



Acknowledgements

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FRESH ROOTS URBAN FARM SOCIETY, BC
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OVERVIEW

This storybook provides an overview of the Farm to School movement in Canada. Stories from across the country are featured, showcasing the diverse models and players, and highlighting the reasons why so many people are drawn to this approach. It is intended as a resource for school champions, food system advocates, policy makers, funders, and all who aspire to change school and regional food systems in order to get more healthy local foods into the minds and onto the plates of students.

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Introduction

Activity to get fresh healthy foods from nearby farms, lands, and waters into the minds and onto the plates of students is not a new phenomenon. Whether in Riverside-Albert New Brunswick or Chilliwack BC, records show that agricultural specialists and teachers were supporting school gardens, greenhouses, and agricultural courses even in the early 1900s. Successive waves of activity have taken place prompted by a variety of goals, whether educational, vocational, or health related.

In the mid-2000s, a new wave of activity began. Inspired by the US Farm to School movement and sparked by motivation to improve student nutrition, food skills, and knowledge while supporting local farmers and the local food economy, Farm to School took root in Canada. Educators, food service workers, farmers and food suppliers began to see their work in a connected way with a common aim: to get more healthy local foods in the minds and onto the plates of students. Together they set out to transform regional and school food systems to help achieve that aim.

Provincial Farm to School networks soon emerged, linking together hubs of activity. More recently, these provincial networks have joined together to form a national one. This national Farm to School network is championed by Farm to Cafeteria Canada (see sidebar).

This Storybook features only some of the hundreds of initiatives and ideas taking root across Canada. These initiatives succeed as a result of countless community champions who see ways to improve how school systems and students interact with their food system. Now is the time to build on these successes to get more healthy, local and sustainable food as well as food-based education into every school across the country.



“There is an exciting movement underway right across this country. From Vancouver BC to Bouctouche NB, school children are seen at the shore and in farmers’ fields, in root cellars and in kitchens, and with spade or rolling pin in hand, reconnecting with their land and their food. And they are not alone. Farmers, fishers, chefs, food service staff, principals, teachers, and parents are there too, working in concert to ensure the healthy local foods students grow to appreciate, gets into the cafeteria and onto their plates. Farm to Cafeteria Canada calls this movement “Farm to School” and we are excited to seed it, feed it, and watch it grow!”

Joanne Bays, National Manager, Farm to Cafeteria Canada



FARM TO CAFETERIA CANADA

Farm to Cafeteria Canada (F2CC) is a pan-Canadian organization that educates, builds capacity, strengthens partnerships, and influences policy to bring local, healthy, and sustainable foods into all public institutions. Farm to School, Farm to Campus, and Farm to Healthcare are all a part of the national farm to cafeteria dialogue. F2CC is amplifying efforts right across Canada to realize vibrant and sustainable regional food systems that support the health of people, place and planet.

Farm to Cafeteria Canada is the lead national agency in Canada that is championing the establishment, evaluation, and linking of Farm to School activity from coast to coast to coast. National Farm to School momentum was given a significant boost when F2CC partnered with multiple organizations on the Nourishing School Communities initiative. This collaborative, evidence-based national initiative aims to get more healthy and local foods into the minds and onto the plates of students by scaling up best practices to create healthier school environments. Farm to School is one of those best practices. Nourishing School Communities is funded by the federal government through the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer’s Coalitions Linking Action & Science for Prevention (CLASP) program.

Farm to Cafeteria Canada:
www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca

Nourishing School Communities:
www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca/nsc

Canadian Partnership Against Cancer:
www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca



Farm to School Basics

What is Farm to School?

Farm to School (F2S) brings healthy, local food into schools, and provides students with hands-on learning opportunities that foster food literacy, all while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness. Farm to School empowers students and school communities to make informed food choices while contributing to vibrant, sustainable, economically viable regional food systems that support the health of people, place and planet. Farm to School looks different in each school and new models are continually emerging based on the creativity and existing partnerships in school communities. While schools may be at differing stages of implementation, Farm to School programs aspire to include the following elements:

“Farm to School is an amazingly rich, diverse and successful approach to inspiring change in the health of our students, schools, communities and food systems.”

Vanessa Perrodou, Provincial Manager, Farm to School BC

Healthy, Local Food:

Schools procure local food in many ways, including directly from farms or schoolyard farms, through food distributors, or by harvesting wild or traditional foods. When local food arrives in schools it may be served in a salad bar, hot lunch program, tasting activity, fundraiser, or community celebration.

Hands-On Learning:

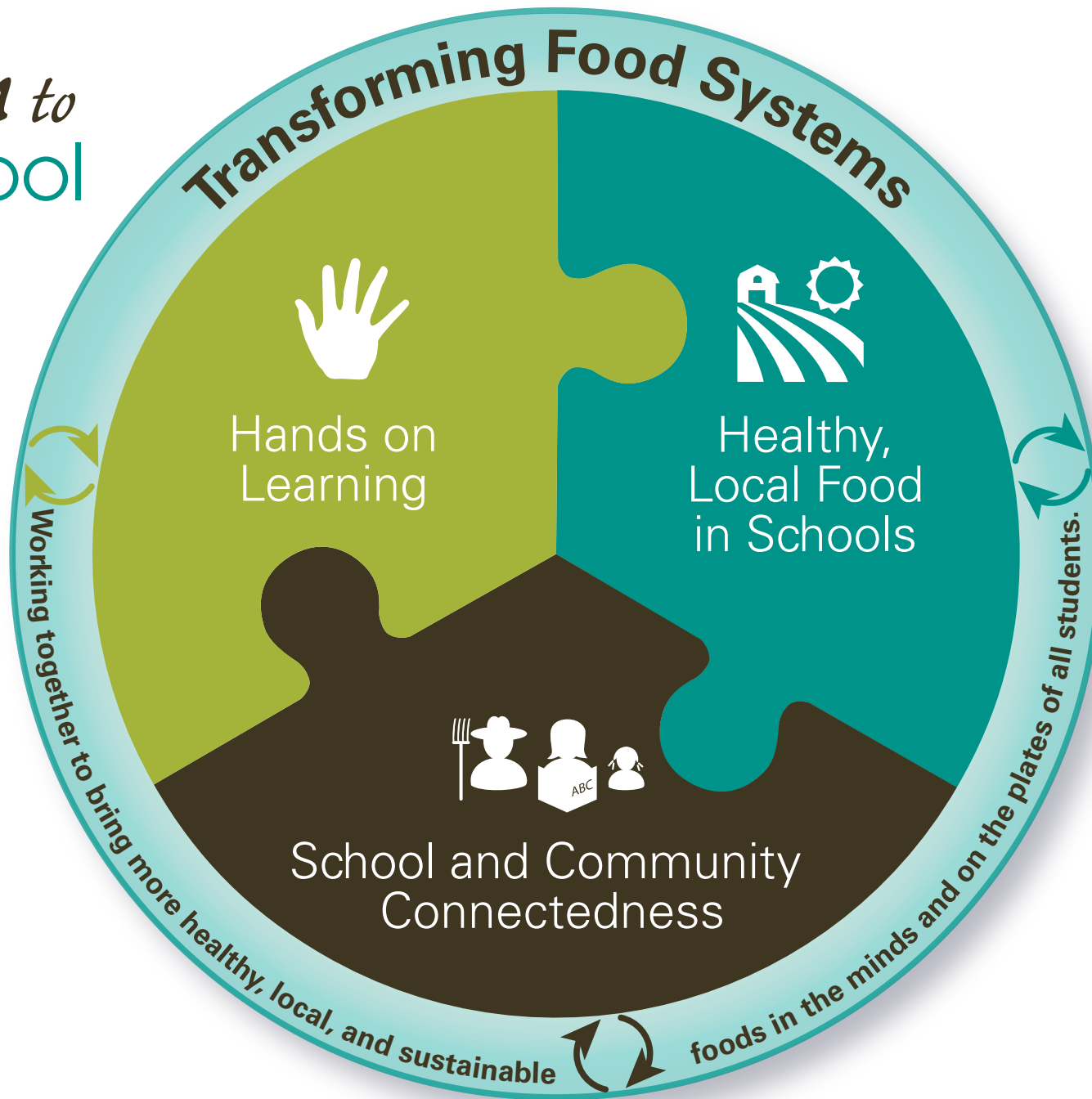
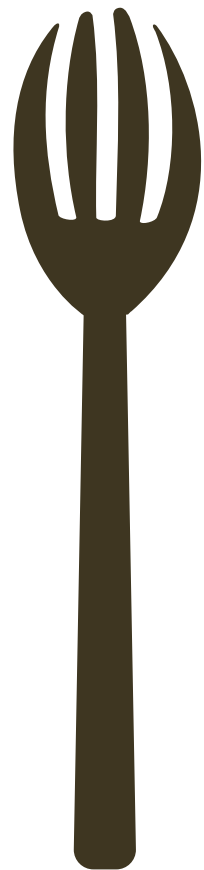
Food literacy is a critically important component of Farm to School. Students learn about food, food systems, and food skills in the school garden, greenhouse, kitchen and classroom. They connect with nature and the environment. They may take field trips to local farms, forests, and shores.

School and Community Connectedness:

Farm to School is built upon strong relationships. Schools establish relationships with farmers, community members, and supportive organizations, tapping into local knowledge, passion, skills, and resources. Students connect deeply with their school and the wider community.

There are many entry points into Farm to School. As the diagram on page 8 shows, schools may start with activities related to food literacy, procurement change, or community connections. Many schools begin their journey by growing food. Once foods are grown and staff observe the student enthusiasm for “fresh from the earth” foods, garden activities often progress to cooking and tasting activities.

farm to
School



THE EVIDENCE IS IN *

When Farm to School is established in a school:

- Students' academic achievement is enhanced
- Students' life skills, self-esteem, social skills and behavior are improved
- Students eat an average of 1 more serving of fruits and vegetables per day
- Students are willing to try new and healthy food, and they choose healthier options in the school cafeteria and at home
- Farmers' income increases by an average of 5% from food sales to schools
- \$2.16 economic activity is generated for every \$1 spent on local food
- More students participate in lunch programs, generating more revenue
- Food service staff motivation and morale goes up

* This data has been drawn from: The US National Farm to School Network's Benefits of Farm to School (2014). Available from: www.farmtoschool.org. Farm to School endeavours are currently building the evidence base in Canada. Stay tuned for evaluation data from the Nourishing School Communities initiative.

Two important shifts may then emerge: a shift in cafeteria practices to procure more healthy local foods, and a shift in school food culture to place a higher value on those foods. Over time, students or staff may rethink the foods they sell at school. These changes in the school food system influence the regional food system as schools begin buying foods from local farmers and preserving lands for foraging and hunting. Farmers develop new economic opportunities for their products, thus maintaining farmland and farmer skills.

Why Farm to School?

Students Win: Farm to School provides students access to healthy, delicious, high quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow.

Farmers Win: Farm to School provides farmers opportunities to educate and connect with students in their community. Farm to School also serves as a new market opportunity.

Communities Win: Buying from local producers and processors helps stimulate the local economy by creating more jobs and keeping more money in the community. School and community partnerships build healthy, resilient, and inclusive communities.

/// It's critically important that students participate.

We're helping them to see that their food doesn't just come in boxes from the local grocery chain store. It comes from the ground, and from what they can create with raw ingredients."

**Dani Conrad, Teacher,
Sexsmith Elementary School, BC**

THE FIRST FARM TO SCHOOL NATIONAL VIDEO!

To hear and see more about Farm to School across Canada, watch our 3 minute video (English/ French).



www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca/resources/videos



Help Us Create a Map of Canada's Farm to School Landscape

Farm to Cafeteria Canada has launched a living school food map that features some of the incredible initiatives across the country.

To add your initiative to the map of activity, visit www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca

**There are thousands of initiatives nation-wide.
At the time of printing, our map highlighted:**

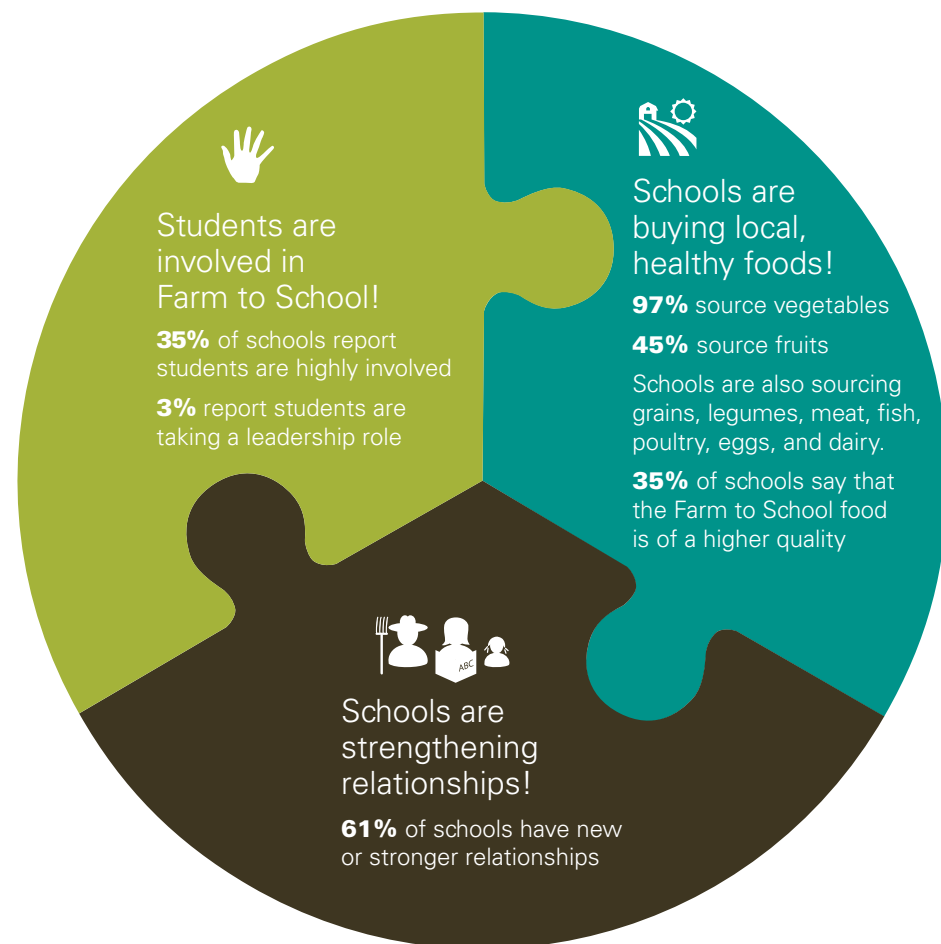


693

Canadian schools engaged in
Farm to School activity

678,709

Canadian students engaged in
Farm to School activity



Eight Stories From the Field

These stories showcase the flavour of Farm to School activities across Canada. They provide a sense of the breadth of models, partnerships, and innovative approaches that are taking root. They highlight successes and challenges from which we can learn, and also propose some solutions for growing the Farm to School movement in Canada.



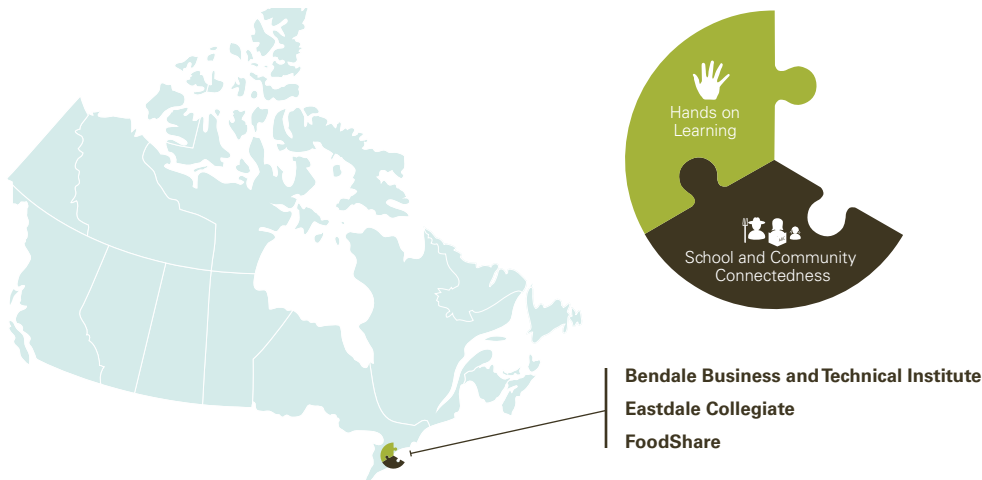
GROWING AND COOKING AS ENTRY POINTS TO FARM TO SCHOOL



ONTARIO

Farming School Grounds





Most schools have plenty of land, so a logical extension of Farm to School became Farm the School. In 2010, FoodShare launched School Grown, a schoolyard farming project in Toronto. Their two farms added one more educational and food production tool to the emerging puzzle of Farm to School.

School Grown is intended primarily as a way to connect students with meaningful, hands on learning opportunities, both about their food systems, but also about business and leadership skills. Contrary to typical school gardens, School Grown designs their crop plans to generate income, as the intention is that the farms will break even in terms of production costs. Even so, they know that their produce sales will never cover the additional costs for youth leadership programming, community events, and student and teacher support. These activities are still reliant on funding, an ongoing challenge.

During the school year, students at Bendale Business and Technical Institute and Eastdale Collegiate Institute are involved in food based learning opportunities in the classroom and in the field. Ontario is one of the few provinces with a class that grants academic credit for garden-based learning. The Green Industries class has learning objectives related to the care and growth of plants and animals, as well as technological, systems and math skills. Eastdale also developed a Seed to Market course, offering students a full semester class about urban agriculture and community food security.

In the summer, students are hired (and paid!) to work full time. They are part of all aspects of the farm management from planning, seeding, and offering workshops, through to selling their bounty at farmers' markets. Their responsibilities help shape a positive identity for themselves.

// You learn so much that you would never think to know when you are eating something, like how much labour really goes into a plant. Just one plant. With the tomatoes, you have to string them up and spray some seaweed oil stuff on it, and take the extra branches off. It's just, it's hard. I guess it gives you more respect for the food."

High School Student

Many students who find it hard to show up on time or at all for classes during the school year, show up daily to their farm job, sometimes even at 7:30 am. Seeing students excel over the summer helps to shift the narrative about them when they return in the fall. School staff see that these students can thrive when given responsibilities that are meaningful to them.

School Grown has expanded by creating a graduated leadership model where students return and mentor other students. They have even hired youth to write curriculum for their program, recognizing that youth know the job best since they have already done it. Students know what activities and topics resonate with their peers.



GREENFUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Managing a schoolyard farm would not be possible without a strong partnership between the schools and FoodShare. FoodShare's ability to contribute staff time, farm planning, onsite farm management, and lesson planning combined with the teachers' skills and interest to integrate food systems into the curriculum allows this project to succeed.

Inevitably and optimistically, some wondered if school farms would be a viable economic model. Could these farms resolve school procurement and distribution challenges of buying from local farmers? In a school system where the bottom dollar matters most and budgets for food are incredibly low, schools are unable to buy much from their own farms. Instead, most produce from School Grown is sold to the general public, including the wider school community, although they do donate fresh produce to the school cafeterias in the spring and fall. Increased budgets for school cafeteria purchases would greatly increase the comprehensiveness of these educational and food production initiatives.

There is no shortage of schools interested in participating in initiatives like School Grown. However,



GREENFUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

A PROVINCIAL LOCAL FOOD ACT

Ontario took a strong leadership role in support of local foods by passing their Local Food Act in 2013, the first of its kind in Canada. The act recognizes the importance of agriculture to the economy and aims to nurture resilient regional food systems, increase awareness of local foods, and develop new markets for local foods.

For More Information:

Ontario's Local Food Act:
www.ontla.on.ca

Ontario's Annual Report on local food activities for 2014-2015:
www.ontla.on.ca

“We have a lot of students who might not respond well in the traditional classroom structure but excel when they are out in the field. We have seen students thrive in our program – they want to come back every year.”

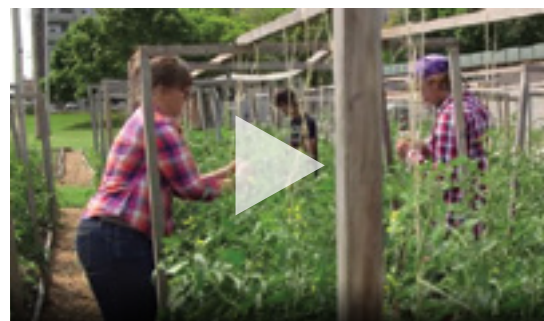
Katie German, School Grown Senior Coordinator, FoodShare Toronto

even with revenue generating farm operations, additional funding is critical for the educational and youth leadership programming. Schoolyard farms transform unused school land into a model for others. They provide concrete ways for students to engage in their food system and in their community. With additional funds, they could increase their reach, their power, and even their ability to supply school cafeterias.

For More Information:

Food Share's School Grown, ON:
www.foodshare.net/schoolgrown

VIDEO: School Grown



www.goo.gl/1n1g10
 (English, 6:03 minutes)



GREENFUSE PHOTOGRAPHY



GREENFUSE PHOTOGRAPHY



ALBERTA

Cooking Healthy, Local Food for All





Ermineskin Elementary School
Ermineskin Junior Senior School
Ehpewapahk school,
Ermineskin Cree Nation

Pine Haven Hutterite colony
S4 Greenhouses

The Ermineskin High School lunch service began as nothing more than toast five years ago. It evolved into a simple lunch for the 300 junior and high school students three years ago, prepared by the Foods classes. Students developed food skills and earned academic credit. The teacher's work inspired the school principal and the Director of Education who helped grow the program. Now the home economics classes prepare and serve breakfast, lunch and an after school snack for 1000 First Nations students between Kindergarten and grade 12.

In this era of cost cutting and limited budgets, Ermineskin offers their meals and snacks to all students free of charge. Funds are allocated from the Miyo Wahohtowin Education Board education budget, recognizing the critical need for good food in order to learn. The Board has managed funds well, prioritized good food, and minimized bureaucratic hurdles to make sure all students eat good food, and many learn to cook.

Astonishingly, the breakfast, lunch and after school snack combined cost only \$1.50 per student. Costs are kept low by refusing to buy any pre-washed, pre-cut, or pre-processed foods, opting instead for foods in their whole form. Modelling local whole foods and cooking from scratch make sense to the school staff given the high rates of diabetes in the community. Students develop skills such as proper cutting technique by cutting up seemingly endless amounts of vegetables

// We have been able to accomplish this because we have really amazing leadership. Our Director of Education is open to trying new things. He wants to nurture trailblazers. We have really good principals and the community is open to new things."

Scott Hall, Teacher, Ermineskin Junior Senior High School

such as carrot and celery sticks. They also learn many traditional Cree food preparation techniques such as drying, smoking and roasting tame game such as elk, bison and deer. The culinary students are encouraged to take part in the Alberta Dual Credit Strategy which provides them with the opportunity to earn college credits while working on their high school diplomas.

While cooking skills and access to healthy food were at the foundation of this initiative, the home economics teacher's personal food philosophy led to local and sustainable food sourcing as well. The local Hutterite colony sells their chicken, pork, and grass fed beef to the school, providing students with a taste of local agriculture. There are plans to connect students with their food supply even further through a food forest, an off-grid greenhouse, and yes, even chickens.

At a time when many across Canada are calling for a universal, federally funded school lunch program, Ermineskin's success provides proof that it is possible to offer meals that are wholesome, affordable, local, and skill-producing.

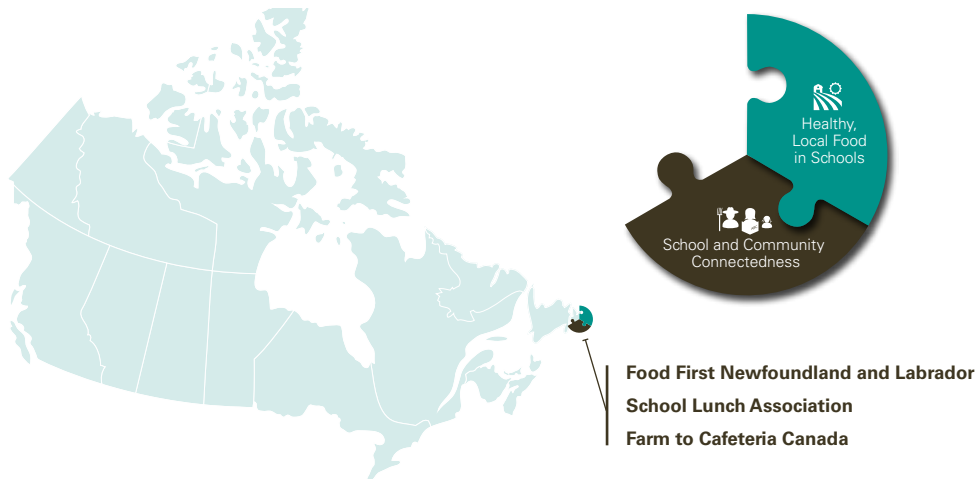




NEWFOUNDLAND

Scaling Up Through Food Procurement Learning Labs





Newfoundland, a province known as The Rock, is not known for its farmland but is known for its culinary creativity and for making the most of resources on the edge of the Atlantic. When the School Lunch Association, a charitable school food service provider on the Avalon Peninsula, decided to join the local food movement, they knew there would be obstacles.

Local food procurement Learning Labs provide an innovative way to navigate these types of obstacles. These Labs, modelled after those of US School Food FOCUS, bring together key stakeholders to articulate their vision and goals. Participants then agree on a handful of priority actions that can realistically be accomplished in a short time frame.

A key strength of Learning Labs is that they fully reflect the community in which they are housed. That reflection begins through the choice of who is seen to play a role in the school food system as community champions. A different mix of individuals and roles are invited in each community depending on relationships, history, values, and aspirations.

Three incredibly different Canadian school districts have launched Learning Labs. Vancouver School Board, a large urban school district, launched the first one in 2013, followed by remote Haida Gwaii - a primarily First Nations region off the coast of Northern BC. On the Atlantic coast, the Avalon Peninsula on the east side



SEED TO SPOON AND THE LIEN FAMILY FARM

“Often people are not asked to provide their creativity to processes. There’s a lot of structure in schools and it’s hard sometimes to think outside of the current framework, but Learning Labs have allowed everyone to do that which is really valuable.”

**Amber Cowie, Learning Lab Coordinator,
Farm to School Greater Vancouver**

of Newfoundland launched their Lab in 2014. By virtue of pioneering this particular convening methodology, the Labs have also connected and united the three communities who have trained each other and now share ideas and strategies.

After the first meeting of the Newfoundland Learning Lab was held in St. John’s, the group was still in a nebulous phase of not knowing what would come next. That uncertainty is typical when trying to tackle something that seems overwhelmingly complex.

I commit to

School Lunch

before our next Learning Lab session, in an effort to increase access to healthy, local, sustainable food and food literacy in schools.

NEWFOUNDLAND’S LEARNING LAB ACTION AREAS:

To bring together cafeteria cooks for sharing, learning and action planning

To increase opportunities for food gardening in schools

To increase cooking skills and basic food knowledge in schools

To review K-12 curriculum for opportunities to embed food literacy in classrooms

What will School
Lunch Association
Cafeterias, Schools,
Communities and
the organization look
like if our efforts
are wildly, amazingly
Successful?

Environment
of Cafeterias

Friendly
Staff

Facilities in
the building
highly
quality of work and
cleanliness

most information
available to
students or
school staff pointing
the school as a future
priority for the
region

Increased
physical
development and
activity that the
school understands

Students can
develop their
physical and mental
skills in a safe
environment. They
can learn to work
together and
communicate with
others.

the community has
been built on
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However, by the end of the second meeting, there was excitement and optimism about the ideas being discussed. Participants recognized that the Lab was providing an opportunity to tackle critical actions they had wanted to see for a long time, but had not had time to address. Everyone was grateful that there was a structure and a lead through Food First NL to help move ideas forward.

Within a packed day of visioning and goal setting, tangible actions were outlined (see sidebar). The group was also keen to collect baseline data about food purchases and to analyze and adapt menus to incorporate Newfoundland produce and seasonality. The great news was that the suppliers were completely on board. Local foods have become quite trendy and the suppliers were optimistic that any changes to the School Lunch Association's purchases would also be helpful for other food service operations.

While Newfoundland's Learning Lab is still at an early stage, the two meetings have already provided unexpected opportunities for creative collaboration. Eastern Health's upcoming vegetable and fruit campaign will be linked to the Learning Lab's actions. As well, Island Rooms' Fishing for Success will work with the School Lunch Association to fulfill their mandate to live, share and celebrate traditional fishing knowledge and culture. These outcomes result when opportunity is provided for relationship building, sharing, and idea generation.

Changing school food systems is difficult work. Doing so asks stakeholders to go beyond what most institutions and what most individuals do in Canada. The Newfoundland Learning Lab is a good example of how a group of stakeholders can tease out these difficult issues and put in place steps to move forward. The most remarkable outcome is always that novel and realistic solutions emerge that are supported by everyone involved in the process.

For More Information:

Food First NL: www.foodfirstnl.ca

School Lunch Association: www.schoolnlunch.ca

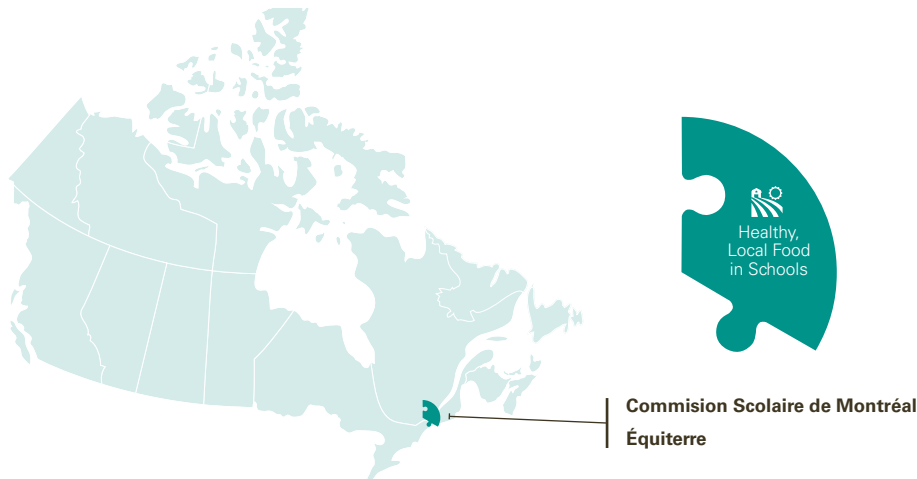
Learning Lab factsheets:
www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca



QUEBEC

The Power of Policy to Achieve 67% Local





A certain bit of magic happens when the person in charge of Food Service is also the person responsible for the school district's Environment portfolio. That is the case in Montreal's French school district (the Commission Scolaire de Montréal - CSDM), and it has resulted in a significant increase in local food purchases. Sixty seven percent of their food purchases are now produced locally.

The school district had already adopted an environment policy in 1992, followed by a Green Plan in 2007 which included objectives to increase local purchasing. These policy levers make a difference. Now, when the CSDM tenders their food supplier contracts, they request prices for both a local and non-local version of each food. For equal price and quality, they choose local.

The CSDM faced the same challenges as other school districts: a desire for pre-cut vegetables and fruits as well as individually portioned ready-to-serve fruit and vegetable snacks. As with other school districts, they also faced a lack of distribution networks for local products. Over the years of working with their supplier however, producers have caught up with their needs.

Some of the CSDM's work was complemented by Équiterre's. Équiterre works with schools and pre-schools across Quebec to increase local and organic foods served in food services. Increasing procurement of local foods requires ongoing negotiations between

school staff, farmers, and distributors. Équiterre manages these discussions to develop workable processes related to ordering, delivery, seasonality, and price. Équiterre also supports classroom lessons and educational activities about the food system and how the choices students make impact their health, the environment, and the wider world through toolkits and workshops for staff and parents.

“A majority of Quebecers live in the St. Lawrence Valley near the most fertile and productive land in the province. Clearly for our environment, our health and our economy, local products need to be on our plates. Reconnecting with the land must happen through increased local food procurement and also through gardening and awareness activities.”
Murielle Vrins, Project Manager,
Food Procurement and Awareness, Équiterre

The CSDM's own policies were the driver for their procurement changes. Since then, the province of Quebec has passed a Food Sovereignty policy in 2013 that aims to increase the consumption of food grown or produced in Quebec. In keeping with this policy, the Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Research sent a letter to all school boards to encourage them to showcase Quebec's food on their menus, offering one more lever in support of Farm to School.

The CSDM paved the way to show that shifting significant purchases to local ones was possible.



QUEBEC'S FOOD SOVEREIGNTY POLICY

For the past several years, the Quebec government has been working to increase institutional local food procurement. In 2013, the government adopted their Food Sovereignty policy, followed by a Positioning Strategy of Local Food in the Institutional Market by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. To this end, the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research has recently invited all school boards and schools in Quebec to source local foods for their operations.

For More Information:

Food Sovereignty Policy: www.premier-ministre.gouv.qc.ca/actualites/communiqués/details.asp?idCommunique=1342 (French)

Positioning Strategy of Local Food in the Institutional Market www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Publications/Strategie_de_positionnement.pdf (French)



Their relatively large size (37 cafeterias), their Green Plan, and the fact that they manage their own food services provided the market share, motivation and control needed to drive changes. The CSDM and the province of Quebec have demonstrated the power of policy, whether at the school-district level or province-wide to influence procurement change. These policies would be unlikely to be initiated or to succeed without widespread popular support. This popular support is an outcome of the work of community organizations such as Équiterre which helps to shift the culture towards one that demands a food system that is healthy, local, and sustainable.



For More Information:

Commission Scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) /
Montreal School District:

www.csdm.ca

Équiterre: www.equiterre.org/en



VIDEO: Épluche ta ville - Food literacy learning in Quebec



www.epluchetaville.org/ecole/20/Lecole-St-Barthelemy
(French with English subtitles - 3 minutes)



MANITOBA

Fundraising with Farm-Fresh Produce



Province of Manitoba

Peak of the Market

Manitoba Association of Home Economists

Manitoba Association of Food Banks

Manitoba's fundraising model moves beyond typical hot dog and chocolate sales to meet many needs at the same time: raising funds for schools, connecting students, staff, and families with healthy foods, supporting local growers, and donating healthy foods to families who are hungry. Peak of the Market coordinates this Farm to School fundraiser. They are a grower-owned not-for-profit vegetable supplier that controls the marketing board for root vegetables in the province. They have partnered with the province of Manitoba, the Manitoba Association of Home Economists, and the Manitoba Association of Food Banks.

The fundraiser runs each fall and sells root vegetables including carrots, potatoes, onions, parsnips and cabbage. A group of Manitoba farmers has pooled their produce together to meet the demand. Parents and staff can order their vegetables in one of two sizes and volunteers sort the deliveries. Schools keep \$5 out of every \$10 of produce sold, and earn on average \$1000. One particularly entrepreneurial school in Steinbach earned almost \$6500 last year. Their students not only did door-to-door sales, they also set up tables in local businesses where they pre-sold orders and then returned to set up their own delivery stands.

Last year, 356,714 kilograms of Manitoba vegetables were sold and delivered across the province in 358 schools and daycares. Given the remote location of many schools, delivery infrastructure has required

creativity. Peak of the market manages this part of the initiative using truck, train, boat and even snowmobiles to reach remote islands and northern outposts with no road access like Churchill.

// The costs of vegetables is higher the further you go from major cities. The fundraiser offers these vegetables at such a competitive rate, so it's an attractive fundraiser not only for getting funds for the participating schools, but also for getting that fresh local produce to families, especially the further north you go."

**Adriana Barros, Executive Coordinator,
Farm to School Healthy Choice Fundraiser**

In 2012, order forms were modified to allow purchases of vegetable bundles for local food banks and soup kitchens. Schools still raise their portion of the funds, while connecting families in need with fresh veggies. Over 6700 bundles, equivalent to 39,553 kilograms of veggies were donated last year through this partnership!

While the fundraiser doesn't get foods onto cafeteria menus, it has connected schools and farmers, successfully providing parents and students with delicious, local, healthy, and affordable foods. This first step may provide the necessary connections, inspiration and distribution infrastructure to eventually sell to school cafeterias.

For More Information:

Farm to School Manitoba:

www.farmtoschoolmanitoba.ca

VIDEO: A Fresh Take on School Fundraiser (the Manitoba model adopted in Ontario)



www.freshfromfarm.ca/About.aspx
(English, 3:43 minutes)



NEW BRUNSWICK

Serving Up Local Foods in Farm to School Salad Bars





Seven schools across New Brunswick
 New Brunswick Food Security Action Network
 Farm to Cafeteria Canada
 Multiple farmers and farm groups across the province

Farm to School salad bars have spread rapidly across Canada and now span from remote Tahsis on the west coast of BC to St. John's Newfoundland. Most recently, seven schools representing urban and rural, French and English, and elementary and secondary joined Farm to School in New Brunswick. These are championed by the New Brunswick Food Security Action Network. This network of new schools has joined many other New Brunswick advocates who are rapidly demonstrating innovative transformation of school food procurement, distribution, and preparation systems.

A F2S salad bar is a full meal deal in several respects. Besides the obvious buffet style meal of delicious and colourful local vegetables, fruits, grains, meats, and dairy, it also tackles all three of Farm to School's core elements. It offers hands on learning opportunities, changes buying practices, and builds school and community connections with farmers and other agencies.

The educational opportunities arise from students preparing the dishes themselves, but also from horticulture classes managing community gardens and carpentry classes building garden beds and renovating cooking labs. Growing food is the learning activity that most teachers tackle first. Even in snowy climates, they have found ways to demonstrate the challenge and reward of food production. Some use indoor growing labs, and others have built garden beds and

// Bringing these opportunities to our school has increased the overall feeling of a positive community, both within our school and our beautiful and abundant province, and will without a doubt create a spark for a life-long interest in how our food is grown and where it comes from—which might even be just as important as learning how to craft an essay or solve a mathematical equation."

Heather Lewis, Educator, Bernice MacNaughton High School

greenhouses that they use seasonally. See chart below of key food literacy activities in these seven schools.

These seven New Brunswick schools have each formed relationships with one or more local farmers who sell their product to the school. As one example, Bernice MacNaughton high school sources a very broad variety of local products through Terroir Foods and Agrimarketing (TFA).

Activities	Growing Food	Preserving Healthy, Local Food	Purchasing Healthy, Local Food	Cooking Healthy, Local Food
%	86	0	29	57

* This chart shows the percent of the seven schools supported by NBFSAN that were engaged in each learning activity one year after the project began.



A NEW GOLD STANDARD FOR FOOD SERVICE RFPs!

Learnings from the Réseau des Cafétérias Communautaires and Farm to School have led the Anglophone East school district to develop one of the most progressive Requests for Proposals (RFP) for Food Services. This RFP encompasses all of the elements of a whole school and community approach to good food, ranging from requirements for local food, healthy food, hands-on student learning, food safety, and even a welcoming eating environment. They are creating a new gold standard for foods in schools!

Serving Healthy, Local Food	Choosing and Eating Healthy, Local Food	Composting Food Waste	Gaining Knowledge About the Local Food System
43	86	71	14

that were engaged in each learning activity one year





This local food distribution network was formed to meet the needs of 26 schools in the francophone south school district. After a pilot project through the Réseau des Cafétérias Communautaires (RCC) demonstrated the feasibility of cooking healthy, local foods on site at a school, 26 out of the 37 schools in the district decided to change to this model.

The RCC began buying their food through TFA. The 30 TFA farmers had been understandably hesitant in the first year, not knowing if there would be a market for their foods. Their motivation skyrocketed in the second year once they saw that the infrastructure and systems for deliveries were working well.

A study made by a local economist, Pierre-Marcel Desjardins, revealed that RCC's work generated economic benefits of \$3.8 million within the province because they chose to buy local products and use local services. In a province where many people leave in order to find work, the potential economic impact of these local purchases is significant. Their

work also succeeded in increasing the amount of local foods purchased by schools to 25-50%.

Those who are primarily drawn to Farm to School for its impacts on health are particularly happy with salad bars as they prove that when given a variety of delicious and colourful choices, students will eat and enjoy their vegetables. Despite launching their salad bar in the depths of winter - not a favourable time for salads or for

“Even when people know about healthy eating, even when people can afford it, even when you put it in front of them, there's a whole cultural and behavioral change that has to take place and that's our whole reason for doing it. Introducing healthy foods to students in many ways is key: farm tours, food tasting, food sampling, growing, preparing and serving.”

**Valerie Carmichael, Community Coordinator,
Centreville Community School**

local produce variety, another school, École Clément Cormier has seen salad purchases skyrocket from two to three pre-made cafeteria salads per week to 80 from the self-serve salad bar, even though the salad bar is available only twice per week.

Even so, the seven schools still encounter challenges. Determining the amount of food to prepare for a self-serve salad bar is an uncertain and unpredictable art, and there can sometimes be high food waste. Other challenges include trying to keep costs low for

families, while paying farmers fairly. And of course, planning for experiential education as well as recruiting volunteers can both be time-consuming.

An advantage of having seven schools on a similar trajectory in (relatively) close geographical proximity along with other school food innovators such as RCC and TFA, is the emergence of a network of people who can share ideas to help overcome challenges. Many people working in food security in New Brunswick also mention that in this sparsely populated province, it is relatively easy to meet with policy makers to talk through crucial solutions such as food distribution infrastructure and program funding.

The rapidity with which New Brunswick schools, farmers, and community partners have transformed school food systems to provide healthy, local food to students and staff has impressed people across the country. Given all that has been accomplished in a few short years, clearly this is a province to watch in years to come.

For More Information:

New Brunswick Food Security Action Network:
www.nbfoodsecurity.ca/farm-to-school

Terroir Foods and Agrimarketing (TFA):
www.recoltedecheznous.com/en/page/about_us



BRITISH COLUMBIA

Reconnecting with our Culture Through Local Foods

CALEB RUSS-EATING SALMONBERRY



Seven schools on Haida Gwaii
Farm to School BC
Farm to Cafeteria Canada
Northwest Community College
Graham Island East Coast
Farmer's Institute

Northern Health Authority
Old Masset Village Council
Farmers & Harvesters
CHN Haida Fisheries
Haida Health Center
Skidegate Health Center
Skidegate Band Council
Gwaii Trust

Beyond connecting with local farms and farmers, Haida Gwaii schools are incorporating hunting, gathering, foraging, gardening and greenhouses into their schools' food supply. This idea emerged naturally in a place where wild foods are so plentiful and the culture of feasting and sharing food is central to the island culture. This remote archipelago along the Northern BC coast has an abundance of salmon, halibut, clams, cod, crabs, deer, herring roe on kelp, octopus, a variety of seaweeds, salmonberries, huckleberries, salal berries, chanterelle mushrooms, spruce tips, elderflowers, sea asparagus and more. The schools are now benefiting from this abundance, learning about food, nature, and culture, as well as incorporating these foods into school meals.

In schools where a majority of the students are Haida First Nation, traditional local food is often not readily available. Eating local on Haida Gwaii involves a personal connection to the land and the sea or knowing where and when to get it from growers and harvesters. Eating local therefore requires time and energy that is limited in the modern working and school life. Funding for Farm to School has been instrumental in helping to support programming that connects students to their food sources one farm and field trip at a time.

Groundwork for this recent shift towards reconnecting with healthy, local foods and Haida culture was laid in 2010. Local and provincial funding for kitchen

renovations, gardens, freezers, meat grinders, vacuum sealers, and greenhouses enabled each community to both produce and preserve foods and to serve up Farm to School salad bars.

// People feel that that our food culture is being lost in institutions. That is why we need the to shift the culture back to a place where people are growing, harvesting, preserving, eating and sharing local foods through school food programs as the Learning Circle Vision states. It's just going back to what we know and getting the kids on board."

Kiku Dhanwant, Learning Circle Coordinator, Farm to Cafeteria Canada

An extensive evaluation was done to assess the impact of that initial funding. Given that each school creates their own model based on relationships, ideas, and a starting point, each excelled in different areas. Surveys and interviews showed that students were eating more fruits and vegetables as a result of Farm to School. In fact, students at one school were eating three times more fruit and vegetables on F2S salad bar days.

A recent Farm to Cafeteria Canada pilot project known as the Learning Lab (see page 18), now known as the Learning Circle on Haida Gwaii, has become an important hub for connecting all eight island schools to share plans and barriers as well as local food resources. Haida Gwaii's momentum to reconnect



HAIDA GWAII LEARNING CIRCLE VISION AND GOALS

VISION: To collectively shift culture on the islands back to a healthy life centered on our connection to locally grown, seasonal food by growing, gathering, harvesting, preparing, preserving, eating and sharing.

Goal 1: Increase food purchases from local food producers and harvesters.

Goal 2: Develop a coordinated system of food transport from farm to school on the islands.

Goal 3: Integrate wild, harvested, foraged and locally preserved food into school menus.

Goal 4: Work with community to share assets and resources.

Goal 5: Build capacity in schools and community in planning, communication and education.

Goal 6: Ensure economic sustainability of Local Foods to School.



M. Jareau / time 0
freshest garlic Romaine
broccoli Lettuce
Master.com

garlic / ail

garlic / ail

Notes

Mrs. Engel / crew
straighter:
cucumbers pickling

Mr. Lagasse
Cucumbers

Greenhouse Garden Beds

Tomatoes
June 11

Tomatoes
June 11

pumpkins

corn
may 25

Beans
Haricots
Sunflower
tournesol

cucumbers

PEAS by Dijon
Tomatoes
June 11 Mr. Lagasse
cucumbers

June 16th Ho Karrow's class
yellow beans & soybean

grape x 2



with culture through food has led to more concerted discussions about a vision and key goals (see sidebar). Champions such as school principals, teachers, farmers, food gatherers, preservation experts, and youth all contributed. Advantageously, this group has now become a valued advisory group that can discuss and tackle bigger food sovereignty issues on the islands as a whole.

During a visioning exercise as part of the first Learning Circle, the group agreed that “If money were no object, kids would enjoy local, healthy food in schools five days a week. Courses would focus on getting students outside and teaching self-sufficiency through farming, traditional skills and growing food on school grounds.” These concepts and values are the foundation of the Vision and Goals that the Haida Gwaii Learning Circle has co-created and is actively implementing.

School staff are now planning menus according to seasonal food availability. Even in the cold month of March, each day featured at least one food grown or harvested on Haida Gwaii. To boost pantry stocks, students and staff are making bulk batches of salsa, tomato sauce, soup stock, and jam. They are also dehydrating mushrooms, blanching and freezing greens and other veggies, and smoking and freezing fish. Preserving foods on a large scale is the only way to ensure a supply of local food year-round in the North. The Learning

Circle is therefore spearheading the establishment of Local Food Pantries on the islands to ensure that schools can purchase good quality local food throughout the year.

Through local food initiatives in schools, students learn all aspects of the food cycle, from hunting through to feasting. For example, a samosa making workshop at George M Dawson secondary school not only teaches student how to cook exotic tasty foods but helps them to weave together the story of where their food is sourced. As students prepared samosas with the deer meat that other students had hunted, the chanterelle mushrooms they had foraged and preserved, and the kale they had grown in the school garden, they learned what it takes to get local food to the table.

Integrating these food related teachings into school programming and changing how foods are sourced

requires funding and strong community-school relationships. Recent funding for a Learning Circle coordinator has provided the convening power to build and maintain that momentum. This timely funding successfully built on the previous waves of funding for team building, planning, kitchen and garden equipment, knowledge transfer and exchange, and evaluation. All of these elements were crucial in progressing from ‘food as usual’ to ‘Farm to School’ and now to the more locally relevant and celebrated ‘Local Foods to School’ as it has come to be known on Haida Gwaii.

For More Information:

Farm to School Haida Gwaii:

www.facebook.com/farmtoschoolhaidagwaii

www.farmtoschoolbc.ca

VIDEO: Farm to School Haida Gwaii



www.vimeo.com/46597015
(English, 1:23 minutes)



UNITED STATES

What Can We Learn From the US Experience?





The USA provides an example of what is possible with more time, a strong grassroots movement, more robust state and federal funding, and strong national leadership. Farm to School (F2S) efforts began in the US as early as 1997. Since then, F2S has grown from a small number of schools to approximately 40,000 schools in all 50 states, representing 44% of all US schools.

There are many factors that led to this remarkable growth. Discussions and policy change throughout the 2000's, partly catalyzed by concerns about childhood obesity, led to an increase in grassroots initiatives, as well as increased private and public financial support for F2S. The US national school meal program seemed to many a logical entry point for improving children's eating habits.

In 2004, federal legislative language was adopted that supported Farm to School. Continued advocacy led to the groundbreaking inclusion of financial and technical assistance for F2S in the 2010 reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act. Five million dollars was made available annually for school grants for developing partnerships, planning, training, equipment, and implementation of Farm to School. Even so, this funding only supports one fifth of the schools that want to be part of Farm to School.

The US Farm to School movement is supported by a strong National Farm to School Network (NFSN). The



“The network is about connecting people to people, people to their voice - the advocacy function, and the right people to the right information so they can take action on Farm to School.”

Anupama Joshi, Executive Director & Co-Founder, USA National Farm to School Network

network came into being in 2007 after a year and a half of consultations to learn whether a network was needed and what functions it could serve. The NFSN's priorities are equally important eight years later: they are a hub for information sharing, for advocacy - primarily at the federal level, and for networking. One significant role they take on is to plan a national conference every second year. The next one will be in Madison, Wisconsin in June 2016, and is expected to draw 1500 Farm to School advocates from across the country.

For More Information:

US Farm to School Network:
www.farmtoschool.org



Growing Canada's Farm to School Movement

Farm to School is everyone's movement. Every parent, every farmer, every teacher, every student, every level of government, and every funder has a part to play.

As these stories show, there are multiple entry points. Action can begin with one teacher who decides to start growing and cooking food with her students. It begins with one cafeteria instructor who decides to find out where his ingredients are sourced. It begins with one farmer who starts a conversation about school lunch with a school principal. It begins with one parent who reaches out to her provincial F2S lead for help.



FRESH ROOTS URBAN FARM SOCIETY

To grow and strengthen Farm to School across Canada, actions and funding are needed at all levels, from the grassroots school initiatives to national level coordination. Conversations with champions across the country have highlighted many ways for strengthening our Farm to School roots, sprouting new branches, and producing more fruit:



At the School Level

Offer hands on food and food system education, E.g., growing and cooking food, field trips to farms and food processing facilities, taste tests, student leadership initiatives. (See pages 11, 15, 27, 31)



Provide training, equipment, and time for cafeteria staff to use fresh, local, whole foods in food preparation. (See page 31)



At the School District Level

Create school food service Request for Proposals (RFPs) that outline requirements for local, healthy, sustainable food, healthy eating environments, and student engagement in food learning. (See pages 21, 27)



At the Regional Level

Rebuild regional food systems. Create production, procurement and distribution networks and models for public institutions. (See pages 27, 25)



At the Provincial Level

Embed food literacy and food skills into school curriculum. (See page 11)

Federally and at All Levels



Ensure schools have equipment needed for food-based education. E.g. kitchens and kitchen equipment, gardens and garden equipment. Ensure school funding formulas include on-site kitchen infrastructure. (See page 31)



Create regional, provincial, and national networks to share information, provide technical support, propose policy solutions, and evaluate initiatives. (See pages 17, 27, 31, 35)



Adopt institutional food procurement policy that prioritizes local, healthy, and sustainable food. (See page 21)



Hire staff at all levels (school, region, province, federal) to teach food literacy, get healthy, local, sustainable foods in schools, and build community connections. (See pages 27, 31)



Fund a universal school food program that has as its goal healthy, local and sustainable meals for students every day. (See page 15)



Change the culture of what foods and teachings are normal in our schools.





Staying connected.

Each food-based experience, each change in procurement practice, each new relationship formed between students, staff, farmers and distributors contributes to changing our food culture. We are moving towards a system that values local, healthy, sustainable food for all and proves it by getting these foods into the minds, onto the plates and into the mouths of Canada's students. Please join us on this journey to improving children's learning and health, preserving our environment, and building local economies.

Farm to Cafeteria Canada is Canada's premier national network championing and linking programs, policy and practice to bring local, healthy and sustainable foods into schools. As of 2015, it is supported by champion agencies in seven provinces. F2CC is looking to grow the network to be sure there is a Farm to School presence in every community.

If you are interested in starting your community's journey with Farm to School, connect with your regional lead (listed to the right) and visit www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca for resources. You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter.

Provincial leads:

Alberta

Catherine White*Alberta Health Services***Email:** Catherine.White2@albertahealthservices.ca**Website:** www.foodsecurityalberta.org**Susan Roberts***Alberta Food Matters***Email:** runstreak@gmail.com**Website:** www.foodsecurityalberta.org

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Vanessa Perrodou*Farm to School BC**through the Public Health Association of BC***Email:** prov.manager@farmtoschoolbc.ca**Website:** www.farmtoschoolbc.ca

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Copies of this book may be downloaded from www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca