

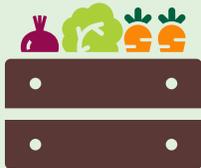
COMMUNITY FOOD LEADER CERTIFICATE PROGRAM



BUILDING FOOD LEADERS, TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Since 2017, **over 70 community-based organizations** have participated in the Ecology Action Centre's Community Food Leader Certificate Program in Cumberland, Cape Breton and Halifax regions. Over eight months, the Community Food Leader Program helps community-based organizations and businesses to **grow food initiatives in their community** that impact the lives of those experiencing food insecurity. Participants represent a wide range of community stakeholders, including family resource centres, farmers, libraries, markets, seniors' homes, shelters, recreation centres, and more. As a way of providing a deep learning experience, we take a **holistic approach** offering monthly training sessions, webinars, and personalized coaching sessions that truly help participants **bring their projects to life**.

— THE IMPACT —



More community-based food initiatives serving our communities



Increased connection to a community food network



Increased knowledge and interest in food justice issues

“ I certainly would highly recommend the program to anybody that is working in food, interested in working in food, wanting to be a change-maker in their community. I think the program is really, really excellent for that. I think the Ecology Action Centre has so much experience in that ability to pull people together and that networking. ”

EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES THAT LAUNCHED OR EXPANDED DURING THE COMMUNITY FOOD LEADER PROGRAM



Community gardens



Subsidized food box programs



Community oven development



Expansion of a youth social enterprise



Youth food programs



Community food security report



Development and implementation of organizational food policies



Food waste initiatives



Development of a farmers' association

“ This was one of the best training opportunities I've had in my career as a community librarian...I've made so many valuable partnerships and connections. ”



COMMUNITY FOOD LEADER CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Ecology Action Centre



Amy Hockin

MANAGER OF OPERATIONS & FINANCE,
RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES CENTRE

Amy Hockin is from the small community of Prospect along the rocky outcropped road to Peggy's Cove, where food choices are mostly fast and convenient, and not always local or healthy. A group of local volunteers came together with a vision for a more food sovereign community and from it grew the Prospect Farmers Market. But in Amy's second year coordinating the market, she knew it needed more guidance and joined the Ecology Action Centre's Community Food Leader Certificate Program (CFL) in search of support. According to her, she received it in spades. From discussions with peers in a safe learning environment, to new ideas and sound advice, her confidence grew. She was able to develop a market survey for prospective vendors that opened the lines of communication and improved vendor offerings as well as establish a plan for an improved guest experience. For Amy, the CFL program **"...gave us the confidence to ask the question and know what questions to ask, and it also gave us the confidence to make really firm decisions and know that it was in the best interest of the market."** Today she is thinking outside the box for new ways of making the Prospect Farmers Market thrive and credits the Ecology Action Centre for playing a part in her community's ability to move beyond food insecurity, to food sovereignty.

The Community Food Leader Program

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 Ecology Action Centre

Mandy Chapman

COORDINATOR OF VOLUNTEERS & FOOD SECURITY, SHELTER NOVA SCOTIA

If you're not housed, you're also food insecure. This is the reality that Mandy Chapman tackles every day in her work with Shelter Nova Scotia serving individuals experiencing homelessness. When Mandy joined the Ecology Action Centre's Community Food Leader Certificate Program (CFL), she wanted to build upon Shelter Nova Scotia's food offerings and meet others who, like her, were trying to understand how people in need can better access healthy, affordable food. She had been noticing that the shelter's food donations were often overly-processed and nutritionally-devoid. Through CFL, she became empowered to tell donors exactly what was needed of their food donations and so, the "Good Food Guidelines" were born. The guidelines outline foods that are appropriate and nutritious, setting a new tone for what would be served in the kitchen. To Mandy, the shift was inspiring, **"We said what we needed and within a few months the community responded."** Beyond these changes, participating in the CFL Program provided Mandy with a new network of local food leaders that she could tap into when confronting pressing food issues. To her, these relationships are the true lasting benefit of the CFL Program: **"...if you get to build those connections you don't need to be in your silo so much and you can be like 'Oh maybe we should work on this together' or 'Hey, I know who's doing this in the community' and you don't have to struggle for resources so much anymore because you have a network of people to reach out to."**

“ ...had I not had the Community Food Leader experience, those relationships wouldn't have been formed, and now if I'm like 'Oh my gosh, I don't know what to do or who would know that?' then I can reach out. I have a whole network of people. ”





COMMUNITY FOOD LEADER CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Ecology Action Centre



Stephanie Osberg

BAREFOOT FARMERS ASSOCIATION

Sometimes the best ideas are grown from the ground up. The Ecology Action Centre's Community Food Leader Certificate Program (CFL) provided fertile ground for Stephanie Osberg to do just that. She joined the program as a community mental health leader with an interest in food security, without an existing food network. By deeply engaging with other CFL participants, she was able to partner with one of her peers to create the Barefoot Farmers Association that would raise money to support small scale farmers and then buy back extra produce to distribute to local organizations in need. CFL helped Stephanie see things more clearly: **"...Everybody growing, everybody eating - that is our mission. And that's what we want to see. We want to see everybody growing a little bit of food and then sharing it and building community."**

In an 8-month period, Barefoot Farmers was able to raise \$4,000 to support 10 growers that would then provide fresh fruits and vegetables to partners like the Sipekne'katik First Nation Food Pantry, Shelter Nova Scotia, and Mulgrave Park Food Bank. According to Stephanie, this would never have happened if it weren't for the CFL Program. It gave her the space and structure to brainstorm ideas, explore possibilities, and co-create.

“ The program changed my life in so many ways, so many incredibly positive ways, but honestly to be able to give me an opportunity to make the kind of difference I want to make. I could not have done the Barefoot Farmer thing without the Ecology Action Centre and the Community Food Leader Program. It happened because of that. ”





COMMUNITY FOOD LEADER CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

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Rielle Williams

CULTURAL TOUR DEVELOPER,
BLACK CULTURAL CENTRE FOR NOVA SCOTIA

Reclaiming the connection between food and African-Nova Scotian culture was paramount for Rielle Williams when she joined the Ecology Action Centre's Community Food Leader Certificate Program (CFL). She arrived in the program as a self-described 'blank slate' eager to put her ideas into action. As a Cultural Tour Developer at the Black Cultural Centre, Rielle wanted to share the agricultural history of African-Nova Scotian farmers while empowering community to reconnect with food. During the CFL Program, Rielle dreamed up a living exhibit where African Nova Scotians could come and learn both about history and about basic food growing skills that could be applied in their backyards and balconies. To her, thinking about food in a cultural context **"...allows for a healthier lifestyle rather than the convenience of things. It's just sort of getting back to our roots and understanding what that means."** During the CFL Program, Rielle had the time and space to ask for help and accept it in full from her peers. With offers of seeds, garden tools, resources, and ideas, she dug deep into her passion pilot project. Rielle was able to successfully launch a pilot season growing an abundance of fresh produce at the neighbouring AKOMA Centre, a centre for black children in care. She was amazed at how much food they were able to donate to people in need simply from two garden plots. Now planning for the growing season at the Black Cultural Centre, Rielle is left inspired by her CFL peers and the power that comes from re-connecting her community with its agricultural roots.

“ It was just very inspiring to be a part of this group. Everyone was really like 'open heart, open minds', like 'How can we help each other' so it was a really interesting introduction to this program, the Ecology Action Centre, and also this whole world and community of people who are passionate about food and feeding each other, making it sustainable. ”





COMMUNITY FOOD LEADER CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

 Ecology Action Centre



Kim Tilsley

LIBRARY ASSISTANT, DRs. COADY AND TOMPKINS
PUBLIC LIBRARY, MARGAREE FORKS

Libraries are at the heart of rural communities - add an under-used green space and a vision for an outdoor oven, and you've got a recipe for a true community hub. Kim Tilsley, library assistant at the *Drs. Coady and Tompkins Library* in Margaree Forks, joined the EAC's Community Food Leader Certificate Program with the hope of bringing the idea for a community oven from concept to reality. She credits EAC staff with helping her develop a governance framework for the community oven. **"One of the things I really liked about the program is it gave me time to really think deeply about the project, which you don't necessarily get in our rush-about world. I think that made the project stronger and I'm hoping that it will give the oven a better chance of succeeding in going forward and growing into something that's really integral in the community."**

Once built, the oven drew the community in. It kicked off with a family camp-out at the library grounds followed by a pizza lunch. To Kim, it is gatherings like these that excite her about the oven's ability to serve as a real community hub. From baking workshops, inter-generational recipe sharing, multicultural cooking, to plenty of community gatherings centered around food, the possibilities are endless. With the CFL Program to thank for getting things cooking, Kim is truly appreciative.

“ I certainly would highly recommend the program to anybody that is working in food, interested in working in food, wanting to be a change-maker in their community. I think the program is really, really excellent for that. I think the Ecology Action Centre has so much experience in that ability to pull people together and that networking. ”





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Ecology Action Centre



Alison Lair

MANAGER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
YMCA OF CUMBERLAND

Alison Lair entered the Ecology Action Centre's Community Food Leader Certificate Program (CFL) with an original focus on expanding the YMCA's community kitchen offerings, and left with a collaborative project called *Waste Not, Want Not*. Suffice to say that the power of networking left a lasting impression on Alison. Engaging with other like-minded people led her to team up with two of her CFL peers to address food waste issues in Cumberland County. Their new *Waste Not, Want Not* project is all about making the most out of local resources by connecting growers who have an abundance of food with local groups that have access to a clientele in need. **"We're trying to get food out of farmers' fields, out of home gardeners, gardens that would otherwise be wasted, and made available to people who wouldn't necessarily have access to those fresh foods."** Flowing from the CFL program, Alison and the *Waste Not, Want Not* team undertook a successful first harvest at a local farm and distributed fresh produce to community members who would use it most. With support from Ecology Action Centre staff, the group was also guided through a strategic planning session that provided a final push to help launch their project. For Alison, the CFL program's networking opportunities have made her and her community more connected - to one another and to food - resulting in a more food secure Cumberland County.

“ It's helped me meet a lot of other people who have similar mindsets, but with very different skillsets ... It was obviously a very well thought out and very well developed program. ”



The Community Food Leader Program

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*- Amy Hockin
Manager of Operations & Finance,
Resource Opportunities Centre*



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- Mandy Chapman
Coordinator of Volunteers & Food Security,
Shelter Nova Scotia

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- Stephanie Osberg
Barefoot Farmers Association



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The impact of participating in this program was on my own knowledge of food injustice, food security, sovereignty - it sort of brought that out of me as far as like *'Wow, I am really passionate about all of this, and I do want this to come full circle'* and then all of a sudden it was just like fireworks of ideas. It was a really good tool to spearhead things and programs that I can see happening in the future here that surround food and food justice.

”

- *Rielle Williams*
Cultural Tour Developer,
Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia



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*Library Assistant, Drs. Coady and Tompkins
Public Library, Margaree Forks*

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- Alison Lair

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