

**Advancing Farm to School in New Brunswick:
Training and Orientation Session Summary**



F2CC Plants Seeds for Success at Orientation Session

On May 12th and 13th, farm to school enthusiasts from across the country met in Fredericton, New Brunswick for a two-day training and orientation session to kickstart 8 exciting new pilot projects in schools across the province. Teachers, principals, community development agents, farmers, and others working directly on these 8 projects as well as other local and national partners doing similar work were there to create the foundations of the new group of Farm to School programs in NB.

This group, much like at the two-day orientation event, will be sharing experiences, learning, knowledge, and other resources as these 8 new projects develop and evolve over the next two years. It will also be inclusive of other similar projects in the province. The new Farm to School NB projects will build upon the existing momentum that is already growing rapidly in the province.



Meet the New Brunswick Farm to School team!

A Lush Garden of Knowledge

In order to give a provincial context to these new programs and introduce the project leads to contacts that will be helpful to them, presentations were made by some key players in the New Brunswick local food movement.

Mathieu D'Astous of Really Local Harvest Farmer's Co-op and Levi Lawrence of Real Food Connections (a local grocery store selling exclusively local products) spoke about their experiences working with NB schools to source and supply local food. Their presentations revealed some invaluable insight into the best practices, limitations and solutions of working with local farmers. The two also touched on what they have both learned and the work they are doing to make local food more accessible in institutional settings, including tackling distribution and supply issues.

Marc Allain of the CÉ D'ICI, the farm to cafeteria program that hosted the training event, gave a tour of their operations and spoke about the creation and evolution of their own project. The CÉ D'ICI started with two cafeterias, a café and a catering service all within the Centre communautaire Sainte-Anne in Fredericton. Since then, they have expanded and now service two other schools in nearby Oromoncto. Marc and his staff also touched on what lessons have been learned, and participants were able to ask the staff questions about the day-to-day operations and how they continue to increase the amount of local food in the meals.

Rachel Schofield and Rachel Allain of the Réseau des cafétérias communautaires described their project, which is now running 22 school cafeterias – just over 20% of the francophone schools in the province! The talk included a brief overview of the many excellent educational components that they have developed, including many experiential activities including social enterprise projects that have given the students hands-on experience with the creation and development of food-based businesses. These hard-working women also gave an overview of the biggest challenges and important factors in running the cafeterias, and what solutions and structures they have developed to address these.

Joanne Bays, National Manager of Farm to Cafeteria Canada, spoke to the group about their proposed projects and what they can expect over the next two years. Her wealth of experience in starting up Farm to School projects helped to clarify the process. Her presentation provided a great deal of direction, and answered a lot of questions about how to make these projects successful!

Mary McKenna, a professor at the University of New Brunswick, was also there to comment on the evaluation process her and her colleagues will be developing in order to get real, valuable information about the impact of Farm to School programs. The

creation of this evaluation framework is very exciting, and it will be the first time that research on this topic will be published.



Our friends from Québec and Newfoundland got the chance to practice spreading the Farm to School message through social media.

Nurturing Strong Bonds

Participants were also given several opportunities to discuss with each other and within their school teams about their projects and topics that are especially of interest to them as they are readying their programs for launch by January 2015. The topics that came up during these activities included things like how to make local food available during the winter months, how to group together in order to efficiently use resources and capitalize on collective buying power, and how to effectively connect farmers and schools in mutually beneficial ways.

In fact, one of the most exciting parts of the event was the opportunity to meet the grant recipients and hear about the change-making projects the Farm to School program will be supporting. Here is a brief summary of each of these projects!



Bernice MacNaughton High School, Moncton

875 students at this school will be eating more local food in their meals. The cafeteria's food will be prepared by culinary tech students at this high school who will be mentored by students in the culinary tech program at the New Brunswick Community College.

École communautaire la rivière, Pokemouche

105 students in kindergarten to grade 8 will get the chance to learn about growing food organically in a new greenhouse and garden on school grounds with guidance from a local farmer.

École Notre-Dame, Edmundston

A greenhouse will be built in order to incorporate agriculture into the curriculum. They will also freeze food for the winter months as they increase the amount of local food in their cafeteria.

École Clément-Cormier, Bouctouche

This school of 480 9th to 12th-grade students is partnering with local farmers and other schools in their area to increase the amount of local food in their cafeteria. They will also be doing educational activities in the greenhouse and garden.

Salisbury Elementary, Salisbury

This kindergarten to grade four school will build on its existing successes in community gardening by incorporating more local food into their meals and providing more food-skills education to their 360 students.

Cambridge-Narrows Community School, Cambridge-Narrows

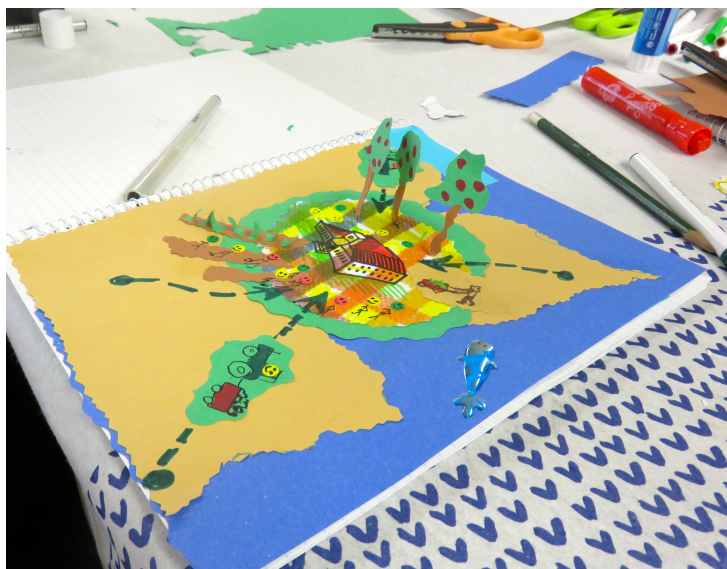
138 students at this kindergarten to grade 12 school will run a salad bar program and incrementally increase the percentage of local foods in the services.

Centreville Community School, Centreville

About 200 kindergarten to grade 8 students will be eating some delicious local, organically produced soups and salads. Local farmers will provide food and help to teach the students about agriculture.

École René Chouinard

The current cafeteria serves about 80-100 preschool to grade 8 students who will now benefit from a partnership with local farmers who will help increase the amount of local food in the cafeteria.



Participants had several opportunities for get creative using all the inspiration stemming from the discussions.

Moving Forward

Overall, those in attendance were very pleased with the event and felt they had gotten a great deal from it, leaving better prepared for the road ahead. One of the many great comments made at the end came from a farmer:

“Very useful information and it was very important for us all to get together to troubleshoot our problems and share our projects. It’s amazing to be part of the Farm to School initiative and to learn how we can take all this information and implement a grassroots, real program at our school! Thank you.”

Before leaving, each person was encouraged to write their next steps on a postcard that will be sent to them in the coming weeks. Most wrote notes to remind themselves to look more closely into the logistics of their local food supplies, making sure their plans were approved by public health, creating communications plans and menus, and to connect more with the students, school staff, and others involved in their projects to create a shared vision and plan. Many wrote themselves words of encouragement, reminding themselves to keep up the great work!

Farm to School New Brunswick is an initiative championed by Farm to Cafeteria Canada and the New Brunswick Food Security Action Network. It is part of a national *Nourishing School Communities* Initiative funded by the federal government through the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer's (CPAC) Canadian Linking Action through Prevention.