

Where Have We Been?

After the food forum in November 2008 a group of individuals met in a subsequent meeting to carry on with the energy and the ideas that were generated. Our journey started by defining a purpose for the work and principles of being together.



Purpose

As a core team, we will become:

Cultivators of a thriving local food system

A cultivator creates fertile land for planting...

1. Creates the conditions for people to solve their own problems
2. Names what is out there and new initiatives as they arise
3. Connects initiatives, people and ideas
4. Nourishes relationships between all the parts
5. Makes visible what's going on, what we are learning and tells the story of local food

Principles and Agreements

- Work together in a fun, flexible, creative way.
- Be clear in our communication: speak, listen, and act with heart and mind.
- Use a variety of methods to ensure understanding.
- Trust: that everyone has good intentions --and these will lead to positive results.
- Patience with the process—changing systems takes time. We will be patient and check in with the process to ensure we achieve our goals.
- Respect what each person contributes.
- Don't lose sight of the goal.
- Work to reach group consensus: reaching agreement we can all live with.
- Shared leadership: we will share, support, act, and reflect together.



After the meeting in February, the core team continued to build it's foundation as a team and explored the draft model. Over the course of several months the team had 3 main projects they cultivated.

A partnership was formed with Mount Saint Vincent University Communications Program. Our work and team was a project the class highlighted. They developed many resources for us, including logos and promotional material.

The team decided to use some community gatherings to explore "what does local mean to you?" This is what we heard:

Eating food that supports the local community and is more environmentally sustainable

It is very important to me

Quality, love, hard work

It all comes from local farmers. That's so important to me!!!

Everything!!!

Longer life

It means supporting our local areas. Much healthier for everyone

Eat

Grown and/or processed in Lunenburg/Queens counties, or at least in NS

Building community food security

Fresh, less or no growth hormone or weird genetic enhancement

More farms, more employment, more pride, more youth staying home

Fresh, safe and tasty food for my family (mom and dad) to smile for joy

Healthy, affordable, free from chemicals, available in our markets and groceries. Accurate labeling – i.e. 'local' is N.S. or Maritimes

The way we should eat. Will pay more for local food

It means that local farmers are finally selling their food to their local area!

I work in a grocery store and I think that the Big companies should be buying more local product because it is what the people are asking for. Local products are better products

When the community comes together

Supporting your community

Generally what can be brought in to Queens/ Lunenburg from N.S. at reasonable costs

The team also decided to have some interviews with a few people connected to our local food system. When we started hearing the quotes we realized they aligned with what we already had, the leverage areas from the forum. We had quotes relating to the 7 leverage areas and have added an eighth area around culture. Below are the areas and some of the quotes from the interviews.

Education - create awareness of the issue, of existing sources of local products, of the value of a local food system, the cooking, storing and growing of local food, of the link to sustaining community, of the complexity of the food system

“We need to work on the education of the public-where the food comes from, what it takes to get here, and that it is okay if that sometimes some food isn’t available”

“People need to know what it actually means when something is labeled as “local” or “Canadian made”

“There are generational barriers; mothers didn’t teach their children to cook; we are only two generations past, but I think it is too late; cooking with fresh food, preserving, etc. is a lost art”

“Put money in the Education budget specifically earmarked for food and nutrition. Students are not getting cooking and other information in family studies, and there is no home economics and very little information on nutrition. Children are not learning these skills at home so schools need to teach how to eat and cook properly. When schools are working with a global budget, even those classes that could teach cooking end up making bread and pizza, because they are inexpensive and it is all they can afford. The province would have to earmark the funds”

“The catch to growing local is to educate companies on the environment so they are not using up resources to haul their products”

Engagement - need to engage the community, the youth, and the political agendas

“In Hawaii, there are rotational markets much like here. In tourist accommodations, they have fridge magnets with the weekly schedule of markets. It would be a good idea for the provincial tourism or agriculture departments to support this kind of advertising.”

“We need a tourist bureau on the highway to help direct people to local farms, markets, etc. Even highway pull-off areas where bulletin boards could be used to advertise, similar to rest stops in Quebec, which feature maps and lists local events.”

“Bylaws and regulations very frustrating- e.g. whole raw milk. Makes you feel that government is not for the people but rather about corporations making money. Sometimes government gets in the way. Regulations need to be adjusted to fit the reality.”

“I think a community garden would work better in the cities where it is a novelty and status symbol. In the rural areas it is considered work because they did this when they were a child.”

“It is the whole system, it is such a complicated issue; it’s transportation, it’s financial, it’s social justice, it’s regulation/legislation sort of stuff, environmental, every kind of system you can think of is involved somehow”

Relationships - local food is a critical and concrete way of connecting consumers with producers and producers with distributors so they can talk, understand, and work together

“family time and values need to be incorporated into these tasks such as cleaning beans, picking gardens, etc.; they may not enjoy it, but it teaches them lessons”

“It is a lost art. Even baking cookies. The grandchildren ask me to bake cookies as soon as I come in. We made bread once we had flour everywhere. They ate the bread they made, dirt and all, they didn’t care”

“Food is a social experience. I want it to look and taste good and I want to feel I’m getting what is good for me. I have far more security about those issues if I buy locally.”

“Local food is good value and good taste. You have a sense of who the farmer is.”

“Most farmers grow for the love of it, not to make money. They are proud of what they produce. When you buy from them, you feel like you are part of the good work.”

“Buying local links communities and is another part of the web.”

“Small family farms where you can get to know your food producer, get to know your butcher, your farmer. You can talk about what happened and how they grew it and in some places you can visit the farm and have a relationship with who grows your food.”

“Community gardens are where people learn together.”

Distribution - create a consistent local distribution system which serves our community and is accessible to everyone

“Local chicken producers sell to a company in Toronto, then chicken come back locally to be sold to consumer”

“the customer is losing and that is the bottom line”; they are paying too much for their food; “something is going wrong somewhere and I cannot agree to it”; “families struggle every month to pay for overpriced food

“there are members of government setting the prices on meat and other foods”

“the middlemen hold onto local meat because it is cheap at the time and sell more expensive imported meat”

“there needs to be a commitment from the distributors that local product sells first so that the demand is maintained”

“It would be nice for fishermen to be able to get into the stores, same with the farmers. Have it come in fresh”

“Food safety issues are a concern. There is less chance of contamination if food is grown/processed local. It means it is not stuck in a truck or plane trying to get to the grocery stores. Being more environmentally safe and leaving less of a foot print.”

“Depends on the time of year...because like this time of the year local is Lunenburg county but in the winter local would be Canadian.”

Policy - look at the policies that are impacting producers and advocate for change where necessary, identify ways we can leverage change to support the local food system

“There are so many regulations on the export of food and it effects the quality of the food”

“Quality is lost in order to fulfill these regulations”

“People are starving and tonnes of food is thrown in the garbage/compost” because of regulations and standards set by people other than the producers and consumers”

“I think there is so many rules and regulations, which is good for us, it protects us but I don’t know how it is for the farmers and fishermen”

“I have a big concern about the local grocery store not promoting local food but still having cheaper access to food from Chile or United States or whatever.”



Sustainability - look local producers as more than local and explore ways of assisting them to stay in business for a healthy population which is vital to our economy. Build momentum – tell the compelling story of this campaign

“We need to create a new industry by using what we throw away”

“Co-operatives are an answer- “get together and build something”; everything has been done on a small scale, somewhere”

“Need to start working on producing products from the entire so that there is no waste; using the appropriate part of the product for producing the appropriate by product; for example, in NS the best parts of the pig are used for bologna and the too much of the pig is being thrown away, unused”

“If we don’t buy from the local people, who will.”

Accessibility - municipal transportation, share resources to make food available/accessible within and between communities

“I look around the area and all I see is chicken farms everywhere, but I don’t see any local chicken in the grocery stores”

I look around and all I see is chicken farms, I haven’t seen a tomato field or a romaine field; “if I can do it in my own yard, anybody can do it”, “it doesn’t cost that much”

“We ask that people only come once per month if they can help it, if you are hungry you are hungry”

“On a provincial level, I would like to see subsidies for farmers and a tax on junk food. The subsidized milk program in schools worked- children can pay 15 cents for milk instead of pop.”

“I hope that farm markets continue to increase and expand. Road side stands working on the honor system have always worked well in some areas. Don’t put obstacles like taxes and regulations in the way of these local successes”

“Local should be within our own province of Nova Scotia. The closer to the community I live in, the better”

“The poor are the hardest hit. The will and want is there and they care but reality dictates what they are buying at that time.”

“So for families who are wanting to eat healthy but don’t have the budget to do that, that makes it difficult. So they can go to the farmer’s market but there’s not a lot, I don’t think, that you would actually be able to afford, so the people who end up going there are the people who can afford it, who have transportation and can get there.”

“So that if you were to choose and again it is a poverty issue... so if you were to choose for example at Superstore this week strawberries were 1.99 from the US and they weren’t ripe or whatever but for 1.99 or if you were to buy local ones, they are at 3 something. If you were on a tight budget you would obviously choose the ones that have been exported for thousands of miles and probably sprayed with ethylene gas or whatever to make them ripen up on the outside but the nutritional value would not be the same. So I have a huge problem with that when you go in the store in the summertime and you have to buy garlic from Chile or from China, when we grow it locally.”

“If I extend the system to the fisheries, I am happy to have immediate access to fresh fish...very happy about that.”

“So having some sort of centralized buying or something like that; I don’t know but it may make it more accessible to people”

Culture

“A challenge to local foods is resistance of some folks. We live in a disposable society and we are talking about changing people’s lifestyle, taxing certain lifestyle choices, and earmarking budgets.”

“There is a disconnect from who we are and our own heritage. We need to reconnect with our place in time and space. We live in Canada, in a northern climate, by the Atlantic Ocean. We have been taught that we can have anything we want, whenever we want. We have been fed consumerism and commercialism. It is not right to have anything you want, whenever you want. If you want the other items, you might have to go somewhere else.”

“As a child we would follow the season of produce, it was a cultural thing”

“Now there are no boundaries; you can get anything, anytime of the year because of the import of produce”

“The current generation of parents are well educated and know better; now is the time to change”

“That’s exactly it, a time to relax and talk and particularly for women, even though it might be a gender stereotype that we gather in the kitchen but we do...we do and the ritual of that I think is important.”

“I think as westerners or North Americans we think that we have the right to consume everything from across the world and the rest of the world owes us their produce, their goods and I think we have to change that.”

“People are busy”

A complete collection of quotes can be found on the South Shore Family Resource Association website. Under the food security tab.

<http://www.southshorefamilyresource.org/>

The Team discussed the possibilities and the depth and breadth of the areas we could focus. It was decided that we would focus our attention in one leverage area at a time and we will be starting with education.

If you are interested in joining this work please contact:

heather@southshorefamilyresource.org

traci@southshorefamilyresource.org