
Public Health
Association of BC
RISE UP!
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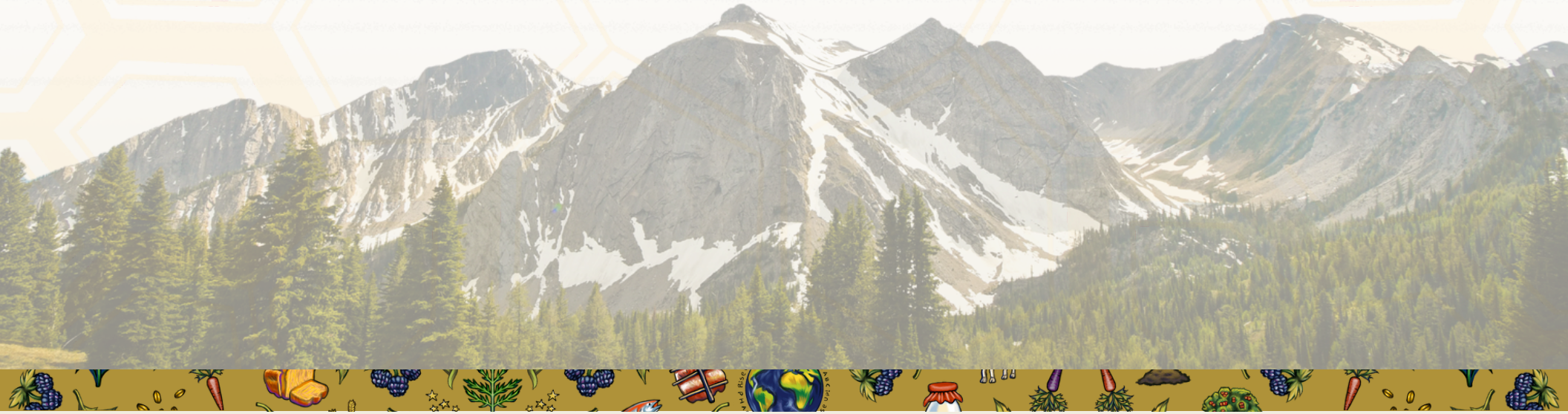
Canada
Provincial Retreat
Speaker Biographies



As we begin this work together, it's important to reflect on where we are and how our efforts are connected to our land-based work. PHABC is a provincial organization and acknowledges that our work goes beyond the places we live and impacts the lives of nations across British Columbia and Turtle Island. We recognize the deep relationships that Indigenous Peoples hold with the lands and food systems where our work takes place.



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Sabrina Anderson (she/her):
Growing up as the fourth generation on her family's farm, Sabrina didn't know how much farming was part of her identity until there was a risk of losing it. After pursuing a foundational degree in Sustainable Agriculture, she followed her passion into community food system development work for 8+ years.

Cameron Bell (he/him):
Cam lives, works, and plays on Lək̓ʷəŋən (Tsimshian territory) in Terrace, and Lheidli T'enneh territory in Prince George, among other places in Northern BC. He has been running a vegetable farm called Farmer Cam's Foods for six years, and is enjoying sharing the joy of growing with youth through Rise Up!
After completing an Environmental Studies degree at UNBC, he spent two years in local government and economic development before committing to a career in agriculture. He has worked with farms, social enterprises, and urban agriculture consulting firms in BC and his home province of Ontario, and returned to the northwest in the fall of 2018.

Lauren Bernardi (she/her):
Lauren Bernardi is a passionate advocate for equitable food systems and youth engagement. She leads the Rise Up! program at the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC).
With experience in agroecology, environmental education, and community-based programming across BC and internationally, Lauren is committed to contributing to an inclusive, place-based food system that leaves no one behind. She holds a Master's degree in Sustainable Food Systems from the United Nations University for Peace in Costa Rica.
Raised in Ligwiłda'xw territory (Campbell River), she now lives on the traditional lands of the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples (Victoria, BC).

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Chris Brown (he/him):
Chris "Farmer" Brown is an elementary educator and agriculturalist, and is currently enrolled in a master's program in Home Economics at UBC. He has been farming for the past 14 years and is passionate about solutions-based, regenerative agriculture, decolonizing food and education systems and empowering optimistic, ecologically minded youth in our community.

Ben Glassen (he/him):
Ben is currently the Regenerative Land & Livestock manager of Glassen Farms, a one-man-show. Participating with nature to rehabilitate the ecosystem cycles that have existed for all of time. Leasing neglected and underused farm land in Nanaimo & Oceanside. Glassen Farms raises Chicken, Turkey, Lamb, Pork & Beef, that is sold at 3 farmers markets.

Richard Han (he/him):
Richard Han is a first-generational immigrant residing on the territories of the territory of the Katzie, Kwantlen and Semiahmoo First Nations. He is the Senior Director of Public and Planetary Health at the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC), where he leads the Division of Community Engagement and Food Systems.
His work focuses on advancing equitable, community-led food systems transformation across British Columbia through initiatives such as Farm to School BC, Can You Dig It, Rise Up! and the Coalition for Healthy School Food. With a background in health advocacy, participatory action research, and systems change, Richard is dedicated to fostering partnerships that promote dignified food access, youth leadership, and planetary health.



Taylor Hartwig (she/her):
Taylor is a Public Health Dietitian for Island Health, servicing the Nanaimo, Ladysmith, and Gabriola Island areas. Her work focuses on promoting a healthy life of individuals and the broader community by supporting food/nutrition security, food literacy, and a positive relationship with food and eating.

Selenna Ho (she/her):
Selenna is grateful to live, work and play on the ancestral, traditional and unceded Indigenous territory of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), Səl̓ílwətaʔ/ Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.
As PHABC's first Communications Director, Selenna leads the strategic development, vision and implementation of PHABC's communications foundation and evolution. Selenna's media expertise spans over ten years, with experiences in academia, magazines, radio, news and non-profit communications.
She is the first person to have won both the prestigious Jack Webster and the Ruth Hancock awards, among many other academic awards. Selenna has also been published in both national and international anthologies and has won awards for her poetry. Alongside media work, Selenna has also done crisis work in women's centres and organizations dedicated to educating the public on youth sexual exploitation and gang violence.



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Dan LaRocque (he/him):
Dan is a lifelong, avid gardener. He started Surly Dan's Urban Farm, a hydroponic greens company, in 2019. It has since morphed into a non-profit food security organization and community garden that uses hydroponics and traditional gardening methods to grow and glean 1000s of pounds of free food for the community.

Christina Lavoie (she/her):
Christina was born and raised in Victoria, on the unceded territory of the Lekwungen speaking First Nations, and is now fortunate enough to call the Comox Valley home; where the K'òmoks First Nations have prospered for millennia on their unceded territory under the watchful eye of K'one-is (Queneesh). Before entering public health, Christina attended the University of Victoria, attaining a double bachelors degree in Linguistics and Anthropology with a focus on language and society while owning and operating a successful home-business, allowing her to graduate debt-free. She began working at the Public Health Association of BC in the spring of 2017 and hasn't looked back.
In her spare time, you can find Christina hiking, biking, kayaking or camping with her husband, Ryan, and rescue pup, Mocha, in some of the most remote places on Vancouver Island and the Pacific Northwest Coast.



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Marcus Lobb (he/they):
Marcus has 15 years experience working in food education with adults, and school aged children. His journey began with cooking programs, and developing an urban agriculture training program while in university, which lead to designing and building school gardens in Montreal. Over the past 9 years he has been a member of F2SBC, with highlights including developing numerous resources, coordinating conferences, and managing the granting stream for the program

Sheelagh Mackenzie (she/her):
Sheelagh studies natural systems in our region, specifically in regard to wild edible and medicinal herbs. She has been learning, collecting, observing, teaching and participating with the wild herbs studiously for 35 years.

Tegan McGowan (she/her):
Tegan was born in Aotearoa New Zealand and now lives in gratitude on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueum, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, now known as Vancouver. Tegan has a background in public health nutrition, health promotion and food system change, both in non-profit and government. She is motivated by a vision of food sovereign communities living in good relation with the land, and an equitable food system that priorities people and planet. Tegan is passionate about shaping the wider determinants of health that enable people to live well and thrive.

Jessie Newman (she/her):
Jessie is from the Gak'yaals Kiigaway (clan) of K'uuna (Skedans) and is a member of the Haida Nation. She is Haida on her maternal side and Heiltsuk and Kwakwaka'wakw on her paternal side. She grew up in Hlgaagilda (Skidegate) and Ẃáláqvḷa (Bella Bella), and comes from two fishing families. She also works as a dietitian.



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Payal Parti (she/her):

Payal (she/her) lives on the unceded traditional territories of the Katzie, Kwantlen, and Semiahmoo First Nations, now known as Surrey. Payal has an educational background in Food, Nutrition, and Health, and brings a diverse range of experiences in community and youth engagement, particularly in food systems, health promotion, and career mentorship. Driven by her passion for public health, equity, and youth empowerment, Payal is dedicated to building healthier communities for all through community capacity-building, collaboration, and addressing the social determinants of health.

Madison Pinder (she/her):

Madison was born and raised in The Bahamas and now lives, works, and plays on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the Halkomelem-speaking peoples in New Westminster, BC. She's grateful to have found a home away from home that nurtures her connection to land, sea, and local food. As a PHABC Communications Specialist, Madison supports food systems projects across the province. This role beautifully melds her passion for food and nutrition with nearly a decade of experience in communications and design. She is a proud graduate of UBC, where she earned a BSc in Food, Nutrition and Health with a Minor in Sustainable Food Systems. Both her studies and time at PHABC have shaped her appreciation for collaborative work, systems thinking, and knowledge mobilization.

Outside of work, you'll find her creating art, cooking fresh meals from locally rescued food, or embracing joyful forms of movement through dance.

Peter Sinclair (he/him):
Peter has served as Executive Director of Loaves and Fishes Food Bank since 2011. He has a Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurship from UVIC and a Master of Divinity from Regent College.

Bianca van der Stoel (she/her):
Bianca van der Stoel is a Registered Horticultural Therapist who uses nature-based therapy programs to support mental health, wellbeing, and resilience. Her work focuses on tangible ways people can use gardens, green spaces, and natural spaces as tools for wellness. She centres accessibility, regulation, and connection in her programs.

Megan Viszlai (she/her):
Megan grew up on the traditional and unceded lands of the Syilx Okanagan People in Vernon, BC. She's grateful to live and work on these lands again after calling the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations home for the past several years in Vancouver.
Megan brings a passion for building sustainable and equitable communities with food justice at the centre. With a background in systems thinking, operations, and food literacy education, she believes in the impact of knowledge-sharing and trust-based relationships across sectors to drive change. She's loves working to connect and support organizations and youth with hands-on opportunities to strengthen our local food systems.



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Jess White (she/her):
With a BA in the Ecological Determinants of Health from McGill, Jess White has worked with organizations such as UNDP, UNAIDS, and IDRC, and now works for Kw'umut Lelum leading the development of Foundry Snuneymuxw. From 2013 to 2019, Jess worked alongside her family to develop a local value chain for grass fed beef.

Ben Ziakin (he/him):
Benjamin Ziakin is grateful to reside in the traditional and unceded territory of the Stz'uminus People and has called Vancouver Island home for most of his life. His passions include food, gardening, music, woodworking, and understanding the natural world. With a background in mental health outreach, agriculture, permaculture, and entrepreneurship, Ben brings a wide array of knowledge and skills to his work in food security. Ben deeply values curiosity, compassion, community, and hands-on learning.



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