



# THE OUR FOOD PROJECT



Ecology Action Centre

RECONNECTING  
FOOD & COMMUNITY  
2013-2017



STORIES FROM FOUR YEARS  
OF FOOD SYSTEMS WORK







# June 2017

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## Core Partners:



Funding for this project has been provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of PHAC.





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# INTRODUCTION

THE OUR FOOD PROJECT 2013-2017

## Who we are:

In 2003 the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) was one of the first organizations in the Maritimes to identify the important connections between our food system, the environment, and individual and community health. Through the years a variety of different food-related projects were spearheaded at the EAC, including the highly successful Food Miles and Urban Garden Projects. In 2013, this work took the form of the Our Food Project (OFP). The OFP's work continued from 2013 through 2017 with a specific purpose: reconnecting food and community. A key component of our work as the OFP has focused on creating a more healthy, just, and sustainable food system. We believe that in the face of complex issues - such as food insecurity, diet-related disease, rural economic downturn, and climate change - we can have a positive impact by strengthening communities' relationship to food. The OFP works to build what we call **positive food environments**: the physical and social spaces that help to normalize healthy eating by making it easier to grow, sell and eat good food.

While our goal is broad, our objectives are specific. The OFP has supported and continues to execute initiatives that contribute to the following:

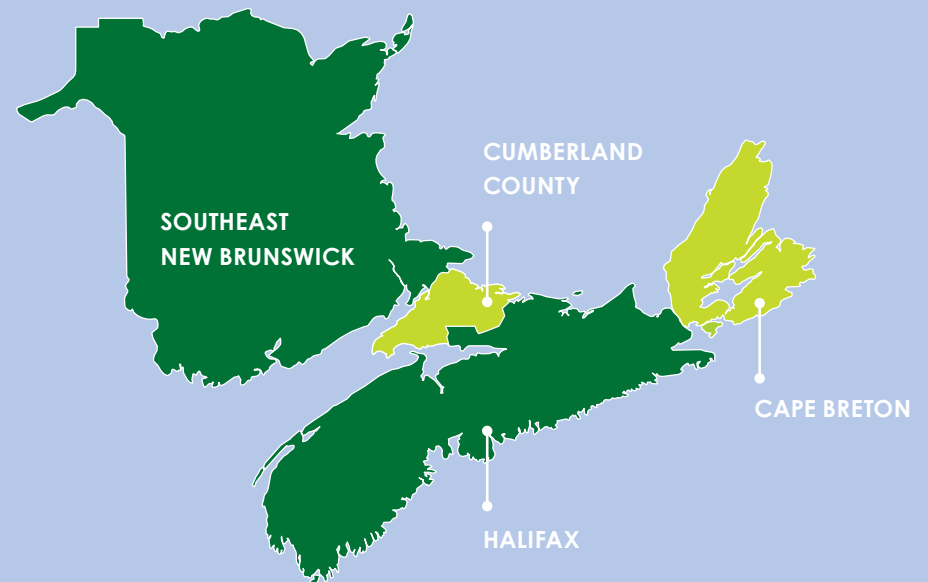
1. **Skills Building:** Building food preparation, preservation, and gardening skills in the target communities.
2. **Infrastructure and Capacity:** Creating lasting food and garden infrastructure while building capacity and leadership.
3. **Change and Civic Engagement:** Supporting food policy change initiatives while increasing the understanding of how food systems work and the role that community engagement can play.
4. **Replication and Knowledge Exchange:** To share lessons learned in this work, so that other communities are inspired and empowered to conduct similar initiatives and so that we may learn from other sites and improve our practices.
5. **Effective and Participatory Evaluation:** To evaluate our programs using methods that are participatory and feed back into the work to improve it.

**POSITIVE FOOD ENVIRONMENTS:** the physical and social spaces that help to normalize healthy eating by making it easier to grow, sell and eat good food.

## Our story:

This report tells the story of the OFP over four years, from 2013-2017. It sketches an outline of the large pieces of our work, and highlights some of the specific stories across the regions we work in. We're excited to share these narratives of particular significance and impact, about the work that we do and the communities we work with. There are so many other wonderful stories that don't fit within these pages, but we've been working hard to raise the profile of these issues and the voice of the communities we work in. [Visit our website](#) to learn more about our work and through our videos, photos, and reports.

## Where we work:







## OUR FOOD IN NUMBERS

*Metrics, measurements, and more. The OFP tells the story of our work in more ways than one, some things we track (like the number of raised beds we've built) and others we feel (how do you graph the number of giggles coming from a school garden?). The following data gives one snapshot of the work that we do.*



## Total number of people reached per site per year:

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Halifax Regional Municipality</b>	2100	3043	1955	1223
<b>Cumberland County</b> Amherst, Springhill, Parrsboro, Joggins, River Hebert	319	520	398	419
<b>Cape Breton Island</b> Chéticamp, Inverness, Wagmatcook, Sydney/CBRM, Glace Bay, Eskasoni	0	629	485	331
<b>Southeast New Brunswick</b> Sackville, Moncton, Hopewell Cape, Riverside Albert, Hillsborough, Cocagne, Grande Digue, Shediac, Bouctouche	0	28	2108	2713
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2419</b>	<b>4220</b>	<b>4946</b>	<b>4686</b>



## Total number of individuals reached per year by category:

### Participants experiencing food insecurity

We worked with a range of populations in urban and rural settings, primarily low-income communities often living below the poverty line. These communities include long-term Canadian residents and seniors living in poverty, newcomers, Indigenous communities, and Afro-Nova Scotians. Many of these groups live in public housing and experience limited access to green and growing space.

<b>2013-14</b>	497
<b>2014-15</b>	1985
<b>2015-16</b>	1147
<b>2016-17</b>	1218

### Practitioners, professional, and service providers

We worked closely with dietitians, community service organization staff, directors and staff of garden and food initiatives, community leaders, academics, evaluators, and facilitators.

<b>2013-14</b>	809
<b>2014-15</b>	1307
<b>2015-16</b>	1257
<b>2016-17</b>	930

### Partners and collaborators

Our project partners included a range of non-profit, private and government partners.

See page 34 for a list of our main project partners.

<b>2013-14</b>	152
<b>2014-15</b>	178
<b>2015-16</b>	196
<b>2016-17</b>	205

### Policy makers

We reached institutional, municipal, provincial and federal level policy makers, including elected officials and bureaucrats in health, agriculture, and planning departments.

<b>2013-14</b>	40
<b>2014-15</b>	46
<b>2015-16</b>	289
<b>2016-17</b>	81

### General public

We engaged students from elementary through to post-secondary levels, farmers' market visitors, volunteers, and community members.

<b>2013-14</b>	1073
<b>2014-15</b>	1289
<b>2015-16</b>	2244
<b>2016-17</b>	2340

# Knowledge Sharing:

FOUR YEARS OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND EXCHANGE



**900+** **phone** and **email** requests for information, resources and connections



**67**  
**students**  
mentored



**220** public talks and demonstrations

**150+** media interviews and articles

**231** blog posts on Adventures in Local Food



**28**  
YouTube  
**videos**

# Revenue and Resources:

The OFP shifted significant resources into food systems work in Nova Scotia and Southeast New Brunswick (SENB) through dedicated financial and in-kind resources, and the time our communities and volunteers invested. Year after year our volunteer hours and in-kind materials grew, allowing the impact of our work to touch more communities and individuals. We are so grateful for the support that enabled us to complete projects and impact food systems.

*Thank you!*

## In-Kind Resources Leveraged

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Volunteers</b>	32	78	171	150
<b>Volunteer Hours</b>	376	994	3700	3819
<b>Loaned Staff*</b>	42	62	193	210
<b>Loaned Staff Hours</b>	1427	2951	5751	7829

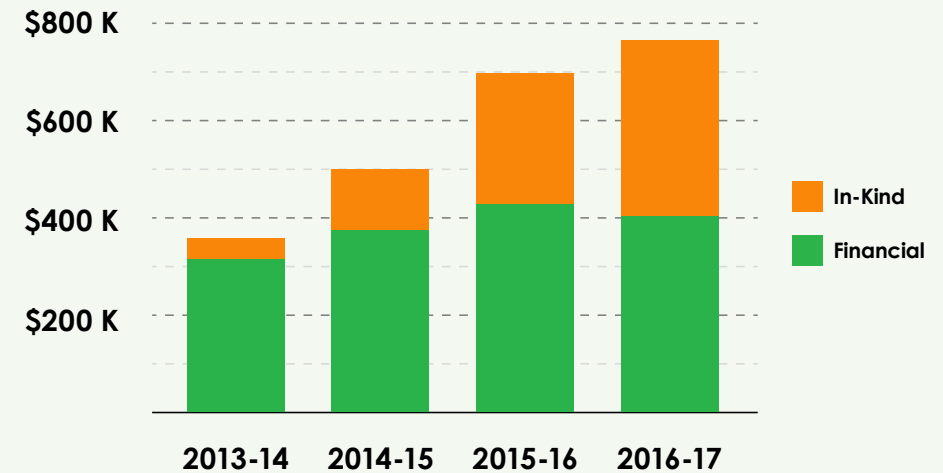
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>In-Kind Materials**</b>	\$5,720	\$17,555	\$57,131	\$58,852
<b>In-Kind Human Resources***</b>	\$39,755	\$99,665	\$220,655	\$311,250
<b>Total In-Kind Monetary Value</b>	<b>\$45,575</b>	<b>\$117,220</b>	<b>\$277,787</b>	<b>\$370,102</b>

\*Loaned Staff: a regular employee of a partner organization who is paid by his or her employer to contribute in a meaningful way to the activities of the project. It also applies to someone who provides services as part of a requirement for a student or professional practicum.

\*\*Facilities, travel, living expenses, telephone/internet, project materials (e.g., soil, food), administrative costs (e.g., office supplies, printing), project equipment (e.g., office equipment, furniture), other

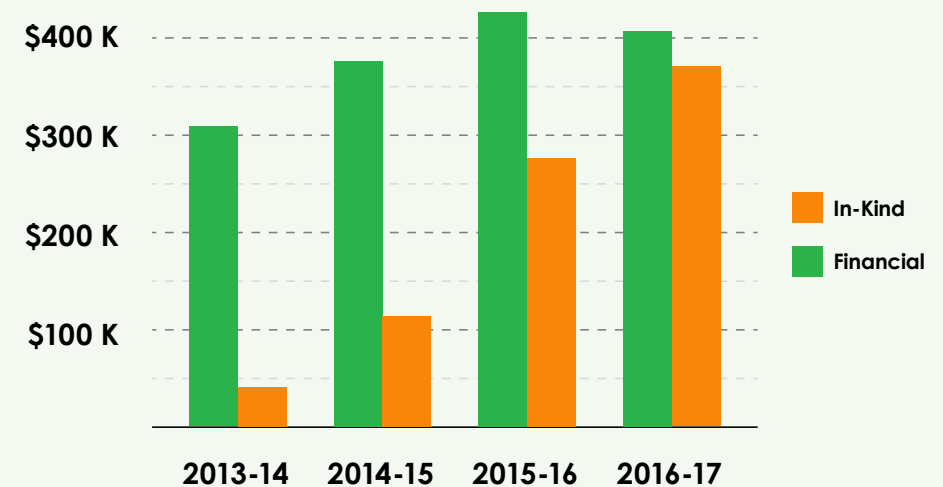
\*\*\*The financial equivalent of volunteer and staff hours using an average hourly rate of pay

## Annual Totals: Financial Revenue and In-Kind Resources



The annual total increased each year, due to leveraging more in-kind resources.

## Comparison: Financial Revenue and In-Kind Resources per Year



In-kind resources increased significantly each year, nearly equal to the financial revenue in 2016-17.





## SECTION 1: Skills Building, Infrastructure, and Capacity

*From 2013-2017 we worked with a variety of communities and community-based organizations across Nova Scotia and SENB to build food and garden skills, install community food infrastructure, and support an increase in capacity and leadership.*



# Food and Garden Literacy

STORY BY JEN ORGAN, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Engaging people in community food issues often means getting back to the basics. For many of us involved in the food movement this is where our involvement began: learning how to grow tomatoes for the first time, cooking our grandparents' recipes, or maybe a particularly memorable conversation with a farmer.

It only made sense to start from this same place with others and see what might light a spark.

Many of our workshop participants grew their gardening skills, explored new ways of cooking with local ingredients, and connected with local farmers through the OFP. One of the joys of garden and food skills workshops is sharing, not just knowledge and recipes but being able to bring in other skilled community members to share their expertise. Thus much of our work was focused on linking community members with each other and connecting them to the resources available in their networks. Cheese making, anyone?

And the spark grew.

By 2014 Food UpSkillin'! Festivals were taking place in both Halifax and Cape Breton; hundreds of people flocked to learn about gardening, raising chickens, making traditional Indian dishes, and more, alongside new friends and long-time neighbours. The Cape Breton Food Upskillin'! Festival continues to this day and will be the flagship event of the newly established Island Food Network. The resounding success of these festivals demonstrated the immense community thirst for learning how to grow, cook, and preserve their own food. We've been delighted to share knowledge and new recipes alongside these communities as they continue to learn and grow.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Food and garden skills workshops hosted	69	177	279	139
Total # of partner sites	15	15	18	18
Total # of participants	395	582	2168	1716

## Participants surveyed:



my **garden and/or food skills** have increased



my **confidence with gardening and/or food skills** has increased



eat more **fruits and vegetables** per week

For every **one person** we support, on average **5 more people benefit**.

**90%** of participants reported **sharing** their garden vegetables and healthy meals **with their family and friends**.

On average, participants report eating



of vegetables per day because of the garden and/or food skills workshops

“Individuals and families who garden with us for one season **develop the confidence** to garden on their own the next season.”

- Service Provider

“I remember my parents gardening, and helping out as a kid. But we never kept it up, it wasn't the thing to do. It's **wonderful to be able to relearn these skills** and be growing food again.”

- Cape Breton workshop participant

## Service providers and community food leaders surveyed:



observed that their community's **access to healthy food** has increased



observed their community/client base's **stress levels are less**



observed their community/client base **exercising more often**



observed that their community/client base's **overall health and wellbeing** has increased



observed a **stronger sense of community** and increased social connections and friendships

“Families that cited never eating vegetables were now eating them **on a daily basis** and had the skills to preserve excess foods.”

- Service Provider

“Client's overall health has increased due to learning more about gardening, **healthy eating, and connecting with others** through gardening and/or cooking together.”

- Service Provider

“Community gardens have had a **positive effect** on many of our public housing, newcomer, and senior populations.”

- Service Provider



# Community Food Infrastructure

STORY BY JEN ORGAN, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Sometimes the work of the OFP is figuratively building: building capacity, building trust, building high expectations for potluck contributions! But often the building we have facilitated is quite literally building the physical infrastructure that supports our work.

The benefits of these construction projects are immediate and tangible, they've led to an increased opportunity for people to grow their own food close to their homes. Accessibility has been especially important when considering the location of garden sites that we support. Many of the OFP supported gardens are located in food deserts where grocery stores are hard to access, and household incomes are below average. Increasing, or expanding, growing space has meant that more people have the option to eat fresh veggies without trekking an extra kilometre (or twenty, depending on where you live), and relieves some stress on food budgets.

Sometimes a garden bed is just that - a place to grow food. That alone is a powerful thing. But sometimes a garden bed isn't just that. It can also be a place to share your identity, ask a friend for help, or step back from the stress we carry with us. This is where many of our conversations began: in the garden, hands in the dirt, harvesting brightly coloured vegetables. Some of these conversations led to members participating in broader food initiatives, and the shared success of the OFP. For example many of the garden coordinators in Cumberland County joined the Cumberland Food Action Network; in Chéticamp community garden members grew enough produce to sell at the farmers' market and garden members have become more involved with local school initiatives. These spaces have no dividing walls or agendas, rather these gardens have become welcoming, safe, public spaces for people to meet and greet, plan and laugh, or simply be.

At the core of our garden infrastructure work has been supporting the capacity for these sites to grow sustainably. We've supported strategic planning for new garden initiatives, community garden committee development, and fundraising efforts that continue to support these special places. Much of this work has involved connecting these groups to other resources and people around them to help navigate current and future food initiatives on their own. Though our hands have often helped to build these spaces up, it is through the hands of the community that they carry on season after season.

Over four years we have:



Supported the building of **39 new gardens**

and the **expansion** of another **26**



**Built** raised beds, seniors raised beds, coldframes, greenhouses, and garden shelters



**Installed** tool sheds, picnic tables, fences, composters, rain barrels and watering systems



**Planted** vegetable gardens, pollinator gardens, pumpkin patches, berry patches, fruit trees and more

**Participants self-reported using food and garden infrastructure more and gaining skills with food and garden infrastructure.**

“ I now have **better tools** for cleaning seeds and monitoring my root cellar. ”



of service providers and community leaders surveyed said

“ I have observed that my community has **gained skills** with food and gardening infrastructure. ”



“ I have observed that my community **use food and gardening infrastructure** more. ”

“ More and more members of the Community Garden are taking advantage of our bimonthly **Community Bake Oven firings** (potlucks) to bake their own bread and cook vegetables while spending time outdoors with other community members. ”

“ They begin to **realize the value of infrastructure** as an investment for future resilience. ”



# Food and Garden Leaders

STORY BY AIMEE GASPARETTO, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Building leadership capacity happens in more ways than one. The OFP has engaged and supported leaders over the four years in a number of different ways to respond to the needs of our participants. Some of the ways we've encouraged emerging food and garden leadership growth include:

- Hosting regional **garden coordinator** and Farmers' Market coordinator gatherings
- Leading **urban agriculture** and rural farm tours
- Developing the Halifax Garden Network website and resource toolkit
- Offering strategic planning, governance, fundraising support, consultation, resource sharing and networking mentorship

The OFP supported the development and sustainability of strong food programs by building leadership skills and strengthening capacity within organizations and communities. In many cases, our support for food leaders has focused on connecting diverse practitioners, developing skills and modelling best practices. Our approaches for this varied based on the needs and skills of our partners, our efforts included the coordination of practitioner networks, written resource development and dissemination, project support and consultation, and providing leadership to regional advisory boards and councils. Over time, we learned that by supporting organizational staff and community leaders in the development of successful food initiatives, collective leadership is amplified and resources shift to encourage stronger investment in community food programs and policies.

We also worked to connect potential food leaders to the networks, communities, and resources they required to thrive. The OFP facilitated regional garden coordinator gatherings in Halifax, Cumberland and Cape Breton that brought community garden leaders together to learn about successful practices, share stories and lessons learned, and connect to each other and common resources. These events helped to solidify and strengthen the network of community garden coordinators across each of the regions and build systems of support for long term sustainability. While we facilitated these gatherings, we also listened. One of the themes that emerged from these coordinator gatherings was the need for an online portal to connect coordinators to each other, and the public. Our team



responded by developing the Halifax Garden Network website that provided an online hub for community gardeners to connect to gardens in the Halifax Region, access high quality resources, and promote related events and activities.

The OFP succeeded both in connecting leaders to one another, and by offering specific development opportunities to these emerging food leaders. Through our many community partnerships, we offered strategic support in program planning and implementation, including strategic planning, fund development, and program evaluation. For example, as Chair of the Common Roots Urban Farm Advisory Board, the OFP staff helped to establish effective governance models and guide long term planning for the farm.

Jayme Melrose, Common Roots Urban Farm Project Coordinator, had this to say about our approach:

“The advisory team has been a place to keep bringing things together, and connecting all the dots. Through this group I get lots of suggestions, and help in identifying gaps. The advisory team is especially helpful in strategic planning, and bringing in diverse perspectives to inform the work. It's also where the institutional memory for the work lives.”

Our ability to offer planning, governance, fundraising support, consultation, and resources to our partners has empowered a highly functioning web of community food leaders to create positive food environments.

## Service providers and community food leaders:

68% said “because of the support and mentorship of the OFP my **organizing skills** have increased”

“I gained a lot of experience and connections when working with the OFP. It's really provided the direction and fire for my career!”

79% said “my **capacity** to develop food and garden initiatives has increased”

89% said “my **confidence** to develop food and garden initiatives has increased”

80% said “I feel more **connected** to food and garden initiatives”

“Learning from OFP has helped me **grow as a garden educator**. Knowing that I have their support and access to their resources gives me confidence to take on bigger projects.”

83% said “I am more **able to support others** to participate in food and garden initiatives”





# The HUGS Community Garden and Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre

STORY BY JEN ORGAN, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre (BWFC) is a non-profit, community based agency, located in the West End of Halifax. Bayers Westwood is the largest public housing community in Halifax with over 360 families, 60% of whom are New Canadians or recent immigrants to Canada. The OFP has partnered with BWFC for many years to build the HUGS Community Garden and food programs that support social, educational and empowering opportunities for the community.

One step into BWFC and you'll be offered a cup of coffee, hear different languages joined in conversation, and begin to understand why this is a second home for many. Food has always been at the heart of Bayers Westwood, here food is as a mechanism to communicate across languages, to celebrate, and to rejuvenate, heal, and support one another (preferably with hands wrist deep in healthy soil).

“The garden is a really good place for relaxation and therapy - for seniors to keep their mind focused instead of focusing on pain.”

- Seniors Garden Committee member

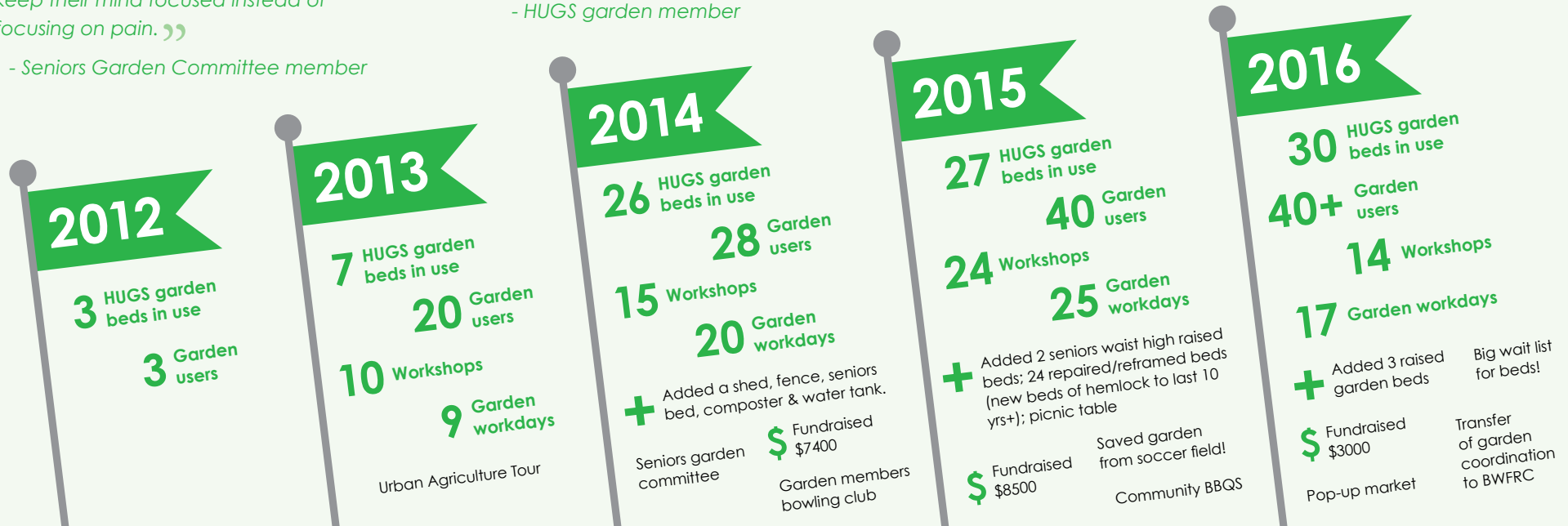
“Hugs garden is an amazing place to meet friends and eat healthy.”

- HUGS garden member

Our goal from the beginning of this project was to work with BWFC to support, enhance, and sustain the ways that food plays a role in the community. Our work grew from providing cooking and gardening workshops to facilitating opportunities for program participants and centre staff to identify themselves as food leaders. As participants and staff became more involved in community food initiatives, community-led food initiatives were born! Highlights from these community-led efforts include: selling preserves at the Bayers Westwood International Bazaar as a fundraiser for the HUGS Community Garden, hosting community garden barbecues, and launching a healthy food pop-up market.



As the success of these initiatives grew, for the first time, the Centre was able to allocate a percentage of staff time toward community food work. And the success of these initiatives wouldn't have come to be without the dedication and capacity of BWFC staff to support these community-led projects. BWFC is now known as a celebrated food organization that continues to incorporate community food initiatives into their programming and community at large. BWFC is a leading organization in the community food movement, and it is clustered around the HUGS garden beds that you'll find the next generations of community food leaders gathered together. Hands in the dirt.



# Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia

STORY BY JEN ORGAN, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) envisions a community where all can belong and grow. ISANS is a leading community organization that welcomes newcomers to Nova Scotia. Working in partnership, they offer services and create opportunities to help immigrants participate fully in Canadian life. ISANS' Growing Strong Neighbourhoods project is about building community through gardening, and has been a strong partner of the OFP for many years.

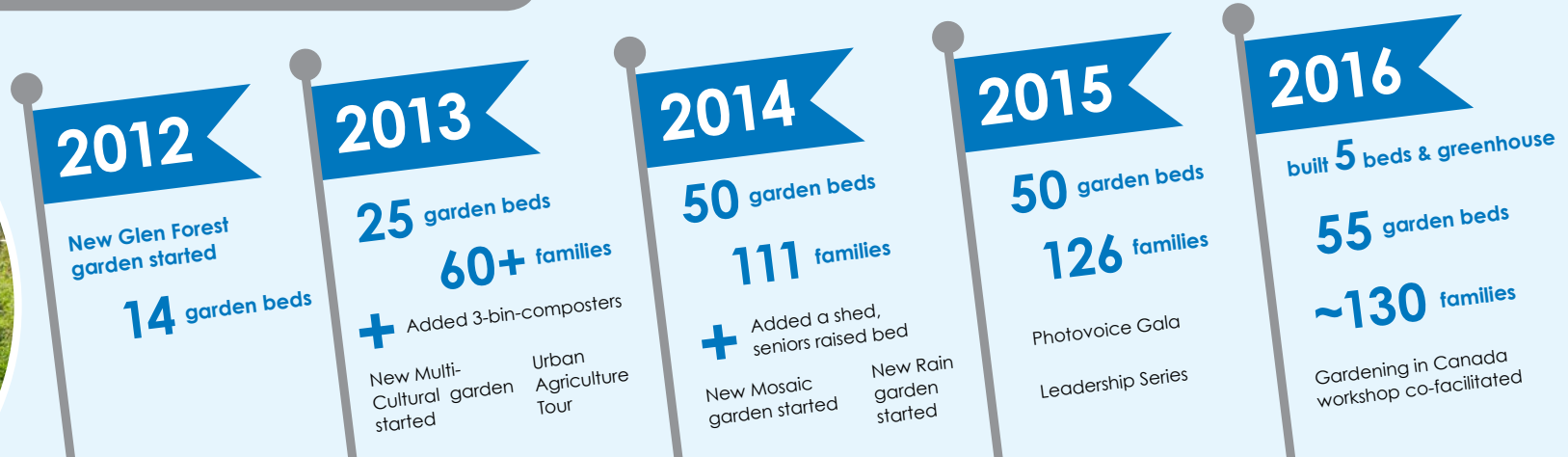
If you've ever doubted how much growth a 4' x 12' garden plot can yield, we dare you to visit one of the ISANS community gardens! Bursting at the seams, it's no surprise that these gardens are so productive - many of their caretakers are farmers by trade. Many of the ISANS garden members arrived to Canada as refugees from Bhutan, Nepal, Sudan, Iraq, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, and Afghanistan. The goal for many? Finding opportunities to grow. Our partnership with ISANS quickly became about supporting the development of garden infrastructure to accommodate the huge abundance of growth, and facilitating the transition from growing abroad to growing in the Maritime climate.

A **FOODSHED** is the geographic location that produces the food for a particular population. The term describes a region where food flows from the area that it is produced to the place where it is consumed, including the land it grows on, the route it travels, the markets it passes through, and the tables it ends up on.

Overtime we've come to view these shared gardens as a place that members call their own. They've become lively community hubs where identities are celebrated and neighbours meet one another. This energy is radiating beyond community gardens to other community food initiatives that are shaping our local **foodshed**. Farmers are growing more culturally diverse produce, more people are reaching out to offer additional spaces to grow, and immigrant perspectives are being incorporated in broader community food initiatives.

The core goal of ISANS is to help integrate newcomers to Nova Scotia. Critical to this is to build capacity with community organizations so they can better work with and involve newcomers. The OFP has been coached along the way by ISANS about effective ways to support immigrants in community food projects, and we are grateful for this support. Through this we've been better able to advocate and support community food initiatives that are inclusive and reflect the diversity of our communities. Our goal is to continue to support this community and influence other organizations to support the integration of newcomers and immigrants in their neighbourhoods.

## CHECK OUT THE PHOTOVOICE IN THE GARDEN PROJECT





# Chéticamp and L'École NDA

STORY BY GEORGIA MCNEIL AND JODY NELSON, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Proudly Acadian, Chéticamp is culturally and linguistically distinct and historically has been isolated from the rest of Nova Scotia. Yet, many of their current challenges are experienced commonly across the province: ongoing population decline, an aging population, and struggles to maintain public services. Known by many for their step dancing and fiddle tunes, leaders at L'École NDA and Conseil des Arts were enthusiastic to step into new roles, take action, and make healthy food more available within their community. The OFP worked with these partners to help them identify their priorities and plan next steps to achieve them.

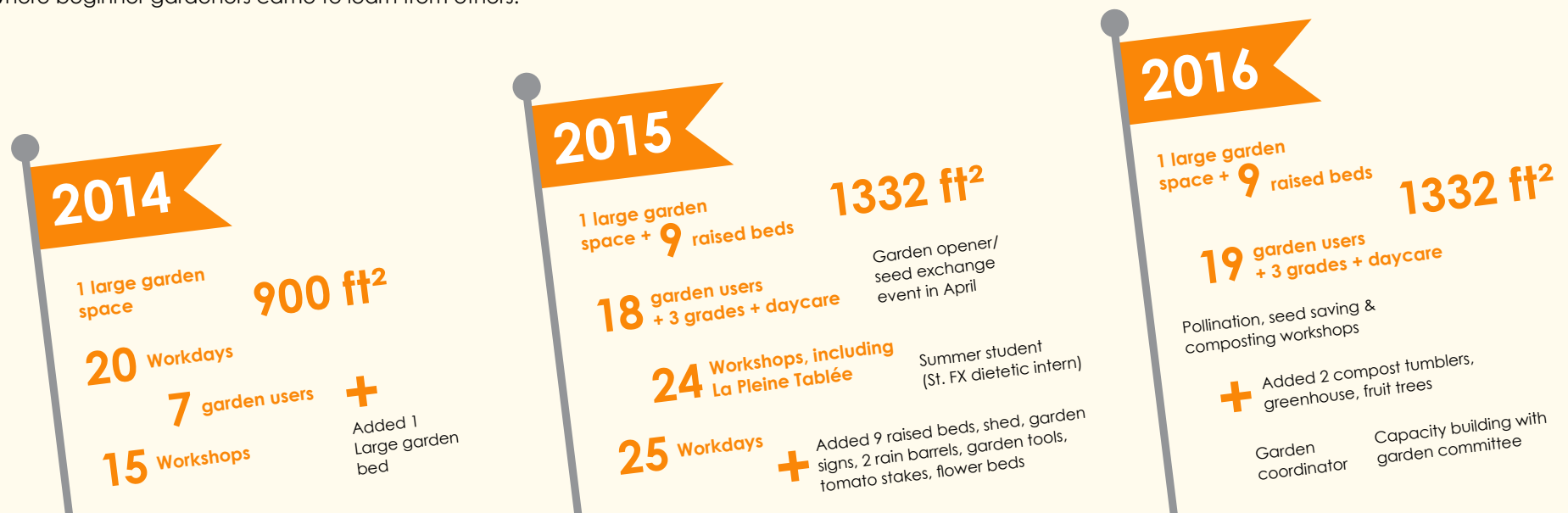
Despite a long tradition of gardening and preserving, community members recognized that this knowledge was beginning to fade. One community member confided to us that: "I remember picking potatoes with my grand-père when I was a child but it's something I never learned to do until now." With the support of the Conseil des Arts, what began as primarily a school garden quickly evolved into a garden space for both young and old. Here, in this wide-windswept landscape, access to land is not a barrier, rather knowledge and resource sharing prevented community members from participating in positive food environment. For many, the community garden acted as a stepping stone to greater knowledge and capacity by creating a place where beginner gardeners came to learn from others.

The garden was so productive that in its first year the unexpectedly high yield of produce was sold at the local farmers' market. With such an abundance of food, people were soon asking to learn new (and sometimes very old) ways of cooking and preserving the fruits, or veggies, of their labour. The OFP started cooking and preserving workshops and gave the opportunity for neighbours to teach neighbours, friends to teach friends. Not only did participants report increased food skills and confidence in the kitchen, but these workshops acted to bring food to the table and made it part of the dinner table conversation. So, what did you do at the school garden today?



“ We cook with vegetables from the garden with children in class, last year we made fries and compared different potatoes and this year maybe we'll try pumpkin muffins. ”  
- L'École NDA Teacher

“ I love stopping by the garden to grab some 'snacks' - carrots, radish... ”  
- Chéticamp gardener



# School Food Programs: Foods of the Fundy Valley

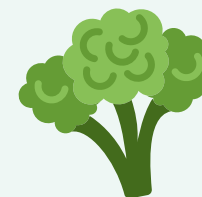
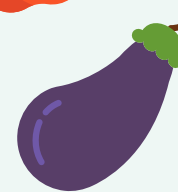
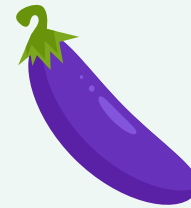
STORY BY ELIZABETH GORMAN, FOODS OF THE FUNDY VALLEY

Foods of the Fundy Valley, a core partner of Our Food SENB, focuses on food security and the local food economy. It's a non-profit corporation whose mission is to foster an environment that promotes the production and consumption of local foods and local goods in the Albert County Area. They are involved in many school food programs. This is the story of their Hillsborough Elementary School's Harvest Lunch.

Each year, Hillsborough Elementary School (HES) hosts a Harvest Lunch. The lunch is made by students, alongside community volunteers, and with support from virtually every teacher and staff member at HES. It's exciting, and it's a holistic process. HES Garden Club members plant vegetables in the spring and months later that produce is used in the soups and desserts served at the Harvest Lunch. What the students don't grow themselves is sourced from local farms and the home gardens of community members.

The Harvest Lunch has become a highlight for all students. We're not exaggerating when we say we overhear comments like "this is the best day" and "I love feeding people" and "can I get that recipe? I want to make it myself" in the hallways and playground. The unbridled enthusiasm displayed in preparing the meal and serving the entire school is contagious!

The addition of a breakfast room at HES two years ago has made the lunch preparation more inclusive, offering a role for all students. With a stove and fridge at the school, all the soups and desserts are prepared on site. Prior to this, we relied on taking groups of students to the high school's home economics room to prepare the food. This meant that only members of the garden club itself could participate. However, with the kitchen on site, now every one of the 155 K to 5 students can be involved. The kindergarten class takes great pride in their ability to form small pieces of dough into rolls, just the right size for most elementary aged children. The older students help with vegetable chopping and the soup making itself. Everyone shares in the excitement of awaiting dessert together.



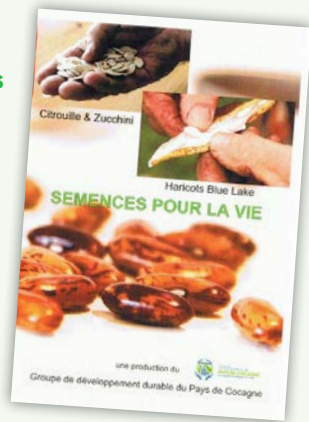


# Seeds for Life Committee/Comité Semences pour la Vie: The Cocagne Sustainable Development Group

STORY BY WIEBKE TINNEY, GDDPC

The Cocagne Sustainable Development Group/Groupe de développement durable du Pays de Cocagne (GDDPC), a core partner of Our Food SENB, has been facilitating the engagement of citizens in the Cocagne watershed since the year 2000. The organization works in a vibrant and innovative community through well informed and engaged citizens. Though the area is rural and people still garden regularly, the average age of local farmers is over 55 years old and the traditional agricultural way of life is increasingly rare. The OFP SENB and GDDPC partnered to form the **Seeds for Life Committee/Comité Semences pour la Vie** to address these barriers.

Sharing knowledge is as essential as sharing seeds. Through the project, we created **two mini-documentaries** with families that have been saving heirloom seeds for over 35 years. Over 40 community members attended screenings in 2015 – and we continued to share knowledge at regularly requested community meetings. In February 2016 we hosted our first workshop, 'How to save seeds including wild edibles,' and created an inventory of over 40 local plant species available through seeds savers. Eventually, these shared resources led to shared actions.



In 2016 a group of local seed producers collaborated to promote four local plant species. The Small Local Seed Savers/ Petits semenciers d'ici planted four pots displayed at the Bouctouche Market with interpretive signs sharing the plant names in French, English, Mi'kmaq and Latin. They also made educational displays of how seed cleaning equipment works, such as the 'fan powered seed separator' and professional seed screens, running demonstrations at events in Sainte-Marie, Bouctouche, Grande-Digue, Cocagne and Moncton. The tools used in the educational display exist as part of a public tool library. In 2016 tools were used to work with local seeds such as: chick peas, savory, buckwheat, beets, spinach, and salads.



The Seeds for Life Committee is a sharing group. New gardeners bring their questions to the group and experienced gardeners contribute their accumulated wisdom. People share stories and seeds, and act together to create change our food system. Over 100 people participate in the Seeds for Life Committee and the group continues to grow!



**of the participants said they were highly likely to repeat the skills that they learned.**

*“Keep up the good work! We need more people like you who show us how to save seeds!”*







## SECTION 2: Market-Based Solutions

*Over the four years the OFP has worked on over 20 market-based solutions distribution projects and sites including pop-up markets, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs (CSAs), Cost-Share CSAs, and the launch of the Mobile Food Market.*



# Mobile Food Market in Halifax

STORY BY AIMEE GASPARETTO, OUR FOOD PROJECT

In May 2016, the **Mobile Food Market (MFM)** launched as a 21-week pilot project, delivering fresh, healthy, affordable fruits and vegetables to five communities across the Halifax region using a decommissioned public transit bus. The project is the result of a partnership between the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Mayor's Office, Public Health (Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA)), the OFP, Halifax Transit, local community organizations and private businesses.

While everyone is welcome, the MFM aims to improve food access of low income residents, seniors, newcomers to Canada, people with disabilities and single parents. Since its launch, the MFM has created fun and welcoming community gathering spaces, where neighbours can get to know one another and learn about healthy food. It has fostered connections among and between volunteers, customers, and communities. Local Host Teams have formed in each community and have mobilized to provide local leadership and voice food issues in their community. The project also demonstrates the market potential for fresh food markets in low-income neighborhoods, and helps to identify opportunities to create more supportive municipal food policies.

The MFM is an uplifting example of a cross-sectoral initiative that is working to find innovative solutions to food access issues that not only lead to improved health outcomes but also build a strong foundation of community engagement and collaboration. It has resulted in a growing network of organizational partnerships that supports a strong foundation for sustaining the MFM initiative long-term, and enhancing collaborative efforts to address community food security.

“This helps ensure that I have a consistent supply of healthy fruit & veg year-round, not something that has been occurring consistently the last few years. I am praying that the Mobile Food Market continues to be a reality as it's a long needed source of decent food for low income families who otherwise would continue to do without healthy food, like my family! Keep up the excellent work...my son & I are enjoying the increased nutrition. THANK YOU, to all of you!”

Survey results from the Mobile Food Market pilot in Fairview, Spryfield, North Halifax, and North and East Preston demonstrated powerful outcomes related to community engagement and collaboration, as well as increased access and intake of fresh fruits and vegetables:



**95%** of respondents agreed the market is a fun and welcoming place in the community.



**95%** of respondents reported they would attend a year-round market.



**93%** of respondents agreed the market location makes it easier for them to buy fruits and vegetables.



**75%** of respondents agreed they consume more fruits and vegetables because of shopping at the market.

# Cost-Share CSA Local Food Box Program

STORY BY SU MORIN, JODY NELSON, AND AARON SHANTZ

The Cost-Share Local Food Box Program connects low-income households with local farmers, for a weekly fresh veggie box throughout the growing season, for half-price. It was piloted in Cumberland County in the spring of 2014 and operates like a traditional Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share. This arrangement provides a reliable source of income for local farms, and increases their resiliency, while supplying supporters with fresh and nutritious whole foods. The OFP worked with many partner organizations, across several regions, to make this purchase arrangement more accessible to food insecure populations. We were able to provide shares in these market based programs at a cost-reduced rate of only \$10.00 across the regions!

For the Cost-Share Local Food Box Program, we provided seasonal, local food boxes at the \$10.00 half-cost rate to individuals and families facing financial barriers. We raised the remaining through community donations. In Cumberland, the project is a partnership between Wysmykal Farm, Side By Each Farm, Good Thyme Farm and the **Cumberland Food Action Network (CFAN)**.

This affordable and nutritious food box program is the first of its kind in the province and demonstrates an innovative approach to improving access to fresh food. In 2016 the program grew to accommodate more families in need and now features several fully-subsidized boxes in addition to the cost-share option.

## Cumberland (2014)

12 weeks  
35 boxes/families  
\$4,750 raised  
420 boxes delivered

## Cumberland (2015)

20 weeks  
20 boxes/families  
\$5,000 raised  
400 boxes delivered

## Cumberland (2016)

24 weeks  
25 boxes/families  
\$6,000 raised  
600 boxes delivered

## Cape Breton (2016)

6 weeks  
7 partial subsidies (\$10/week)  
3 full subsidies (\$20/week)  
\$1,650 raised  
60 boxes delivered

## SENB (2016)

16 weeks  
20 boxes/families  
\$3,200 raised  
320 boxes delivered

**COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE**, commonly referred to as a CSA model, is a system that connects local farmers and consumers within the food system more closely by allowing the consumer to subscribe to a the harvest of a certain farm or group of farms.

In 2016 the Our Food Project expanded the program with pilot projects in Cape Breton and SENB. In Cape Breton we operated a 6 week cost-share pilot in partnership with the Cape Breton Food Hub, the Glace Bay Food Bank, and the CBRM Local Food Network/Island Food Network. The Food Hub offered produce at cost, and helped to coordinate fundraising, ordering, distribution, and a series of cooking workshops delivered in conjunction with the program. For select families from the Glace Bay Food Bank, the local food boxes were provided at full subsidy, but most shares were subsidized at half-cost. Participants were able to order as much or as little as they could afford beyond that.

In SENB we ran a program called Fresh Food for All. The United Way supported 20 half-shares on behalf of local food banks and the new Peter McKee Community Food Center. Food bank participants, volunteers and community members then purchased a weekly CSA box at half-cost. Other supporters included the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, and the Department of Wellness through a Community Food Action grant. Believing in inclusive education as a vital component, we ran workshops throughout the summer. Working with Community Food Mentors and dieticians, we offered sessions on choosing healthy on a budget, amazing healthy substitutions for traditional comfort foods and canning and preserving.

Survey results indicated that



of respondents agreed the Cost-Share Local Food Box improved their access to healthy food, as well as their daily intake of fresh vegetables.

“ Through OFP, our farm has become more recognized in the community as a source of safe, healthy, and nutritious food. This has expanded our business. ”

“ I LOVE my weekly food box and feel great about feeding my family such high-quality, healthy food that is grown nearby, and I am so happy to be helping to support our local farmers! This program provides food for low income families who would otherwise continue to do without healthy food. ”

- Cost-Share Local Food Box Participant 2015



# Community Food Smart Bulk Buying Club

STORY BY ELIZABETH GORMAN, FOODS OF THE FUNDY VALLEY

Community Food Smart is a bulk food buying club for individuals and families keen on purchasing quality fruits and vegetables at affordable prices, sourced from local farmers when possible. The buying club operates through a network of community partners who collect orders, provide volunteers, and distribute food bags to their members each month. Together, these partners donate their time and effort to make each area's food buying club a success.

Members can place an order for one or two fresh produce bags a month. The price of a food bag is \$15.00. Volunteers help sort and pack bags for same day delivery. To assist members receiving new produce we include a nutritional insert for a fruit or vegetable of the month that is prepared by the local Health Centre.

The idea blossomed in October of 2015 when two members of Foods of the Fundy Valley (FFV) attended a New Brunswick Health and Wellness conference. During that conference, we realized that FFV operates within a defined **food desert**; the lack of actual grocery stores in our communities means the distance to travel for some residents is well over 70 kilometres, an impossibility for some.

*“This is the best food program that has come to our communities in my memory. It offers seniors and low income families, along with other families, the opportunity to access healthy food and I hope we continue to be able to do this. It will really be missed if we stop.”*

*- A dedicated senior volunteer who has not missed a single packing day*

We were inspired to start an inclusive and financially accessible purchase model to address this issue of food access. When FFV met in the winter of 2015/2016 to plan and discuss the potentials for this program with our local Community Inclusion Network Coordinator, we were informed that we should set a target of 45 members, by December 2016, as a measure of success of the program. In April 2016, our first month, we had 60 members sign up for a total of 65 bags (each member can choose to purchase 1 or 2 bags on any month that they wish to participate). By late 2016 we had a total of 107 members, with the number of bags going out each month varying from a low of 57 (summer) to a high of 92 (winter).

With partner distributors in Edgett's Landing, Curryville, Riverside Albert, and Alma we have been able to provide fresh, health, low-cost, accessible produce once a month for families and individuals living in communities without grocery stores. The program is advertised through existing relationships of trust and known community staff and members at the various distributor partners. The Shepody Food Bank has also helped to promote the program. Keeping the community involved in reaching out to each other and being part of the solution is the reason this program has been successful (in fact, the tastiest part of our community engagement work is the homemade Christmas cookies that are slipped into bags purchased in December!). We hope to continue to build on these positive relationships, and continue to build our network of food suppliers, dedicated volunteers, excited users, and community connections.

**FOOD DESERTS** are defined as parts of the country void of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers.







## SECTION 3: Networks

*Over four years we have stepped increasingly into leadership roles in regional, provincial and federal networks. For example, in partnership with Food Secure Canada, a federal network, we hosted the national food assembly in Halifax in 2014. We've also had many successes at the local level. Read on to hear more about our work in three of our core regional networks.*



# CFAN: Cumberland Food Action Network

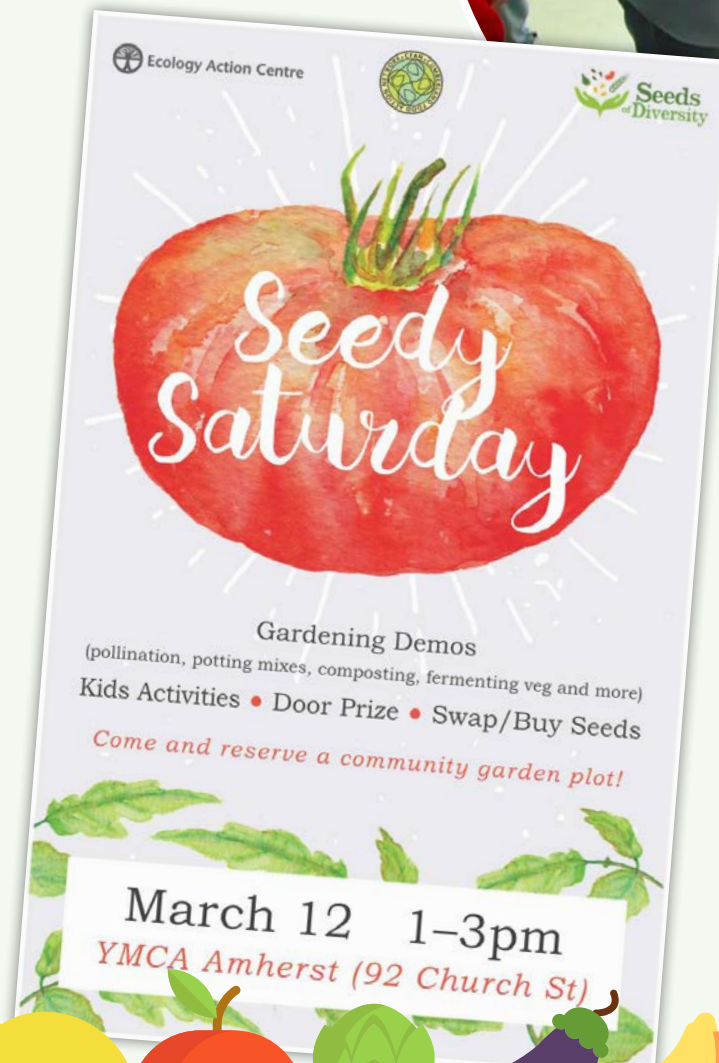
STORY BY SU MORIN, OUR FOOD PROJECT

The Cumberland Food Action Network (CFAN) was founded in 2012, by a group of passionate farmers, health advocates and food enthusiasts. The mission of CFAN is to promote sustainable food growing and community food security through education, action and events.

Over the past four years, the OFP has played an integral role in building organizational capacity for CFAN from assistance with strategic planning processes, to support for logo development, non-profit incorporation, and formalization of board roles, we have been excited to support the ongoing development of the network. We are so proud of the work that continues to emerge from CFAN!

CFAN hosts several food and gardening skills workshops and an annual Seed Exchange. The group has identified several priorities for action including food literacy projects aimed at youth engagement, school food and local food procurement. CFAN has established a Community Gardening Network, which lends support to the 11 community gardens found throughout the County. CFAN supports and promotes local sustainable farmers and produces a directory of Farmers Markets each year.

These are only a smattering of the network's accomplishments, and we can't forget our own programming partnerships! We have also partnered with CFAN to pilot the Cost-Share CSA Local Food Box Program, which is a project that links low-income households with local farms for an affordable, nutritious seasonal veggie box. ([Read more in "Cost-Share CSA Local Food Box Program" on page 20](#)).



# HFPA: Halifax Food Policy Alliance

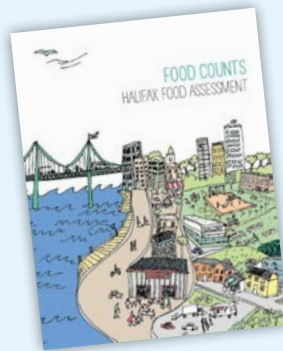
STORY BY AIMEE GASPARETTO, OUR FOOD PROJECT

The Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA), co-chaired by the OFP and the NSHA, is a network of cross-sectoral organizations working to build a healthy, just, and sustainable food systems in the Halifax region.

The work of the HFPA centers around three key activities:

- Building awareness of existing and emerging food system opportunities;
- Connecting and fostering dialogue to strengthen collaboration and advance action across the food system;
- Informing and supporting food related policies and initiatives that benefit Haligonians.

Since 2014, the HFPA has led and supported a variety of initiatives that aim to raise awareness of the connection between food systems issues and the Municipal policy agenda. For example, through the HFPA we added a health equity food security lens into the Halifax Regional Plan. In 2015, the HFPA released **Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment**, providing a detailed picture of all aspects of the food system – from how and where our food is grown, caught and produced to how accessible a healthy diet is for people across the municipality.



HALIFAX FOOD  
POLICY ALLIANCE

Building on these successes, the HFPA continues to seek opportunities to work collaboratively with the municipality in the development of local programs, strategies and policies. Other activities led by the HFPA have included the development of a food planning toolkit, policy briefs, and submissions to public planning processes; conducting a policy scan identifying food related policies; and engagement of food leaders through a workshops and social media. By leveraging our shared values and expertise, the HFPA is able to influence policy using various mechanisms and strategies – which ultimately support our work to create positive food environments at the systemic level.

Building on these successes, the HFPA continues to seek opportunities to work collaboratively with the municipality in the development of local programs, strategies and policies. Other activities led by the HFPA have included the development of a food

In 2016, the OFP worked with New Economics Foundation Consulting to do a **Social Return on Investment (SROI) study of the HFPA**. Findings showed that HFPA produces positive benefits for members/their organizations, and the residents of Halifax, including food insecure individuals. It also demonstrated the significant reach that policy-influencing work can have.

## HFPA SROI Findings

### HFPA members experience:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of food security
- More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments
- Increased trust and belonging
- Increased competence to create positive food environments
- Increased meaning and purpose

**Halifax residents** benefit from better food policies which help support positive food environments and community food security. Namely, we have focused on the HFPA's role in the implementation/improvement of the following policies:

- Downtown Plan
- Green Network Submission
- 2014 Regional Plan
- Food Planning Toolkit
- TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy

The HFPA generates  
**more than 5 times**  
the amount of  
value that it costs



“ The HFPA offers a credible body that government and other organizations can look to for support and advice on food policy development... more groups are recognizing this and making use of this to advance work. ”

- HFPA member





# Launching the Island Food Network in Cape Breton

STORY BY GEORGIA MCNEIL AND JODY NELSON, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Take a trip out of the busy cities, down winding country roads towards the Island, and you'll discover many small, out of the way communities with names like Mabou, Chéticamp, and Whycocomagh. Most of these places have a long history connecting land and sea to livelihood and sustenance. Today, the population of food producers, farmers, and fishers, has dwindled and many residents find access to affordable, healthy food a challenge.

Nearly half of Nova Scotians live in rural communities, and the OFP recognizes the importance of enhancing food security in both urban and rural areas. How do you build food security? The answer, of course, can depend greatly on where you live. Rural needs, assets, and barriers present both unique challenges and inspiring opportunities.

Distance was a significant barrier to our rural food security work. Finding ways to connect people has been a consistent focus in our rural work. When the nearest village is 20 kilometers away, all too often groups with similar food interests work in isolation. We've been experimenting with different solutions to bring community food leaders together.

The OFP began hosting events including the Garden Leaders Gatherings, Food Skills Leaders' Sharing Session and Upskilling Festivals to bridge the distance between communities. We've been able to connect food leaders from around the Island through these forums. Participants in these events have expressed how much they value being able to learn from their neighbours, and how they leave these gatherings feeling inspired and better supported. Not to mention, it's pretty fun!

Through these events an informal network of food leaders across the Island began to emerge – various partners planned the Upskilling Festival together, organizations and individuals began sharing more resources and connecting on similar food initiatives. Early collaborators included the existing CBRM Local Food Network, based in the Sydney area, New Dawn, and the Cape Breton Food Hub.

As momentum built up, so did the desire for a network that connected community food initiatives in various regions across the Island. We listened. Then, in October of 2016, we co-hosted a lively gathering of food-minded individuals and organizations with the purpose of launching the Island Food Network: an umbrella for collaborative food action in Cape Breton. Representatives from regional farms, farmers' markets, the CB Food Hub, Atlantic Coastal Action Program, FoodARC, New Dawn, Public Health, and municipal governance came together and we brainstormed about how to grow the network, strengthen and build new relationships, and continue sharing and listening to each other. The best part is, it's working!



The Island Food Network embarked on the early stages of development, working on a website, social media presence, and developing a governance structure. We envision the Network as a meeting place for individuals and organizations throughout the island interested in creating a strong local food system. Collectively, we strive to learn more about issues related to local food, share information about initiatives across the island and connect partners interested in working together on specific projects. We know there are only more exciting things to come, so stay tuned.

In 2016, the Our Food Project worked with New Economics Foundation Consulting to do a **Social Return on Investment (SROI) study of Cape Breton food initiatives** supported by the OFP. Findings showed that the OFP in Cape Breton provides positive outcomes for multiple groups, with the most valued assets being more coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments and increasing meaning and purpose for stakeholders.

The Our Food Project in Cape Breton generates **twice as much** value as it costs

“Developing food-related knowledge and skills is important for our community for so many reasons. The presence of this programming means greater community togetherness and a more resilient local food system.”

- OF - CB Participant





# SECTION 4: Policy

*By successfully contributing to over 30 policy changes and increasing engagement between civil society and policy makers the OFP created conducive food policies for positive food environments.*



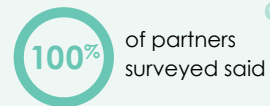
# Policy Influence

STORY BY MARLA MACLEOD, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Through the OFP, we strived for lasting, systemic change to support community access to healthy, local food. One of our approaches to this is to influence relevant policy and planning tools. Our policy change work is rooted in the lived experiences of those who have been connected to our food projects over the years. We work to bring the voices of vulnerable populations, food producers, and other non-profits into the realm of policy change.

In 2012, we successfully advocated for the inclusion of local food goals in Nova Scotia's *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*. Through the Our Food Project, we monitor progress toward the goals of increasing the percentage of money we spend on food produced in Nova Scotia to 20% by 2020 and increasing the total number of farms in the province by 5% by 2020. Our team has been pleased to see progress on both goals, and will continue to support the development of new and ambitious targets.

While working on specific, measurable goals is essential - a key component of our policy work has been to identify leverage points for systemic change. One such leverage point is institutional procurement. By pushing for more local, healthy and sustainable food in our publicly funded institutions, like schools and hospitals, we can improve access to good food, help create stable markets for local producers, and stimulate the economic benefits of keeping money in the province. In March 2016, we co-hosted a one day workshop featuring Joshna Maharaj, activist chef with extensive experience in shifting institutional food practices. This was followed by a January 2017 event to continue to build momentum amongst key players in institutional procurement. With over 70 attendees, representing the spectrum of institutional procurement - from producers to distributors to purchasers - these events have been a huge success and will continue to inform our policy change activities. For example, one discussion group led to plans for a pilot project to get local carrots into local hospital facilities, via an employment training social enterprise that would cut the carrots to the hospitals' specifications.



“because of the OFP the profile of **community food security in media** has increased.”



“because of the OFP the profile of **community food security in government** has increased.”



We initiated **over 90 meetings** with approximately **130 government representatives** to raise the profile of community food security.

If you want to make lasting, systemic change, you can't do it alone. We know and believe this. Our approach to this work has always been highly collaborative. As a trusted voice in the community, we often play the role of convener. We find opportunities to bring people together to advance food policy work and push for systemic change. Over the years this has taken many forms, from co-chairing the former Nova Scotia Food Security Network, to co-organizing the May 2013 Nova Scotia Food Gathering and bringing the Food Secure Canada Assembly to NS in 2014. From 2015 to 2017 we were increasingly taking on a backbone role, working to bring voices from across sectors to the table.



## Overview of 4 years in numbers

TYPE OF INFLUENCE ON POLICIES, PRACTICES AND/OR PROGRAMS	NUMBER OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS/ACTIVITIES
Policy Research and Briefing Notes to Support Policy-Influencing Activities	50
Discussed in key policy/practice forums	14
Information was cited or referenced	10
Informed practice, policy or program decision	29
Led to the implementation or adaptation of an intervention, policy or program outside of funding	28



We were in the media **over 150 times over 4 years**, increasing the profile of community food security. This included a range of coverage from print, radio, TV, magazines, websites, and social networking.

## Areas of Policy Influence:

### INSTITUTIONAL PROCUREMENT PRACTICES AND GARDEN TO TABLE PROGRAMS:

shifting purchases from imported conventionally produced foods to local sustainably produced food, as well as seasonal and whole/healthy foods, in universities, schools, food banks, health care settings, and organizations; using food from school/community gardens in school cafeterias, community organizations and food banks.

### INCREASING RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE:

creating new jobs within municipalities, and integrating food security into existing policy structures.

### FOOD BANKS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRES:

shifting from charitable food models towards inclusive and participatory food programming; supporting community gardens to deliver excess produce to food banks; and integrating gardening programs and guidelines to centres.

### MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES:

supporting healthy eating and active lifestyles; increasing open, green, and gardening spaces in urban areas; increasing the preservation of agricultural land; and co-creating visions and charters of complete and healthy communities that include access to healthy, just and sustainable food.

### INSTITUTIONALIZING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS:

schools and community centres adopting and integrating ongoing food programming often spearheaded by volunteers.

### MAKING INFRASTRUCTURE MORE AVAILABLE/ ACCESSIBLE TO SUPPORT FOOD ACTION (e.g., on city property, on school property):

opening commercial kitchens to community and student use; allowing community gardens on city land; installing signage for preservation and use of edible landscape; and using a city transit bus for a Mobile Market.





# Civic Engagement

STORY BY MARLA MACLEOD, OUR FOOD PROJECT

So, what is this policy stuff anyway? To many people, policy seems mysterious. Who makes it? How it is made? How is it changed?

Through the OFP's work we wanted to demystify the policy process, and empower community members who care about food to engage in policy change. So we tried to do exactly that! We developed and delivered Policy 101 workshops, through which we shared stories of local policy change efforts and workshopped real life examples of strategies to influence decision makers. Participants left with a better sense of policy process and a feeling that making change was "doable". Not a bad start, but we kept going.

Next, we supported our community partners as they put their civic engagement skills to work at election time. During the 2015 federal election campaign, we joined Food Secure Canada's Eat Think Vote campaign with the goal of getting federal candidates talking about a national food policy. We hosted an all-candidates breakfast meeting, engaged in social media, and encouraged everyone to tell their local candidates that food mattered to them. They did! The Eat Think Vote campaign also engaged community members in educating politicians about the issues they were experiencing and invited them to be partners in seeking solutions. Thanks to efforts all across the country, the newly elected government committed to creating a national food policy during their term. But, we didn't stop there.

We polished up those skills again during the 2016 municipal elections in Nova Scotia. We engaged our volunteers and community partners in a social media campaign to put food in the conversation. We asked municipal candidates about their role in making our cities and towns more food secure. And through the HFPA ([read more about this work on page 24](#)), we hosted a workshop to bring people together to learn about the upcoming municipal election and plan actions that 'Put Food on the Table' leading up to the election. We were encouraged by the buzz about local, healthy and sustainable food and excited to see the inclusion of food, not only in the conversation, but in municipal plans.

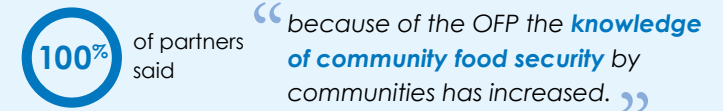
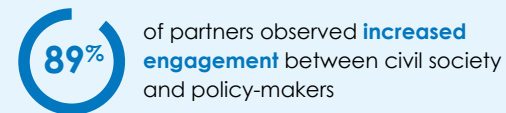
We may not have answered all of your questions about policy here just now, but if there's one thing that we've learned these past four years, it's this: How is policy changed? Simply put, together.

## Policy 101 participants shared this feedback:

“ I learned techniques that can be used on the ground. I learned how to use policy tools. ”

“ I learned to think in more bite sizes about policy change. ”

“ I learned to be specific when one is identifying stakeholders. You CAN evaluate policy change work. Great resources - looking forward to exploring these further. ”



# SENB Regional Food Pledge

STORY BY AARON SHANTZ, OUR FOOD SENB

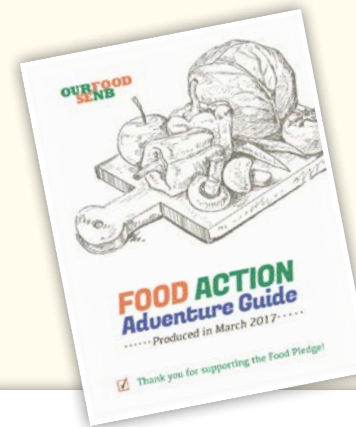
The idea of a regional food charter/pledge took shape in 2014-2015 through a partnership between the City of Moncton, Southeast Regional Service Commission and the OFP SENB. In 2016 existing research and feedback from over 30 network partners was compiled, a working group was struck and the **Southeast New Brunswick Regional Food Pledge** and Action Guide was created.

The Pledge is an important policy change tool that helps us to continue our efforts to build a healthy and sustainable local food system. The document outlines specific guiding principles which reflect the vision and interests of the community. For example, it stresses the promotion of local food production, improvements in food literacy, and dignified food access for all citizens. By supporting the Pledge, members of the public, as well as local policy makers, commit to linking the stated food policies to direct food actions.

This Pledge can be used in a variety of ways: as a starting point for food-related discussions, as a reference to collective ways we can better our food system, and as an action guide for citizens, businesses, organisations and decision makers.

Both the Pledge and Action Guide are intended to address concerns surrounding six key food-related categories: health, education, local development, environment, culture and social justice. Within those categories there are more than 40 suggested action items, and over 100 resource links, to help users honour their pledge and get involved in their local food system. There are resources showing the locations of nearby food centres, links to local cooking classes, how-to-guides for community gardening, and much more! (Feeling the urge to act? **Sign the pledge here!**).

In late 2016 as the project was nearing completion, sneak previews of draft versions were shown during various regional meetings and gatherings, and the response was very positive. We maintained this momentum and presentations to municipalities and Regional Service Commissions were underway by late 2016. The official launch was planned during the Everybody Eats Tour in early 2017. The vision was, and continues to be, that the Southeast New Brunswick Regional Pledge becomes a cornerstone of local food actions and policy influence for years to come! Stay tuned!



## Southeast New Brunswick Regional Food Pledge

Join the movement!

The food pledge promotes easy and affordable access to good food for all and contributes to the overall well being of our communities.



Sign e...  
send yo...  
need to sta...  
action at...  
OurFoodSENB.link/



### TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE A FOOD SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES:



#### Health

- Recognizing the direct link between food and health
- Preventing and managing chronic diseases by making the healthy choice the easier choice
- Ensuring that healthy food is physically accessible to all



#### Education

- Learning, sharing and promoting food skills (ex: canning, food gardening, gathering, hunting & fishing)
- Bringing food literacy and gardening into our schools - Training future farmers and fishers
- Educating the public about the connections between our health, the environment, and our food choices



#### Local Development

- Buying from local producers and bringing good food into the marketplace
- Promoting food that is produced, processed, sold and eaten as close as possible to its source
- Supporting food and agriculture innovations in line with our changing climate



#### Environment

- Caring for and protecting the farmland, forests, water and wildlife that feed us
- Producing our food in a way that enhances the natural spaces in our cities and countryside
- Minimizing waste and energy consumption



#### Culture

- Connecting rural and urban communities through food
- Celebrating and respecting food diversity



#### Social Justice

- Understanding that everyone deserves dignified access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food
- Ensuring that food workers have a fair wage and a safe and respectful environment
- Investing in farmers
- Supporting income, education, employment, housing and transportation policies that enable access to healthy and sustainable local food

The food choices and actions you make have the power to transform our food system! Sign the pledge and take action for a better future for us all!

I declare my support to these principles and commit to engaging in positive food actions. [OurFoodSENB.link/web](http://OurFoodSENB.link/web)

**OUR FOOD SENB**




# EVALUATION AND STORYTELLING

STORY BY MIRANDA COBB, OUR FOOD PROJECT

Over four years of evaluating our projects:

A total of **1323**  people participated in evaluation activities;

We created **105**  reflection/evaluation opportunities

We wrote **81**  discrete evaluation tools (e.g., surveys, interview guides).

If you don't know where you're coming from, you won't know where you're going. The OFP recognized this, and over the four years developed a practice and culture of evaluation to inform our work.

At the beginning of the OFP we were tasked by our primary funder, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), to build a strong evidence base around which programs and initiatives worked well and which were less effective. This mandate inspired us to develop tools, resources, and staff capacity to track the impact of our work. Our shared vision, was that after the four year project we would have generated a set of scalable programs that could be expanded to bring positive impact to greater numbers in the population (and have the evidence to back it up).



Internally, we were very dedicated to putting our time and resources into initiatives that had impact and made a difference. Because of this, our evaluation capacity grew over the years and we were increasingly approached by partners and organizations to share our evaluation tools and perspectives. This led to the creation of an **Evaluation Toolkit** which highlighted many of our practices and the development of evaluation workshops to build capacity of our partners and networks. It also led to evaluation being one of the three pillars of the **EAC's strategic plan in 2016**, with an increasing interest from other teams within the EAC of how evaluation practices could support them to be more effective and efficient in their work.

The OFP's evaluation system consisted of a number of formative and summative evaluation tools (e.g., tracking forms, workshop evaluation forms, surveys etc.) as well as a series of developmental evaluation practices. One of the largest challenges with evaluation of this type of project - working within the complexity of the food system, aimed at social change - is that a rigid and linear evaluation framework cannot capture the nuance of our impact, or our partners' experiences. Developmental evaluation was therefore explored significantly to create an evaluation practice with a certain amount of flexibility, while maintaining accountability. These mixed methods provided us with insight into the impact of our work, and enabled us to focus our resources effectively where the most change was experienced.



**Big successes and examples of our evaluation methods include:**



**FOOD ASSET MAPPING**

We brought community members together to map out food assets in their community, discuss barriers and supports for food access, as well as visioning for the future. **(Check out the Community Food Snapshot visual reports).**

**STRATEGY JOURNALS AND TEAM RETREATS**

Three times a year the Our Food Team completes strategy journals (e.g., what's working, what's not working, what needs to change?) and spends two days understanding the project's impact and supporting each other to move forward more effectively.



**SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)**

We conducted two SROI studies in order to map, measure and monetize the social, economic and environmental outcomes of the Our Food Project.

**COMMUNITY GARDEN COORDINATORS' STORYTELLING CIRCLES**

We brought community/school garden coordinator's together to share stories of success and challenge, as well as to learn from each other about building community and growing food.



**ISANS PHOTOVOICE PROJECT**

We brought gardeners from different ISANS gardens and different countries of origin together to explore the question: "what does your garden mean to you?"

**STORIES FROM THE FOOD MOVEMENT**

We created a video series highlighting food successes from across Nova Scotia and SENB.



**We have supported an increased impact of our partner organizations:**

*"I was involved in getting the HFGA off the ground, without the folks at Our Food it would not have happened- they brought their skills, credibility and know-how which were essential in those formative months (and continue to be!!)."*

*"Because of the OFP the impact of my project/organization has increased."*

*"The work of those in OFP has made solid and meaningful progress for which many other organizations including my own benefit from. This is not to mention a strong legitimization of our work and the work of others in this field."*

*"Through OFP our farm has become more recognized in the community as a source of safe, healthy, and nutritious food. This has expanded our involvement to include supplying food to a daycare, community events, and sharing gardening skills at CFAN events."*







# BEYOND 2017

*In 2017, the four year grant from PHAC came to an end. The OFP was successful in securing another three year grant from PHAC. Evolution continues with the new phase, with new focus on strengthening food leadership for programming and market-based ventures, championing effective food policies, strengthening the evidence base that demonstrate the impacts of food systems change, and building sectoral alignment and impact through regional and provincial networks.*

*We are already thinking ahead to the stories we will share in 2020.*



# MAIN PROJECT PARTNERS

## Cumberland County

PARTNER	NETWORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre</li> <li>Public Health</li> <li>Municipality of the County of Cumberland</li> <li>Town of Amherst</li> <li>Local farms</li> </ul>	Cumberland Food Action Network (CFAN)

## Southeast New Brunswick

PARTNER	NETWORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moncton United Way</li> <li>Foods of the Fundy Valley</li> <li>Groupe de développement durable du Pays de Cocagne (GDDPC)</li> <li>Green Eye Cooperative</li> <li>NB Department of Social Development</li> </ul>	NB Food Security Action Network (NBFSAN)

## Cape Breton Island

PARTNER	NETWORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L'École NDA</li> <li>Conseil des Arts de Chéticamp</li> <li>Public Health</li> <li>Wagmatcook First Nation</li> <li>Glance Bay Food Bank</li> <li>Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op</li> </ul>	Island Food Network (IFN)

## Halifax Region

PARTNER	NETWORK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigrant Services Association of NS (ISANS)</li> <li>HUGS Community Garden and the Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre (BWFC)</li> <li>Common Roots Urban Farm (CRUF)</li> <li>FoodARC (Food Action Research Centre)</li> <li>Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU)</li> <li>NS Health Authority (NSHA), Public Health and Partners for Care</li> <li>NS Department of Health &amp; Wellness</li> <li>NS Department of Agriculture</li> <li>Food Secure Canada</li> <li>Halifax City, Mayor's Office</li> <li>Nourish Nova Scotia</li> </ul>	<p>Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA)</p> <p>Good Food NS/NS Food Security Network (NSFSN)</p> <p>Try Do Council</p>





**THE OUR**  Ecology Action Centre  
**FOOD PROJECT**

[ecologyaction.ca/ourfood](http://ecologyaction.ca/ourfood)