenous knowledges emphasize relationships with place, they are incredibly diverse, varying between Nations and the landscapes they inhabit.

To date, over thirty Indigenous Nations/ Tribes have signed the Treaty including Indigenous peoples from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and South Dakota. Signatories with relations to the Bow Valley include the İyârhe Nakoda, Cree, Tsuut’ina, Blackfoot, Secwepemc, and Ktunaxa Nations.

Ecological Regeneration occurs when food systems foster biodiversity, enrich soil, improve watersheds, and enrich ecosystems. Regenerative food systems are context-specific, creative and holistic. They aim to capture carbon, increase food yields, and reverse current climate change trends.

Food Sovereignty is a transnational movement that advocates for communities’ ability to determine what their food systems look like. It highlights the need to change the ways that people relate to each other and their food systems and includes seven pillars: focusing on food for people, building knowledge and skills, working with nature, valuing food providers, localizing food systems, placing control locally, and recognizing food as a sacred responsibility rather than a commodity. Food sovereignty also encompasses the concept of food security, which means that all people have physical and economic access to sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. La Via Campesina, an international movement that brings diverse groups together defines food sovereignty as *“the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”*

Food Systems include all of the different steps it takes to get food from farm/ocean/forest/plains to plate to waste. A food systems framework encourages a holistic understanding of the multiple ways that food is connected to our daily lives, to our communities, and to other people and places across the province, country, and world.

