

Report from the directors of Skookum Food Provisioners' Cooperative, as presented at the 2010 Annual General Meeting

Wednesday June 23, 2010

Background

Skookum Food Provisioners' Cooperative began in November 2009 with a series of conversations and planning meetings involving Pam Brown (Brownie), Jan Burnikell, Sharon Deane, David Parkinson, Giovanni Spezzacatena, Julie Thorne, and Heather Wheating.

This team came together around the idea of an organization which would help people become more self-reliant in providing for their own food needs and the needs of their families, friends, neighbourhoods, and community. We chose to structure the organization as a cooperative, because cooperatives are explicitly member-focused and based on solid values and principles.

After some discussion of the pros and cons, we decided to incorporate as a community service (i.e., not-for-profit) cooperative. This means that Skookum is able to generate a surplus through its activities, but that any surplus must not be distributed among its members. Surplus will go towards creating a reserve of funds, towards furthering Skookum's purposes, and towards worthy projects in the community, as determined by our members.

Accomplishments to date

The initiating team met eight times from November 2009 to April 2010, refining the plan for Skookum and preparing the documents of incorporation. During that time, the initiating team accomplished the following:

- Decided to incorporate as a community service (i.e., not-for-profit) cooperative;
- Decided on a name;
- Created the Statement of Purpose;
- Created our Rules, involving decisions about the cost of a membership share, joint memberships, proxy voting, term limits, and other matters;
- Worked with cooperative consultant Marty Frost to refine incorporation documents;
- Created our vision statement ("A thriving community with a strong and reliable local food network");
- Began discussing potential projects for Skookum to carry out for the benefit of its members.

On April 6, 2010, the BC Registrar granted Skookum Food Provisioners' Cooperative's application for incorporation. The initial subscribers were Pam Brown (Brownie), Jan Burnikell, Sharon Deane, David Parkinson, and Julie Thorne. At the first meeting of the board, these first directors appointed Giovanni Spezzacatena as a director. The board appointed David Parkinson to the offices of President and Secretary; Julie Thorne to the office of Vice-President; and Sharon Deane to the office of Treasurer. This initial appointed board serves for no more than three months, at which time a General Meeting elects a board of directors.

Since our incorporation, the directors have accomplished the following:

Management & documentation

- Six board meetings (roughly biweekly);
- Decided on our Values and Principles and created a document explaining them;
- Written a draft of the Directors' Manual;
- Written a draft of the Secretary's Manual;
- Begun a draft of a general policy document;
- Created various documents essential to our operations: application form, Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ), proxy form, gift certificate, share certificate;
- Resolved that our financial year runs from April 1 to March 31;
- Gathered information on insuring Skookum against liability resulting from its activities.

Projects

- Begun managing the Fruit Tree Project, now named Skookum Gleaners;
- Skookum Gleaners organizing team has met five times since April 2010;
- Visited Bill LePage, owner of The Cider Press in Courtenay, to get information about cider presses and other equipment;
- Bought a cider press for use by our members;
- Planted a test patch of hull-less oats in Wildwood;
- Made a bulk purchase of eight Piteba oil expellers, one of which we hold for use by members.

Publicity & outreach

- Created a website (<http://skookumfood.ca/>) and associated email addresses and lists;
- Created a logo;
- Attended the Chambers of Commoners get-togethers in February and June to spread the word and recruit members;
- Held a public meeting on April 27, 2010;
- Planning a public event and workshop on July 13 & 14 to publicize Skookum Gleaners and raise funds.

Fundraising

- Investigated several potential sources of funding to support Skookum's projects.

Membership

- Accepted 32 applications for membership, of which 7 are joint, giving us 39 members.

Our plans for the coming year

Management & documentation

Overall goal: To formalize the structure of the Association so that members, directors, and officers know how things work. Because we have imposed term limits on directors and officers, we need to ensure that board succession is made as smooth as possible by providing good documentation for incoming members, directors, and officers.

- Continue developing basic documentation:
 - Directors' manual;
 - Secretary's manual;
 - Treasurer's manual;
 - General policies.

Big question: What resources will make our vision and objectives clearer to ourselves and to others?

Projects

Overall goal: To provide our members with activities that help them produce, process, and preserve more food for themselves and others.

- Develop clear policies for selecting and managing projects;
- Start new projects as determined by the interests of our members and by our capacity to manage them.

Big questions: What projects will best further our purposes? (See Appendix A below.) How can we manage projects so that members' work is rewarded? How do we serve the broader community?

Publicity & outreach

Overall goal: To let people know who we are and what we are doing.

- Redesign website;
- Collaborate with other like-minded organizations.

Big question: How do we let people know what we're all about?

Fundraising

Overall goal: To find appropriate sources of funding to support our activities, particularly in our startup phase.

- Pay for equipment purchases (cider press, ladders, dehydrator, etc.);
- Develop policies to direct our search for sources of funding.

Big questions: What do we need to raise funds for? What are our preferred sources of funding?

Membership

Overall goal: To recruit new members and respond to the needs and interests of our members.

- Continue actively recruiting members.

Big questions: What are the benefits of membership? What are the responsibilities?

Appendix A: Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Association is to

- 1) help its members acquire and share the knowledge, skills, and resources they need in order to
 - a) grow, gather, raise, and catch healthful food as locally as possible;
 - b) preserve, store, prepare, and share the bounty;
- 2) build a strong community and a diverse local food economy based on mutual support, fair prices, living wages, and respect for the natural systems which sustain life.

Appendix B: Skookum's Principles (adopted May 28, 2010)

Voluntary and Open Membership

Democratic Member Control

Member Economic Participation

Autonomy and Independence

Education, Training and Information

Cooperation among Cooperatives

Concern for Community and Environment

Individual Self-empowerment

Community Self-reliance

Fairness and Transparency