

A Summary

May 15-17, 2019
Victoria, BC



Conference Hosts and Partners

The 2019 National Farm to School Conference was hosted by:



Lead Host Organization



Local Host Organization

As part of *Farm to School: Canada Digs In!*

A multi-sectoral chronic disease prevention initiative, in partnership with:



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



MEAL EXCHANGE



équiterre



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About the Conference

Canada's first ever National Farm to School Conference was held in Victoria, BC, from May 15-17, 2019.

The conference set out to: **INSPIRE, INNOVATE** & organize for **IMPACT** to close the distance between farm and fork and bring more healthy, local & sustainable foods to the minds & plates of students, from pre-school to campus.

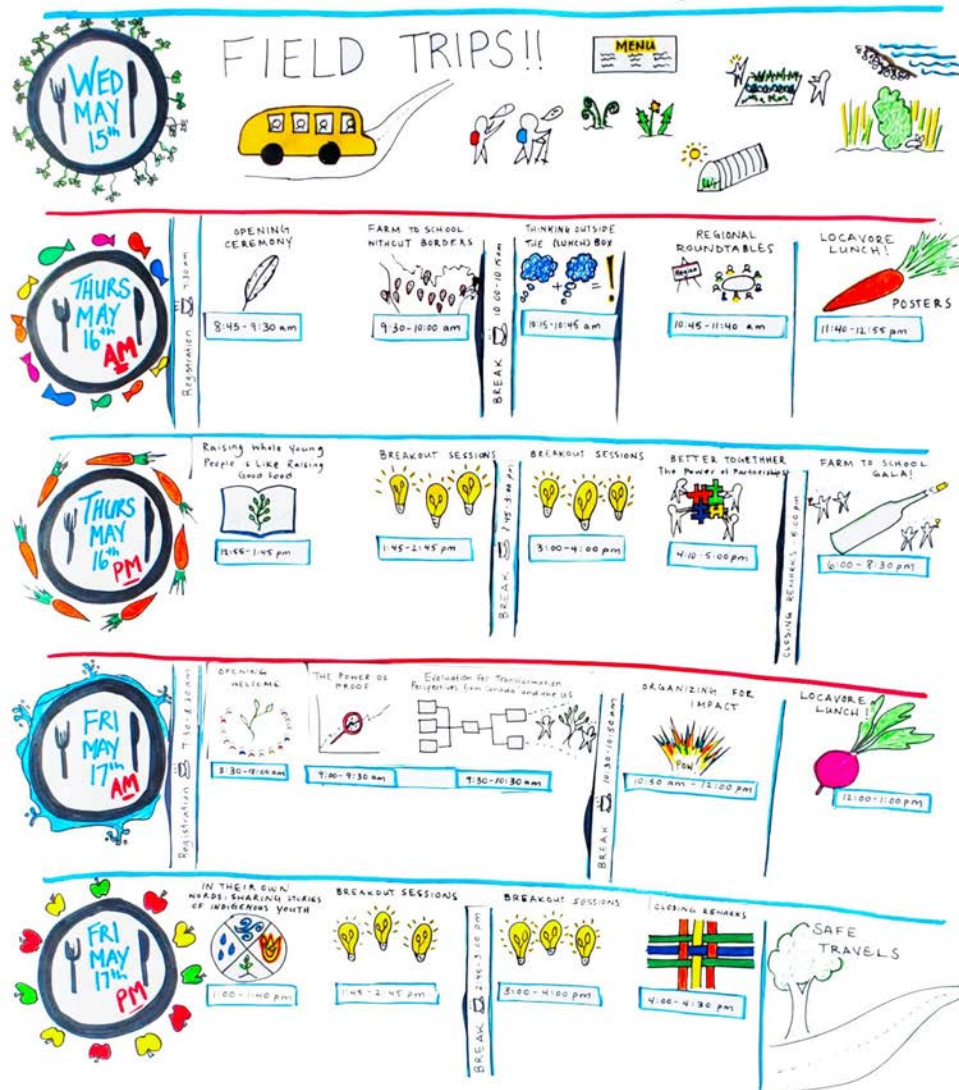
Building on **Changing the Menu: 2015 School Food Conference**, with its focus on strengthening partnerships, and celebrating and inspiring action, the 2019 conference emphasized scaling-up efforts and evaluating impacts of farm and local food to school activities happening across Canada – putting more healthy, local and sustainable foods on the minds and plates of all students.

In addition to presentations from our featured speakers in plenaries, panels and oral sessions, this conference also created a space for rich dialogues and strengthening collaboration. In short, we sought to create a [Different Kind of Conference](#).



NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL CONFERENCE

MAY 15-17, 2019



About This Report

The following summary presents highlights from the event, acknowledging that the richness of the content was generated through the discussions and meaningful dialogues of conference participants as well as the contributions of speakers.

Fuller session descriptions and powerpoint presentations are available at 2019farmtoschoolconf.sched.com

Photos have been shared on the [Conference Facebook photo album](#).

Like the conference itself, these proceedings are intended to be interactive.

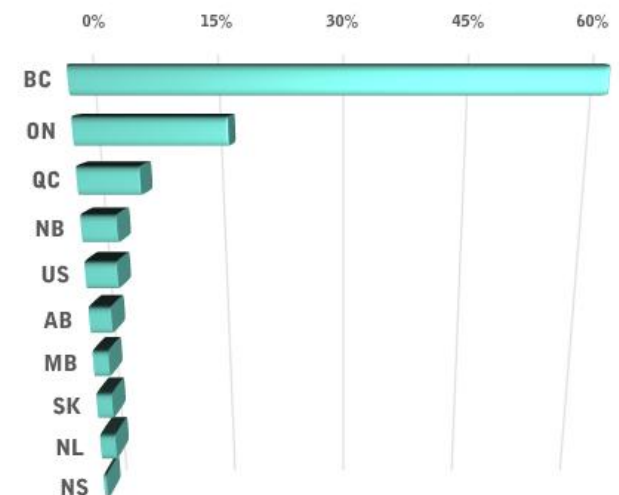
About Our Participants

Over the course of this event over 300 participants from a variety of sectors and provinces (as well as outside of Canada) gathered in Victoria, BC, to learn, network, and collaborate.

What sector(s) best represent you? (select up to 2)



What province are you from?



Meeting Participant Expectations

Results from our post-conference survey: (37% Response Rate)

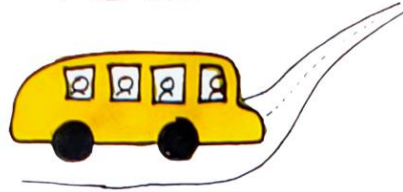
- **97% Agreed or Strongly Agreed** that the information presented at the conference was relevant to their work
- **96% Agreed or Strongly Agreed** that the conference was inspiring
- **87% Agreed or Strongly Agreed** that the conference met their expectations
- **84% Agreed or Strongly Agreed** that attending the conference will enable them to make effective changes in their work
- **88% Agreed or Strongly Agreed** that the overall discussion was of high quality
- **84% Agreed or Strongly Agreed** that as a result of attending the conference they will be able to make effective changes in their work



Six Field Trips



FIELD TRIPS!!



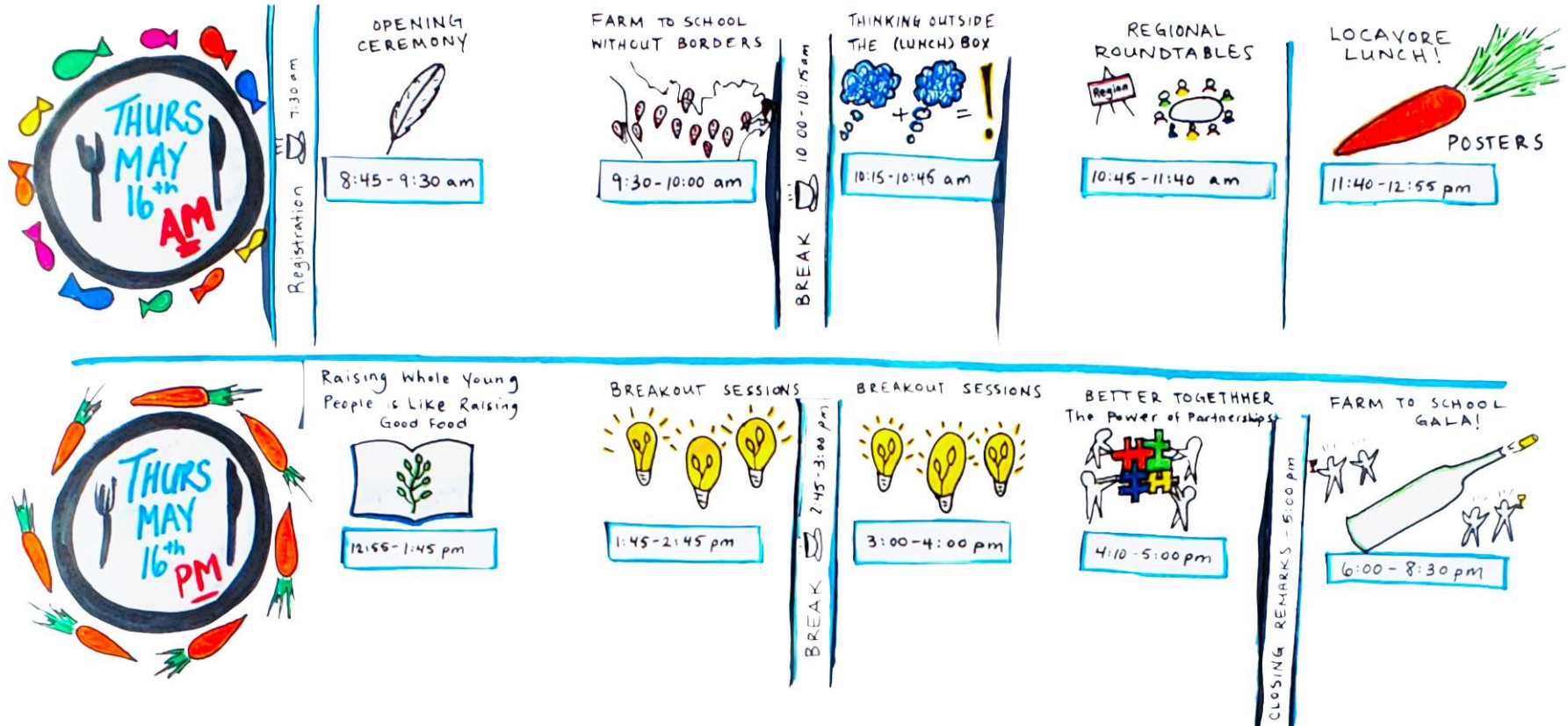
The conference began with a day of tours to local land, schools and shores that included a tour exploring urban farming and campus food Initiatives, an urban food systems walking tour, a visit to OUR ECO Village in the Cowichan Valley as well as a Wild Harvest Foraging Workshop and Coastal School Visit in the Sooke Area, a Salt Spring Island Farm to School Tour, and Indigenous Foodscapes at *PEPÁKEN HÁUTW*.

For a list of field trip descriptions visit the conference website.

<https://farmtoschoolconference2019.ca/field-trips>



Conference Day 1



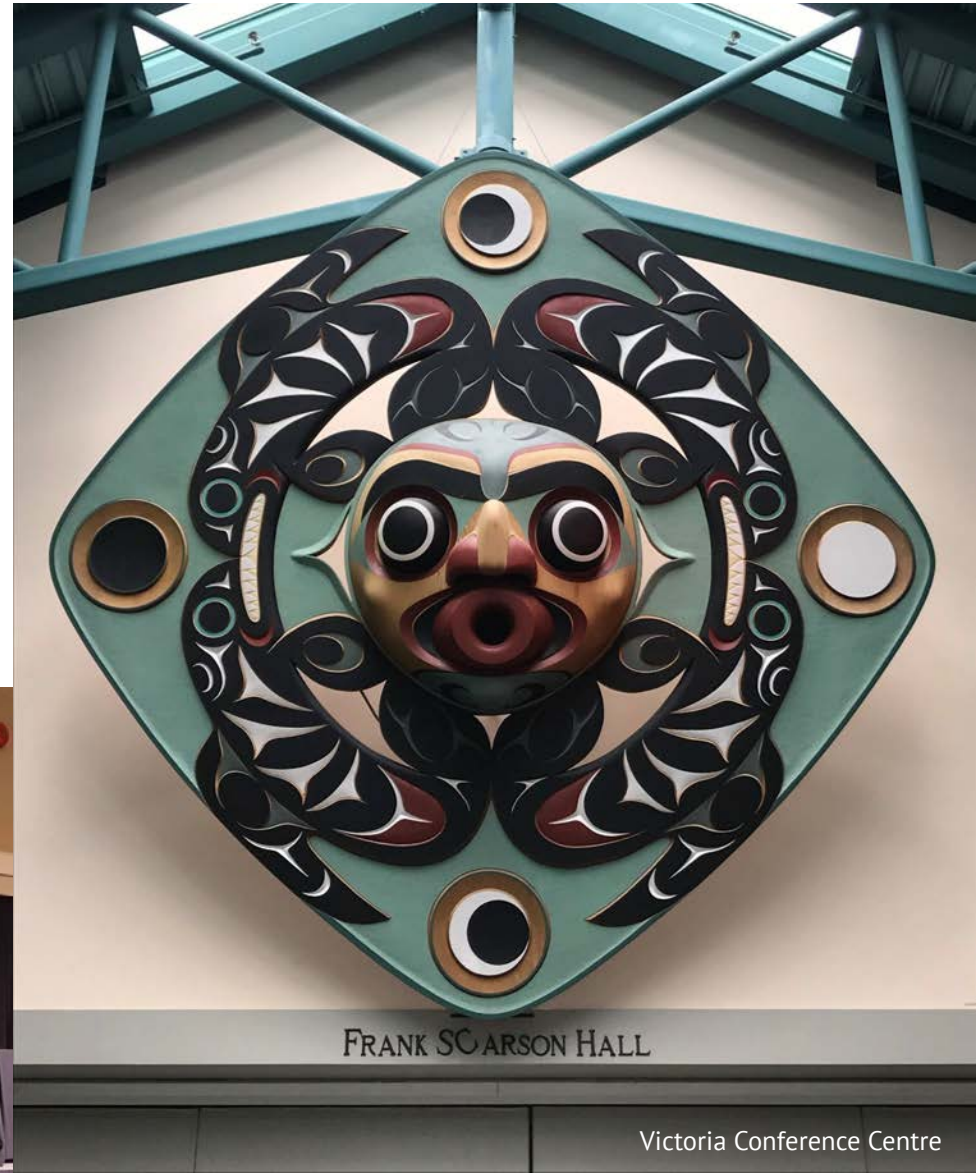
Day 1 of the conference set out to inspire and illuminate the farm to school landscape in Canada and beyond to foster and strengthen partnerships.

Opening and Welcome

The conference began with traditional greetings inviting us to work together on the traditional territory of the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ Nations.

This was a powerful opening for the National Farm to School conference. We were asked to recognize ourselves as experts, that we too are linked to the land and are responsible for it.

The conference was designed to enable experiential knowledge and participatory learning.



During the opening ceremony, Canada's Minister of Health, Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor provided a warm welcome, via letter, speaking about her support of F2CC and the national F2S activity the organization is championing.

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

**Message from the Minister of Health
2019 National Farm to School Conference
May 15-17, 2019**

Encouraging healthy eating habits in children and youth is important to ensure a healthy future for young Canadians. Healthy eating habits also help prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. Research shows that poor diet is a top risk factor for these conditions.

The Government of Canada is supporting initiatives that promote healthy eating among children and youth in Canada. We are proud to be providing \$1.8 million over three years to implement the *Farm to School: Canada Digs In!* initiative. This initiative aims to bring healthy, locally grown food into schools, and provides students with hands-on opportunities to learn about healthy food options, meal preparation, sustainable food systems, local food production, and more.

Just this year, we launched the new Canada's Food Guide, which promotes healthy eating in a variety of settings, including schools. The new Food Guide encourages Canadians to eat vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein foods and promotes life-long healthy eating habits by encouraging people to cook and prepare healthy foods at home.

Promoting healthy eating habits and improving access to nutritious foods requires support and collaboration among partners across Canada. This conference is an excellent opportunity for people from different sectors and disciplines to come together to collaborate and inspire one another to find new ways to improve eating behaviours among students. Your collective efforts will help make it easier for children and youth in schools and on campuses to learn about healthy eating and adopt nutritious eating habits for life.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank *Farm to Cafeteria Canada* for making this conference possible and for their valuable contributions in improving the health and well-being of children, youth, and young adults across Canada. This important work will have a positive impact today and for generations. By working together, we can help make the healthy choice the easy choice for all Canadians.

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, P.C., M.P.

Canada

Participants were invited to share their biggest
Farm to School questions coming into the conference.

What is your biggest burning question coming into this conference?
Quelle est votre plus grande question en arrivant à cette conférence?

Respond at [PollEv.com/f2sconferenc467](https://www.poll-ev.com/f2sconferenc467) Text **F2SCONFERENC467** to **37607** once to join, then text your message



These questions included how to support good food for all, Indigenous food ways, evaluation, fundraising, and many program elements.

Farm to School Without Borders



Seven leaders from across Canada and the United States shared short 2-minute lightning talks that illuminated a living landscape of Farm to School activity. Participants learned about the vibrant programs, partnerships, and policies that are advancing Farm to School across our borders.

Farm to School Without Borders - Highlights



Farm to School BC is a diverse and expanding provincial network that has funded 208 schools and since 2014 has had over 12,000 participating students. F2SBC has 6 regional hubs with local community animators who build school and community capacity.



In Budget 2018, the Alberta government allocated \$15.5 million towards its commitment of phasing in a targeted school nutrition program for elementary students in the province for the 2018/19 school year.



The Province of Manitoba and partners offer the Farm to School Manitoba Healthy Choice Fundraiser for schools and licensed daycares.



The Saskatchewan government allocated \$709,000 in its spring budget towards school nutrition programs – including feeding programs, food skills (cooking/gardening) and food access.



In Yukon “Kids on the Farm” offers school field trips to local farms for K-12 students where students interact with livestock, work with soil and compost and become natural managers of a farm operation. Since 2013, over 3,500 students have participated.

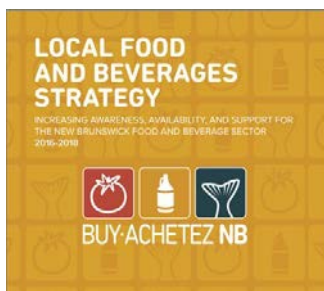


The Ontario Local Food Act (2013) has provided funding to F2S programs to increase local food literacy, access to local food, and institutional procurement.

Farm to School Without Borders - Highlights



Quebec's local food recognition program was launched in 2017 to recognize schools, hospitals, health care and other institutions that prioritize local foods in their menus.



In 2016 New Brunswick developed its Local Food and Beverage Strategy that sets a target that 30% of foods served in school cafeterias should be sourced locally.



The South Shore School Food Project in Nova Scotia works collaboratively to build healthy menus in schools and make positive changes to food culture in cafs, classrooms and communities.



PEI is piloting a comprehensive and sustainable cost-shared school food program that will increase students' food literacy and provide them with food made from scratch using fresh, local, healthy Island products.

Full presentations are available on the [Conference Website](#).



Food First Newfoundland and Labrador hosted a Farm to School Learning Circle from 2014-2016 and helped create the new [Learning Circle Guide](#) that was launched at the conference.



F2S, by the numbers in the US:

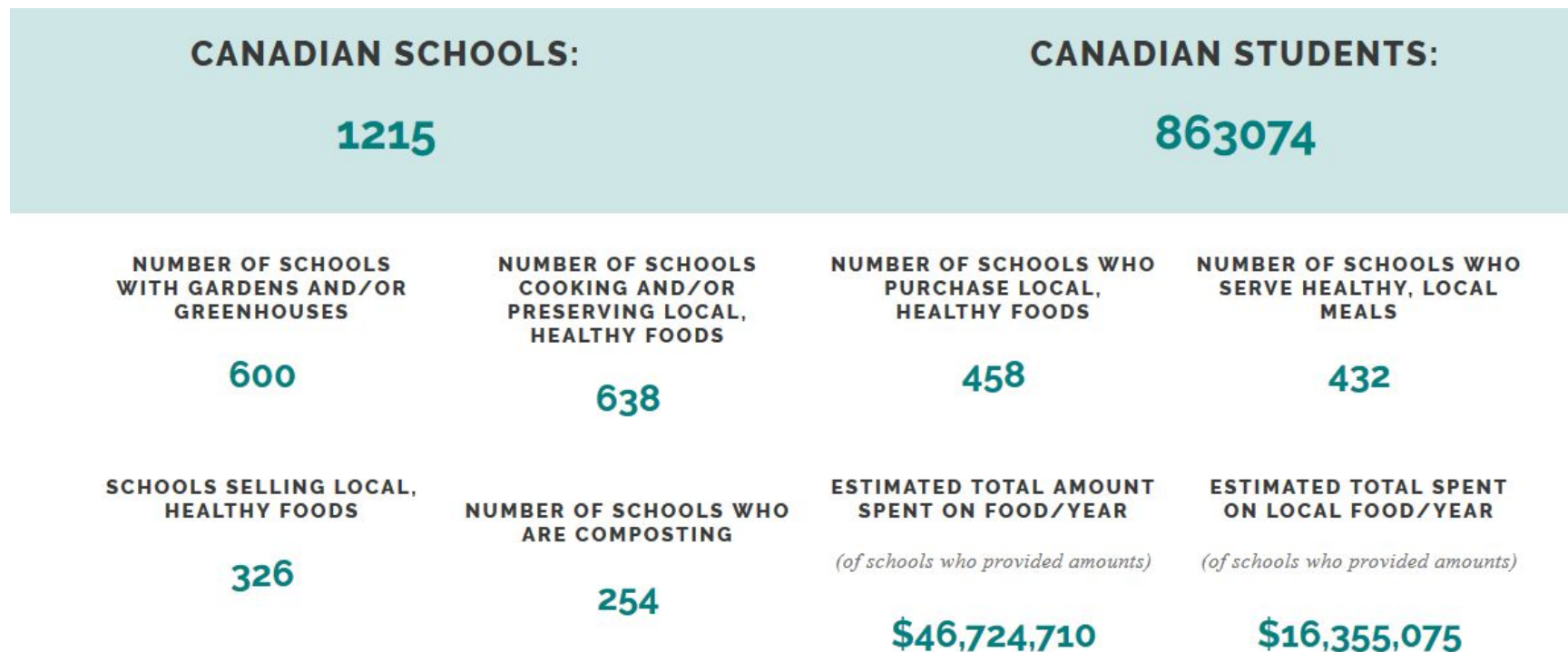
- 42,587 schools
- 42% of schools
- 49% of ECE providers surveyed
- 23.6 million children
- \$789 Million dollars of local food
- Supportive policies in 46 states & DC

Farm to School Without Borders - Highlights

At a national level in Canada, we learned that 1,215 schools (pre-school - grade 12) and campuses have shared their farm to school activity with F2CC so that it could be tracked on the nation's only [school food map](#).

These educational institutes report they are providing 863,074 students with an opportunity to experience growing, harvesting, preparing and eating healthy local foods at school.

The estimated combined local food spend of these schools is \$16 M annually.

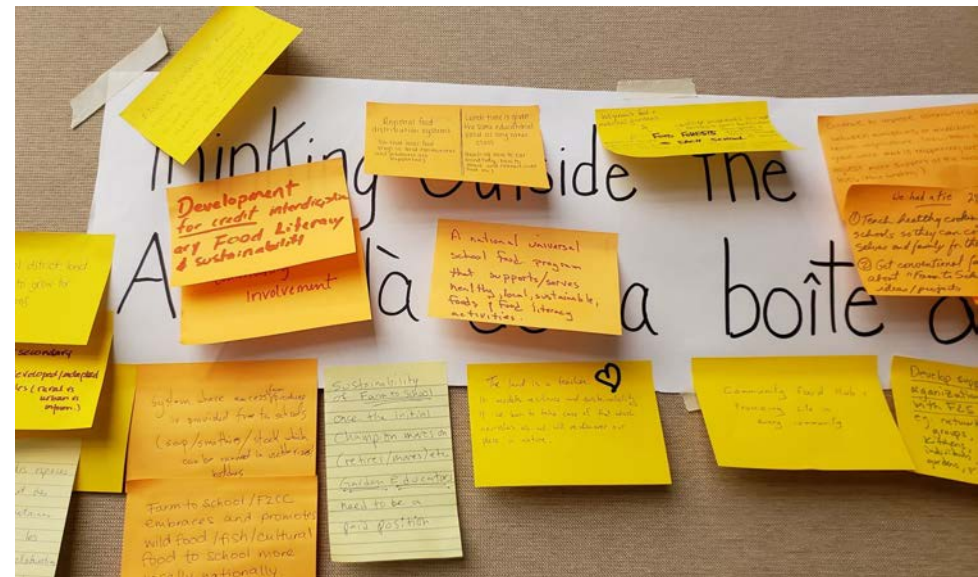


Thinking Outside the (Lunch)box

Participants worked together to identify big, bold, ideas to fuel the momentum to get more healthy, local, and sustainable foods into the minds and onto the plates of students.

These ideas included:

- That lunch time is given the same educational value as any other class (teaching how to eat mindfully, how to share and connect over food, etc.)
- Developing an online hub that
 - (a) connects growers and schools;
 - (b) connects schools and funding sources.
- Building schools sustainably with integrated farms, greenhouses, green energy and ecosystem-friendly infrastructure.
- Providing school district land to new farmers to grow for school food programs



Regional Conversations

Participants met with others from their region and the rooms were a buzz of animated conversations. During these knowledge exchange sessions, participants shared the activities taking place in their regions and connected with one another. Participants left with a deeper knowledge of what is happening in their region along with new relationships and opportunities for collaboration.



Locavore Lunch

We are so grateful to our local food sponsors, their contributions made our meals an event of their own! The following farmer producers generously donated locally grown products for our lunch service.

[TOPSOIL](#) - Salad Greens

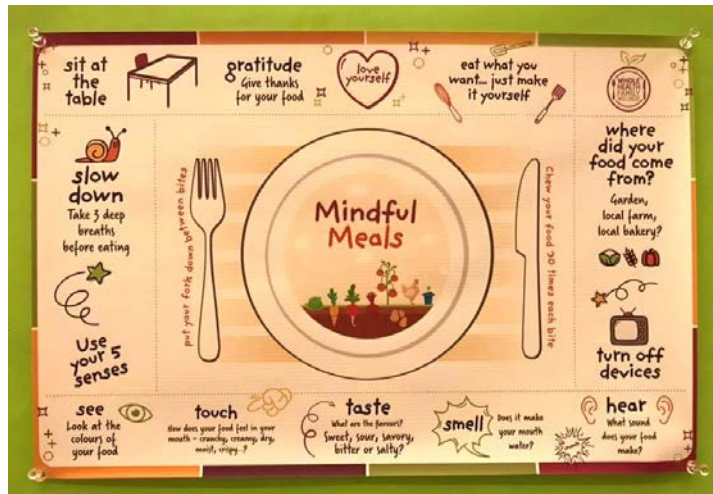
[Cowichan Pasta Company](#) - Pasta

[Cow-Op](#) - Kale



Poster Session

Participants visited over 20 vibrant Farm to School poster presentations.



The full list of presentations and many of the posters are available at <https://sched.co/OY4V>

Keynote : Michael Abelman

Raising Whole Young People is like Raising Good Food

Michael Abelman shared the story of his beginnings and how they framed his thinking and actions today. Much of this is shared on his website at <http://michaeltabelman.com>.

He argues that reinstating and valuing hands-on learning with food should be a core curriculum subject that should have as much value within the educational system as any other academic subject.

"Most of society doesn't know what it's like to pull a carrot out of the ground."

"Replant, reimagine, reinspire every individual and seed you encounter."

"Compassion is transforming hard urban landscapes into living breathing growing urban gardens."



Keynote : Michael Abelman

Michael Abelman also shared that developing food and garden literacy has positive impacts well beyond nutrition and economic yield. Being connected to land provides nourishment for the soul. Local connections and relations build and strengthen people in the community as well as the students and farmers involved. This is an important step towards a range of benefits such as equal access to real food and the opportunity to do something meaningful with our lives.

The range of subjects and skills that would emerge naturally from hands-on food literacy education is wide. For example, life skills (cooking, finance, driving, etc.) would engage students in active learning. Harvesting food, feeding a neighbourhood, and realizing that plants depend on you for survival, makes local food production more visible and shares it's true role as the soul of a community.



Breakout Sessions

Participants visited breakout sessions

on themes of Food Literacy, Local Procurement, Indigenous Foodways, Making Connections: farmers, fishers, food hubs, and supply chains, and many more.

Short summaries of many of the sessions are available on the [Conference Website](#).



*School Farms & Market Gardens:
Opportunities & lessons learned*



*From Policy to Action,
Farm to School: Canada Digs In!*



*Experiential Learning: Growing and Cooking
at School, from Coast to Coast*

Better Together: The Power of Partnerships

Our panel of change agents and investors from diverse sectors shared why they are keen to be engaged in transformative change to get more healthy local sustainable foods into the minds and onto the plates of students.

"It's humbling to access the knowledge in the room."

"A good partnership = humility + common vision + trust + curiosity + good listening."

"Live in the messiness, recognize & respect different mandates."

Strategize around viral social media; champion to make a video; invite parents, community to witness food activities; invite school district to a salad bar!; power of kids' voices."



Better Together panel: Brent Mansfield (moderator), Patti Murphy (PHAC), Mira Laufer (Corus Media), Don Buckingham (CAPI), Arzeena Hamir (farmer), Nona Evans (Whole Kids Foundation)

More Canadian Students to Experience the Joy of Farm to School



WHOLE
KIDS[®]
FOUNDATION

Dedicated to improve children's nutrition by supporting schools and inspiring families.

Nona Evans, CEO of Whole Kids Foundation, and Grant Daisley, Associate Marketing Coordinator of Western Canada for Whole Foods Stores spoke of their strong partnership with Farm to Cafeteria Canada - a partnership built around alignment with vision and values and deep trust. Reaffirming their commitment to improve health of children and planet, Nona and Grant announced an additional investment of \$500,000. F2CC will deliver the lion's share of this investment directly to schools to enable more students in more provinces to experience the joy of Farm to School.

We were left with a beautiful recording of the day, created by our talented Master of Ceremonies Dr Theresa Healy.



Celebrating the Harvest: Reception and Dinner

Later that evening participants enjoyed a reception and dinner at the Songhees Wellness Centre.



Thank you to [Spinnakers Brewery](#), [Parsell Vineyard](#), [Salt Spring Island Cheese Company](#), [Little Oualicum Cheeseworks](#), [The Cultured Nut](#) and [Jenny Marie's Cracker Company](#) for contributing your delicious local products to our evening!



Celebrating the Harvest: Reception and Dinner

We were welcomed by the Lekwungen Traditional Dancers



Celebrating the Harvest: Reception and Dinner

BC's Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Lana Popham, spoke about her support for F2S and the way she is accelerating the realization of the F2S vision through her Ministry's [Grow BC, Feed BC, Buy BC](#) initiative.



Celebrating the Harvest: Reception and Dinner

Michelle Lessard Award and Young Chef Competition

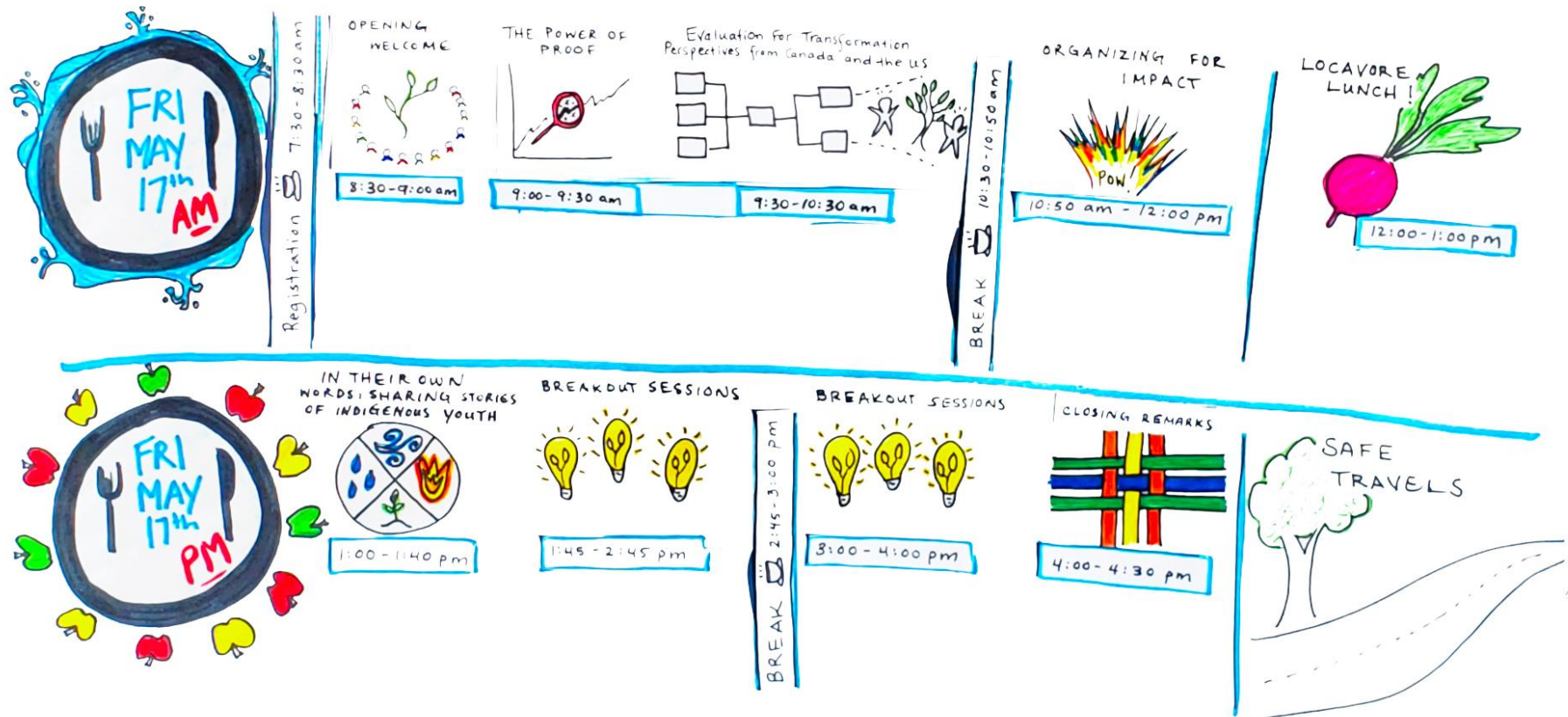
During the dinner, two awards were presented:

Michelle Lessard Award - presented to **Nanâtohk Mîciwin** ([Universal School Food Strategy](#)) for demonstrating exemplary leadership in Farm to School programming, practice or policy, as voted by the national Farm to School community.

Young Chef's Competition - a student recipe contest, inspired by BC local ingredients. The winning recipes, developed by **Sarah Priet & Laura Siegenthaler**, were cooked up and served as part of the dinner celebration. [Meet the winners.](#)



Conference Day 2



Day 2 focused on inspiring for influence and impact with the morning dedicated to conversations about the power of proof, evaluation for transformation and organizing for impact.

Opening

On Day 2 of the conference, we [shared a welcome video](#) from Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Honourable Marie Claude Bibeau, endorsing the F2S vision of *more healthy local sustainable foods on the minds and plates of students*. Minister Bibeau went on to speak about the way [Canada's National Food Policy](#) will support that vision through the provision of funds for local food infrastructure and through the commencement of dialogue towards a National School Food Program.



"You are all helping children get the best head start in life by finding ways to get more locally-grown, nutritious food in schools."

Keynote: Wayne Roberts

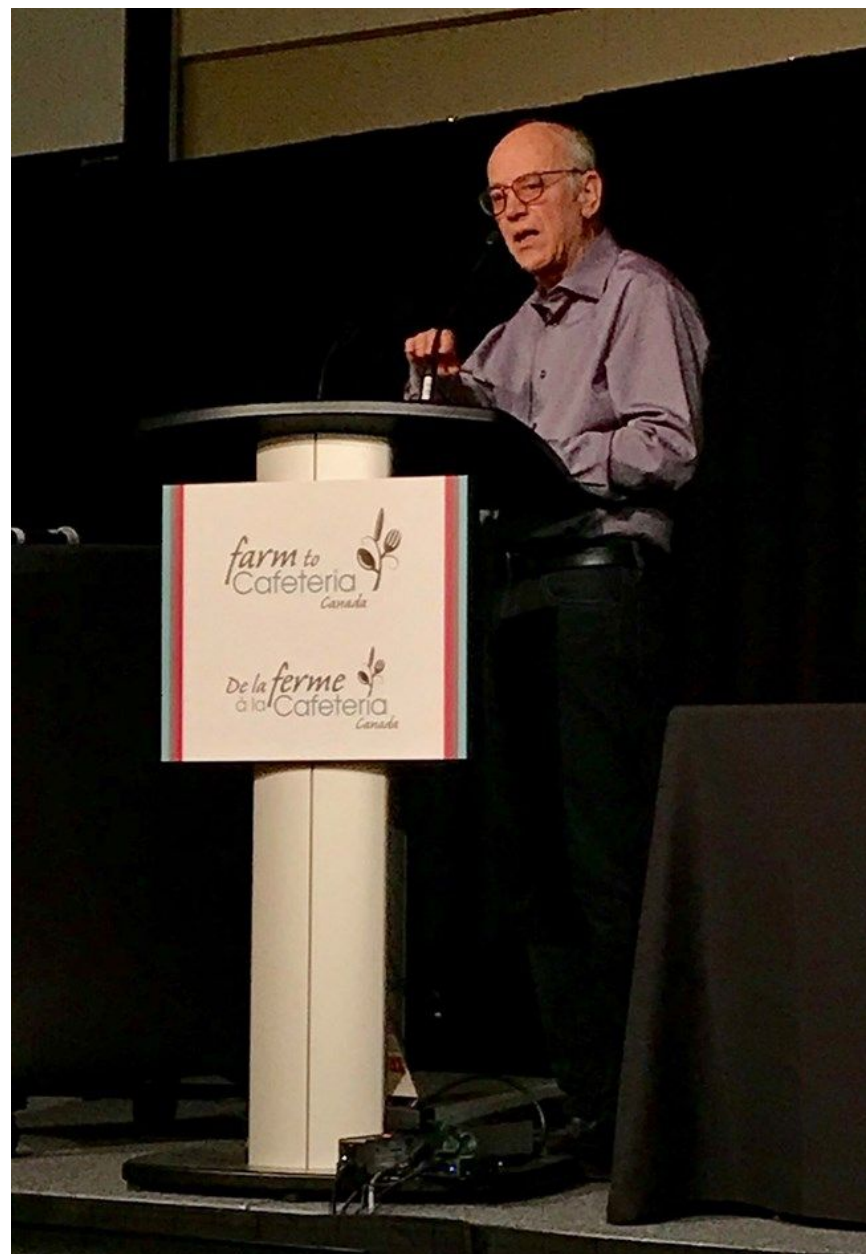
Power of Proof

Wayne Roberts, food policy advocate, speaker, and author, shared the need to document and share proof about the benefits of Farm to School. In his view, Weak evidence = a weak movement; Great evidence = a great movement.

He felt that the timing of conference is perfect with the government's announcement of a National School Food Program.

Wayne spoke to the precautionary principle: it's better to prevent chronic disease than try to treat it after – there is a cost to doing a program and there is a cost to NOT doing a program.

He suggested that we could build on the common sense that kids would learn better if fed. Getting this on the agenda is key, and measuring this is key.



Keynote: Wayne Roberts

Power of Proof

Wayne shared the following insights:

The power of storytelling – humans have evolved to tell and hear stories. We need to put together evidence in the context of real people. We also need to **trust in the power** of children having their voices heard.

Building movements 101 – it's important to start where people are at and move toward incremental change.

It is possible to make a decent report front page news – it needs (1) good evidence, (2) to be share-worthy, (3) to be time-worthy, (4) to be policy-worthy.

We need to build business case with both fact-based AND emotional evidence. It's important to share the Return on Investment (ROI) - health care costs etc... AND social ROI - better social outcomes.

We need to move **beyond the idea that food is only about physical health**. It's also about many social factors including mental health, social skills, multiculturalism.

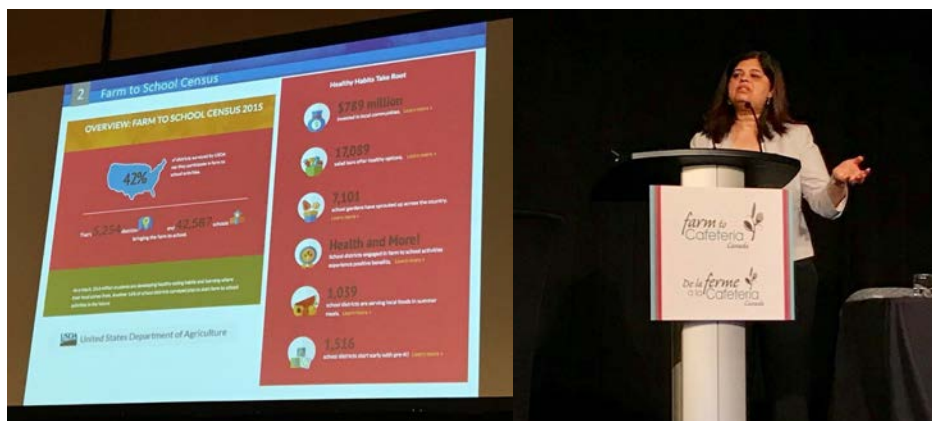
People-centred food policy – policy is usually about supply chain and/or food as nutrition. A neglected field is food in relation to people. We need to focus on that.



Evaluation for Transformation

Perspectives from Canada and the US

Our panel from across Canada and the United States shared their insights into how participants can use evaluation for transformation.



Anupama Joshi, Blue Sky Funders Forum

Anupama Joshi spoke about the US Farm to School Network's [Evaluation Framework for farm to school](#) and gave an overview of the [USDA's Farm to School Census](#) including how the Network is making use of this data and is linking to USDA goals.

Kim Raine shared the history of the University of Alberta's [Nutrition Report Card on the Food Environment for Children and Youth](#) and spoke to the need for this type of evidence combined with effective advocacy. Her final reflection: "don't wait for 'perfect' evidence to act"



Kim Raine, University of Alberta

Evaluation for Transformation

Perspectives from Canada and the US



Lacy Stephens shared the US National Farm to School Network's focus on measuring the [economic impacts of Farm to School](#) by looking at local food spending in the state and extrapolate broader economic impact for advocacy purposes.

Lacy Stephens, U.S. National Farm to School Network

Scott Graham spoke about the evaluation process and results of the Farm to School: Canada Digs In! project. He highlighted [preliminary findings](#) of the project linked to Canada's Food Guide.



The data we have gathered to date is centered around the **Farm to School Salad Bar Model** that has been implemented in:

- 91 schools
- Across 5 provinces
- Affording 55,000 students (K-12) an opportunity to experience Farm to School

Looking for more of our results?

Check out:

Evaluation in practice: early impacts of Farm to School

Today at 1:45pm in the Sidney Room

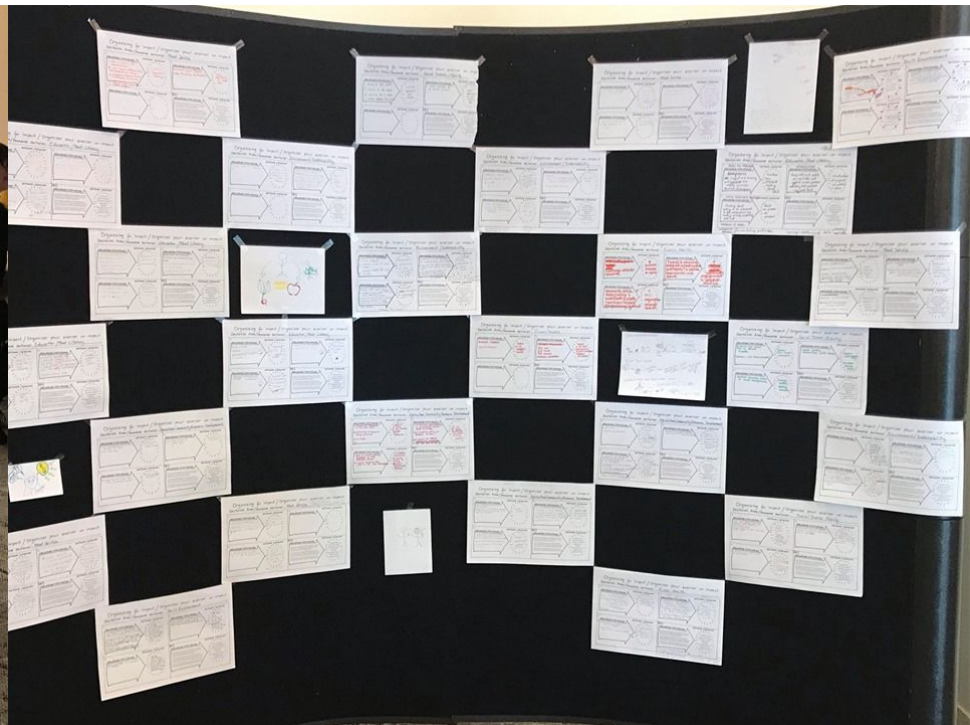


Scott Graham, SPARC BC

Our presenters' full powerpoint presentations are available on the [Conference Website](#).

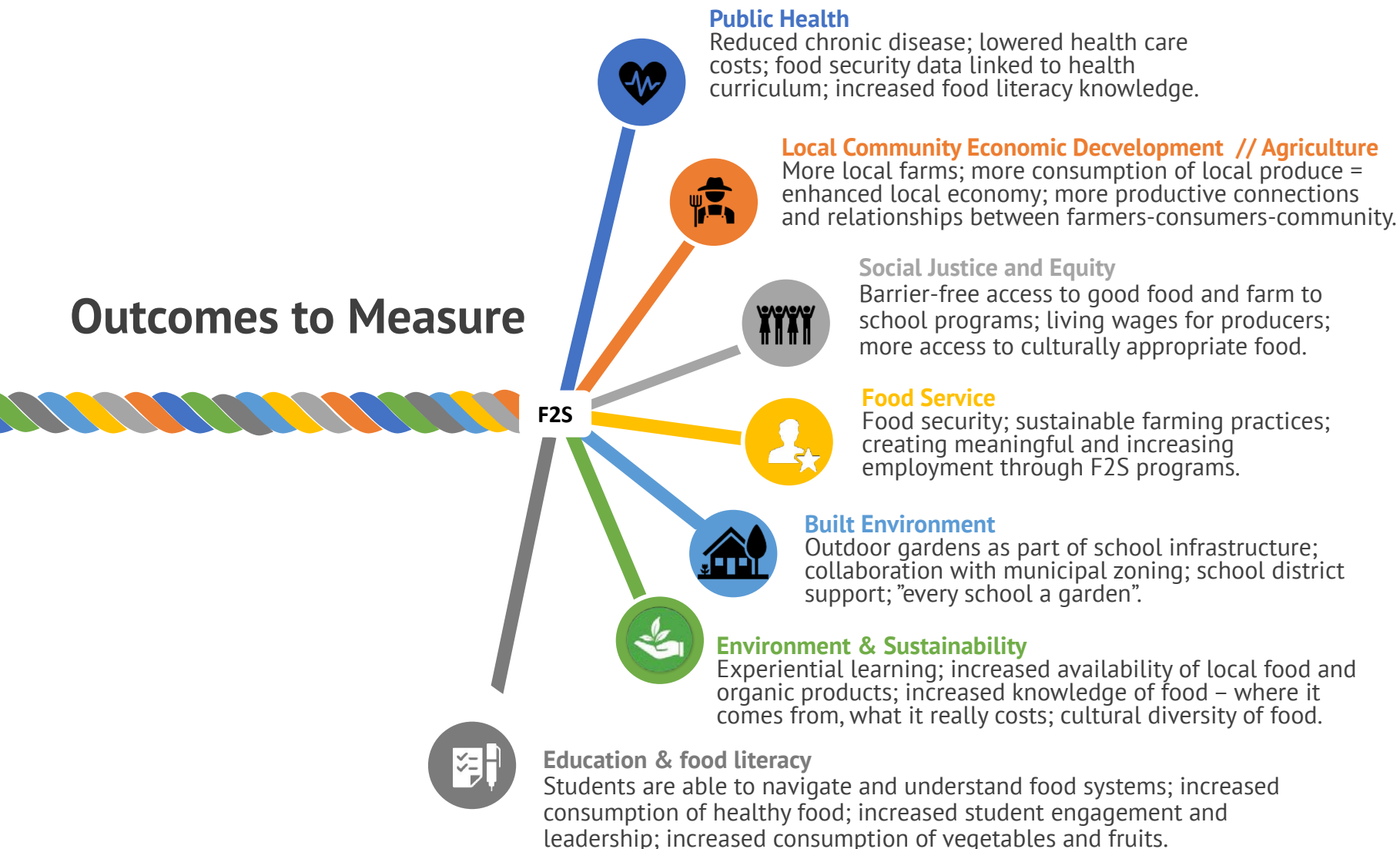
Organizing for Impact

Participants engaged in a participatory activity to launch a national dialogue around developing a common evaluation framework for Farm to School initiatives in Canada.



Organizing for Impact - Examples of Discussion Results

Outcomes to Measure



Visit the [Conference Website](#) to access the full results of the discussion.

Farm to School Award for International Leadership

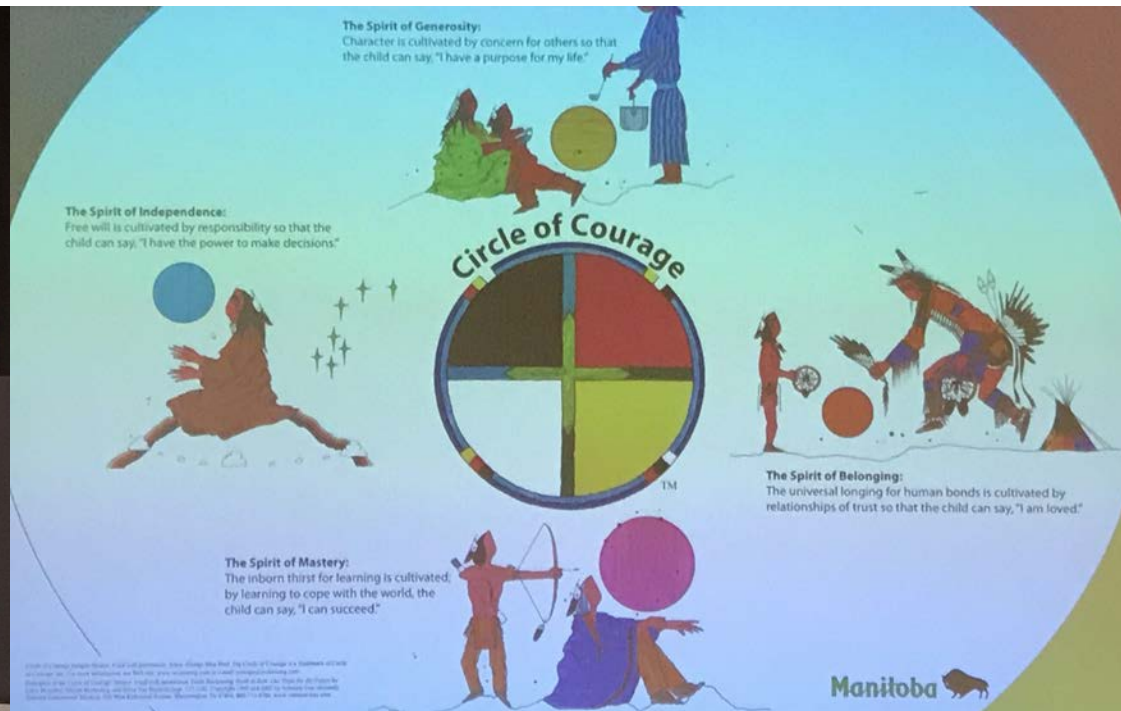
Joanne Bays, National Director Farm to Cafeteria Canada presented the Farm to School Award for International Leadership to **Anupama Joshi, Cofounder US National Farm to School Network**, in appreciation for her outstanding contribution to the global Farm to School movement



In Their Own Words:

Sharing the Stories of Indigenous Youth

This session highlighted how Indigenous youth are sharing their local food to school stories, in their own words. Participants were inspired by the richness of the programs and the ways that youth are being encouraged to share their ideas and experiences.



Among the presentations, Maureen Zutz shared the song written, recorded and filmed with Secwepemc students of Skeetchestn Indian Band in BC:
[When the Storm Comes](#).



Breakout Sessions

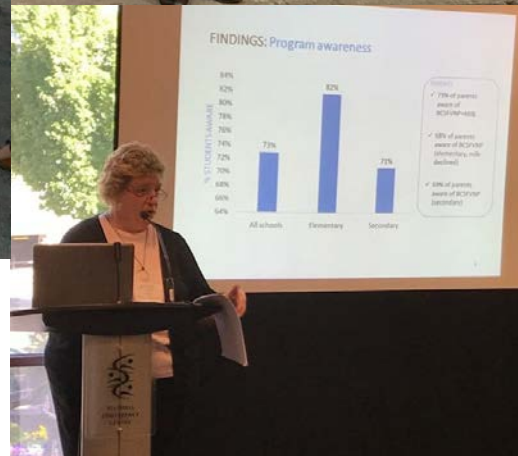
Participants visited more breakout sessions on themes of the Evidence is In, Youth Leadership and Engagement, Advocating for Change, and many more.



Towards a National School Food Strategy



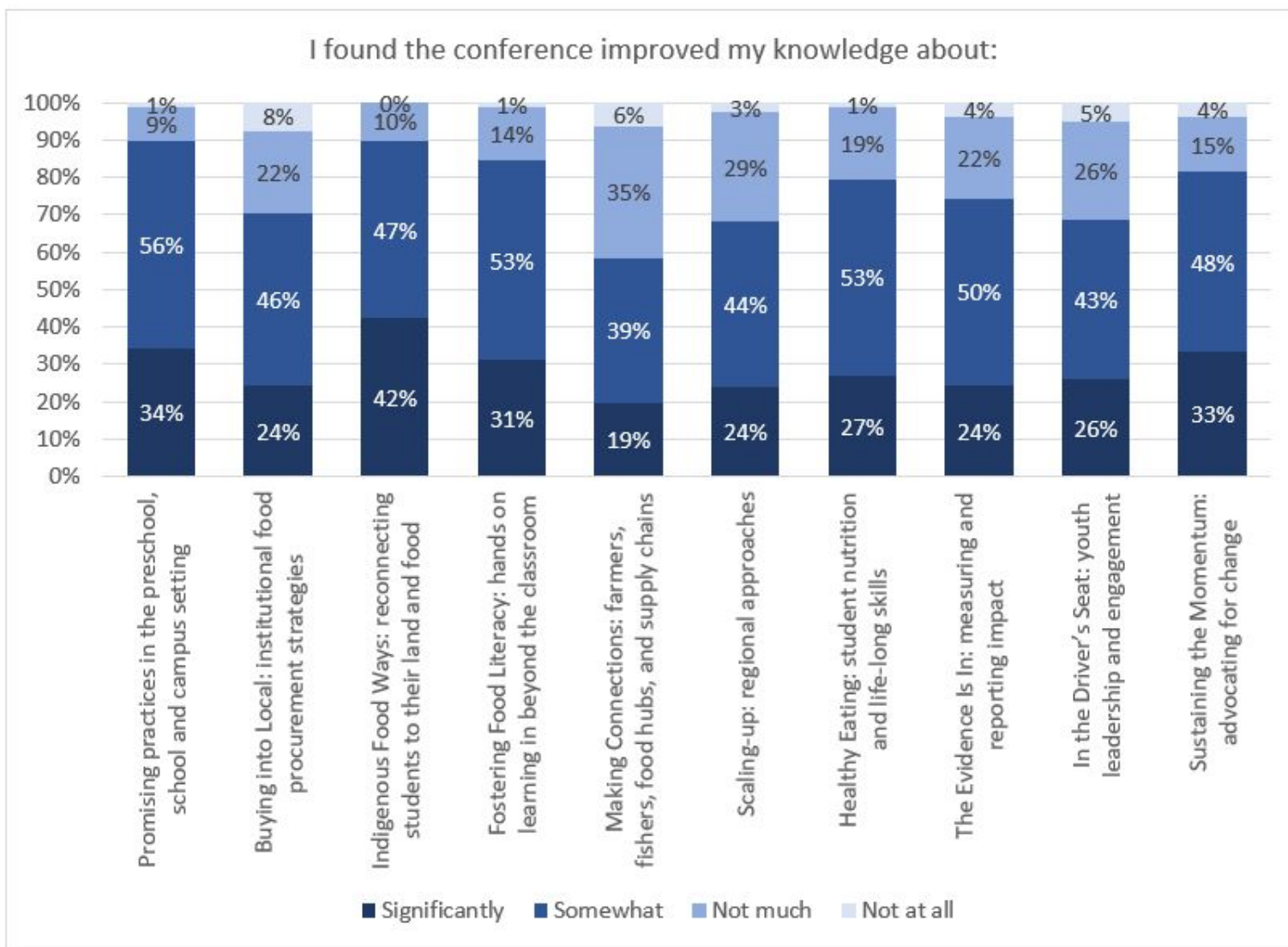
*Canadian Chefs:
Stirring Up Change*



The Evidence Is In

Short summaries of many of the sessions are available at <https://2019farmtoschoolconf.sched.com>.

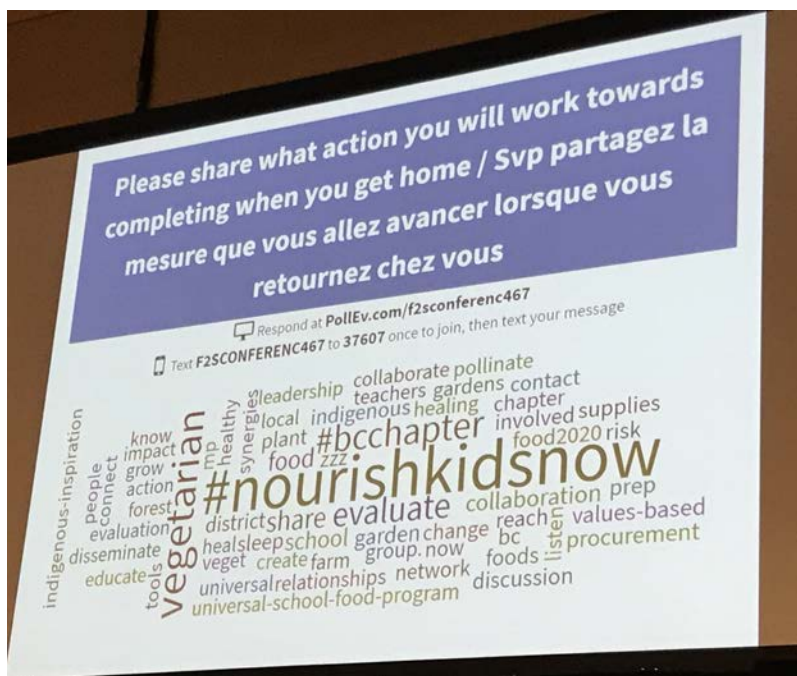
Participants found that the conference improved their knowledge about all of the conference themes, particularly promising practices, Indigenous food ways, and fostering food literacy.



Closing

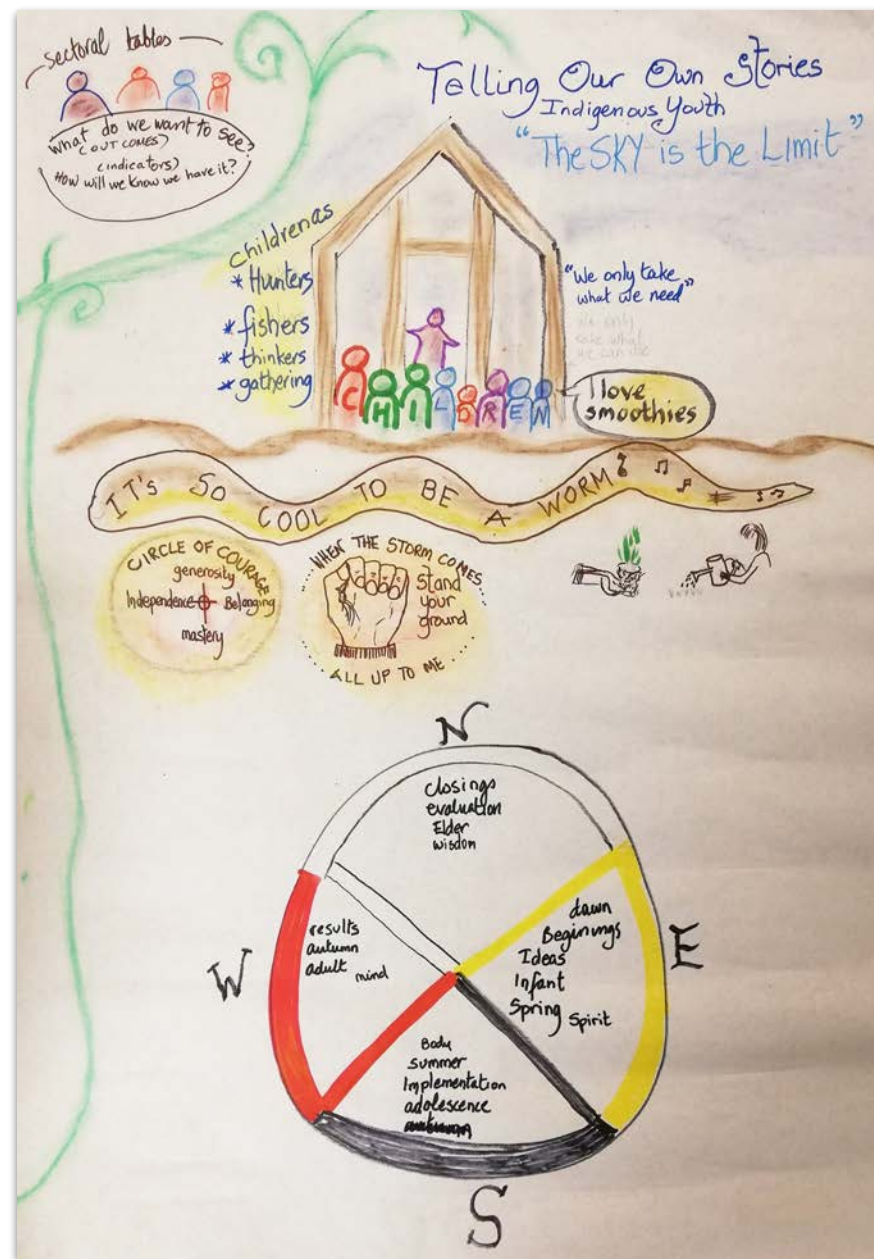
Theresa Healy, Master of Ceremonies, shared some closing words for the day. These are available on the [Conference Website](#).

Angie Todd Dennis, Resident Elder at the Public Health Association of British Columbia then led a closing prayer to wish participants well as they journeyed home.



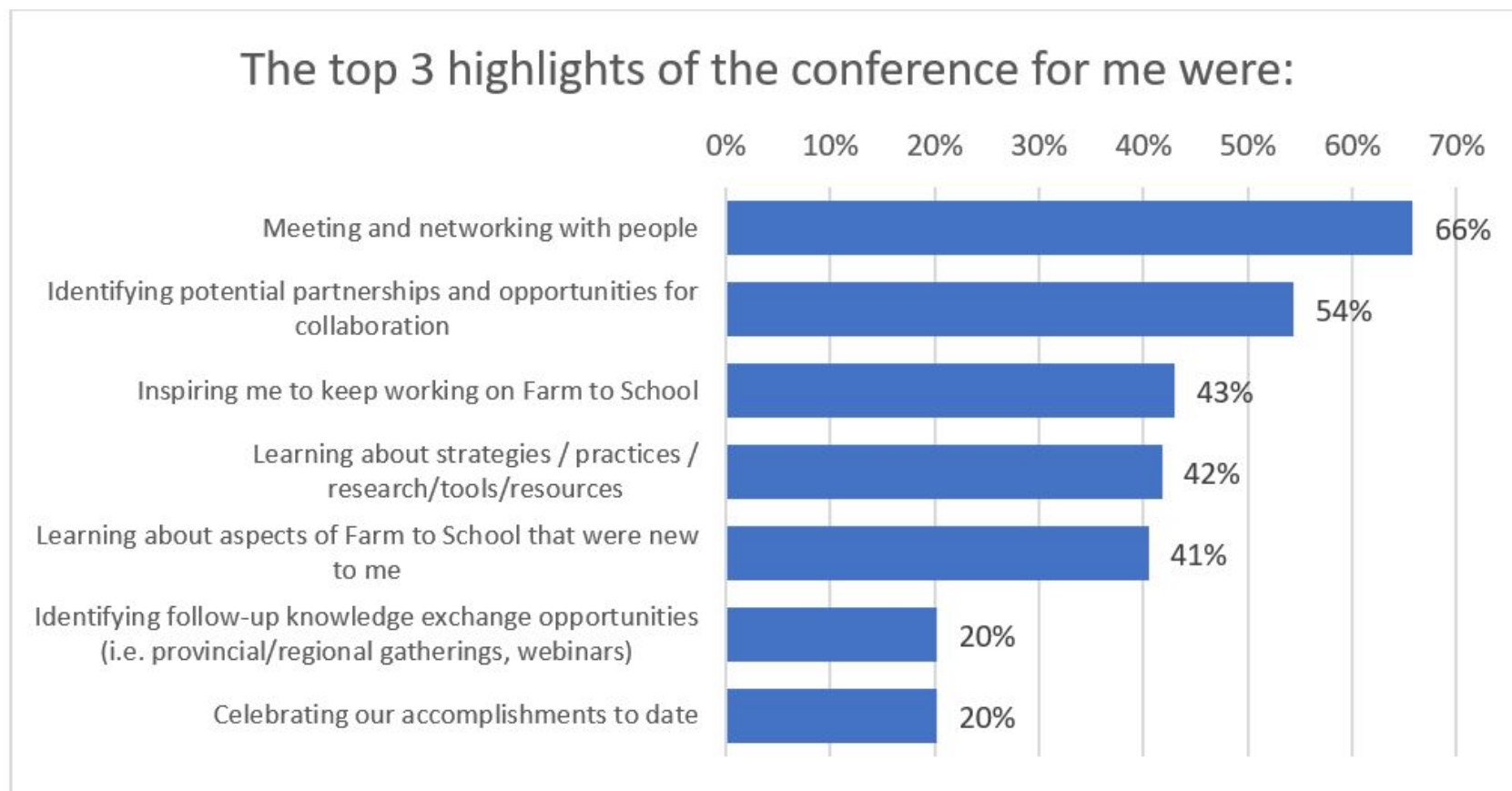
Angie Todd Dennis

We were left with a beautiful recording of the day, created by our talented Master of Ceremonies Dr Theresa Healy.



Key Takeaways

When asked about the top 3 highlights of the conference, participants most enjoyed Meeting and networking with people, and Identifying potential partnerships and opportunities for collaboration.



What Next?

We're excited to continue the momentum!

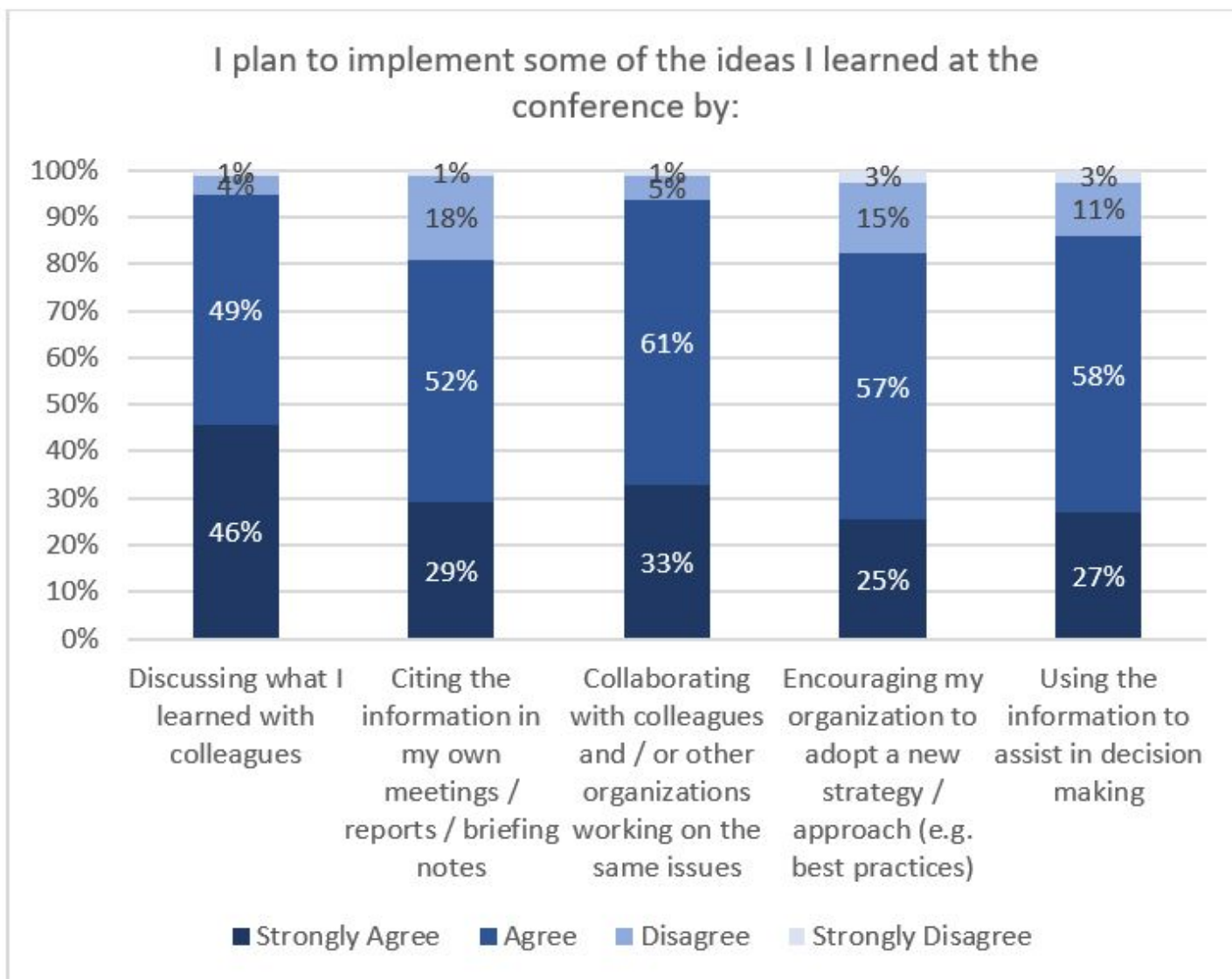
In the coming weeks and months Farm to Cafeteria Canada and partners will act on the invitations of government staff to meet and to share existing farm to school evidence and plans.

Farm to Cafeteria Canada will prepare for a 3rd cycle of Farm to School Canada grants to continue to scale up and sustain the momentum.

Over the next 18 -24 months Farm to Cafeteria Canada will facilitate a pan-Canadian series of **table talks** in order to develop an evaluation framework for farm to school in Canada. During the process we hope to continue to fill in Canada's living school food map as well as to gather knowledge, tools, and resources to share with others, and to expand and strengthen Canada's Farm to School network.



Participants have also shared that they will implement what they learned in a variety of ways:



What people were saying

Blogs and social media were buzzing with reflections from the conference. Here's a sampling of what people had to say:

- June 13: A conference interview with Joanne Bays in [100 Degrés](#)
- June 3: [De la ferme à l'école: donner de la force au mouvement en documentant les interventions](#)
- May 16: [De la ferme à l'école: nouveaux investissements pour encourager les initiatives partout au pays](#)
- May 28: Conference inspiration from [Sustain Ontario](#)

I love the sound of the focus of this conference! So much knowledge and insights to bring back to their communities!
- Jennifer Skogland

Oh! 😍 Wow! Quelle belle source d'inspiration et d'espoir!
- Édith Surprenant

Proud to be attending the #F2SConferenceCanada19!
- Breakfast Club of Canada

Yes, the facts prove it. #Farm2School is good for farmers @ColoradoStateU research shared at #F2SConferenceCanada19
- Karen Dar Woon

Wow! j'aime vraiment cela! Bonnes rencontres!
- Louise Beauchesne

What an amazing conference!! So much gratitude, thank you Joanne Bays 🌻❤️🌻
- April Ottesen

Vraiment inspirant, de belles idées concrètes et un pur bonheur ! merci pour la journée et l'organisation !!
- Véronique St-Germain

Visited salt spring island for first time from Winnipeg - what amazing programs that show the potential of programming and learning for sustainable eating, living, working and beyond! Thoughts to consider are implementing prg in challenging SES communities
- Scott Durling

Une journée fantastique et vraiment inspirante! Merci pour cette belle organisation Murielle et Farm to Cafeteria Canada !
- Marianne Boire

Thank You!

In closing we'd like to share a big **Thank You** to our sponsors, to our partners with the Farm to School Digs In! initiative, and to everyone who made the first National Farm to School Conference in Canada possible.

Thank you Sponsors!



Cowichan Pasta
Company
Cow-op
Finest at Sea
Freeman Audio
Visual Canada
Jenny Marie's
Cracker Company

Little Qualicum
Cheeseworks
Parsell Vineyard
Salt Spring Island
Cheese Company
Spinnakers Brewery
The Cultured Nut
TOPSOIL

Thank you to the F2SCDI team:

