



Empty Boxes, Full Hearts: Tahsis Food Distribution Brings More Than Food

TAHSIS, B.C. — By the end of the afternoon on Friday, August 7, the boxes were empty.

Every bag and can of pet food had disappeared. Fresh produce, frozen meat and canned goods had been distributed to neighbours across this remote Vancouver Island community.

But for the volunteers and SSVP representatives who gathered in Tahsis that day, the most important thing they brought home was a renewed understanding of just how much the monthly food distribution means to the community.

It had been more than a year since representatives of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul had visited Tahsis in person. The August 7 visit provided an opportunity to observe the distribution, meet with volunteers and recipients, take photographs and participate in a meeting with the village council.



56 households—and counting

Each month, **56 households—approximately 100 people—receive food assistance** through SSVP and Loaves and Fishes Food Bank. The households include 37 people living alone, 10 couples and nine families. Food is also provided for approximately **75 dogs and cats**.

About eight local volunteers unload the monthly truck, prepare the food and manage the distribution. Later that day, they deliver hampers to residents who are unable to attend. Some food is also set aside for the school's breakfast and lunch programs and the daycare.

For many residents, the assistance is essential—not simply because of the cost of groceries, but because of the challenges of getting to them.

Many seniors and other residents do not have a vehicle, while others struggle with the cost of gas, insurance and repairs. Campbell River, where shopping is more affordable, is a **three-hour drive each way**. Food assistance means fewer costly trips—and, for some low-income households, enough money remains to cover rent and utility bills.

“Food assistance has reduced the number of trips needed to Campbell River.”

A gathering as much as a distribution

The monthly event is about more than food.

For many recipients, the distribution is also an opportunity to connect with neighbours. In a remote community facing significant economic and social challenges, these gatherings strengthen community spirit and provide an important opportunity for people to support one another.

On August 7, that spirit was unmistakable.

There were smiles, laughter, hugs, handshakes and expressions of gratitude. The SSVP visitors left with new friendships and memories, as well as a deeper appreciation of the importance of the program.

“There was joy, smiles, laughter, hugs and many words of gratitude.”



Four-legged neighbours included

A large pallet of pet food donated by the North Island branches of the BC SPCA was also distributed that day.

Every bag and can was gone.

The response underscored another reality of food insecurity: helping families often means helping the animals who are part of those families, too.

Looking toward a more dignified model

The visit also opened the door to the next stage of food security work in Tahsis.

During a meeting with the mayor and village council, the possibility of moving the distribution indoors was discussed. A model similar to the Campbell River Food Bank could allow residents to make appointments, select the foods they need and receive assistance in a more private setting.

The approach was viewed as more **dignified, personal and private**, while also providing better protection from Tahsis' rainy climate and harsh winter storms.

There is also momentum toward establishing a Society serving Nootka Sound. Local paramedics are helping with the initiative and are seeking a building in Tahsis for food storage and distribution. SSVF has offered support in helping secure commercial refrigeration equipment.

The need continues through the seasons. With the Knights of Columbus no longer delivering Christmas food hampers to Tahsis, preparations for Christmas support are also becoming a priority.

Help—and hope—on the North Island

Tahsis is one of SSVF's **North of 50 Food Security Projects**, alongside Zeballos and Kyuquot on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island.

The August visit offered a simple but powerful measure of the program's impact: the food was needed, appreciated and quickly put to use.

Each month, the shipments of fresh produce, frozen meat and canned food bring **help and hope to 56 households and more than 100 people in Tahsis**.

And on August 7, there was nothing left at the end of the day.

The boxes were empty.

The hearts were full.

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