



Healthy Communities

Charting a Course to Food Security: *The Sudbury Manitoulin Food Security Network*

A sustainable food system integrates health, economic, environmental and social justice issues under the vision of creating food secure communities. Food secure communities have enough healthy food for all and support those who are at-risk of food insecurity. In a food secure community, local food resources are grown in a sustainable way and contribute to a thriving economy and a healthy environment.

The Sudbury Manitoulin Food Security Network (FSN) is a good example of a community taking collective action to improve food security and advocate for healthy public policy.

The FSN started 10 years ago through the Sudbury & District Health Unit. Its membership represents a wide range of sectors including agricultural groups and key government ministries. The vision of the FSN is to create food secure communities in the Sudbury-Manitoulin Districts that have zero hunger, healthy food choices, local food resources, and a sustainable environment.

Since the summer of 2002, the Network has focused on developing a "Food Charter" for the Sudbury and Manitoulin districts. The Food Charter provides a framework to bring community members

together around a common vision of improving access to healthy, nutritious, local food. Because it addresses the social, economic and environmental issues related to food, the charter helps community members to think about the food system and its various components in a comprehensive and holistic way.



Participants in Food Charter "Visioning Day"

The process of developing the Charter proved to be an effective way of engaging community members and local government. During this process, a tremendous amount of consultation and learning took place within the FSN and in the broader community. Several public events were held including a meeting with Debbie Field from Foodshare Toronto about the importance of strengthening the local food system, a workshop at a public health conference, and a talk by Dr. David Suzuki on food-

related environmental issues. The first draft of the Food Charter was written after a "Visioning Day" that included Dr. Wayne Roberts of the Toronto Food Policy Council. The visioning process involved more than 60 diverse participants.

Events like these raised the visibility of food related issues in the community and increased the interest of different sectors in getting involved with the FSN. They generated a healthy debate about issues such as organic agriculture, methods of charitable food distribution, and ways to improve access to culturally appropriate food. The Network members also

identified a need to better understand and support food security in First Nations communities. The traditional food of First Nations people is integral to their way of life, and the loss of sovereignty over their land has coincided with the loss their traditional diet.

The Network members also found that there is a lack of government involvement in overseeing food systems and that the resources to support local agriculture have decreased. According to FSN co-chairs Tammy Cheguis and Doreen Ojala,

continued on page 8



Healthy Communities is the newsletter of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition.

Readers are encouraged to submit comments and suggestions to the Editorial Committee.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Monique Beaudoin
Paul Filteau
Lorna Heidenheim
Kerri Jones
Andrew Koch

CONTRIBUTORS

Monique Beaudoin
Tammy Chegus
Lorna Heidenheim
Andrew Koch
Kim McGibbon
Doreen Ojala
Chris Winter

LAYOUT

Kerri Jones
Andrew Koch

TRANSLATION

mots Pour maux

PRINTING

Captain Printworks

Please contact us at:

Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
555 Richmond Street West, Suite 505
Box 1100
Toronto, ON M5V 3B1

telephone (416) 408-4841
toll free 1-800-766-3418
fax (416) 408-4843

e-mail info@healthycommunities.on.ca

Visit our web site at:

www.healthycommunities.on.ca

OHCC would like to thank our funders:

Ontario Ministry of Health and
Long Term Care
Ontario Trillium Foundation

The material contained herein reflects solely the views of the contributors and is not officially endorsed by OHCC or our funders.

Healthy Food, Healthy Communities

Access to food is something that most of us take for granted, like housing, clean water and other basic needs. If you walk down a major street in most towns or cities, you will notice restaurants and stores offering all varieties of food. Take a drive through many rural areas and you will pass farms growing an abundance of crops or raising animals like chickens and cows.

But have you stopped to think about why so many individuals and families rely on food banks to get enough to eat, while others become obese from eating too much junk food? Why are healthy foods often expensive or even difficult to find in some communities? Why is so much of our food imported from thousands of miles away when we have excellent farmland right here in Ontario? Questions like these remind us of the importance and complexity of our food system.

Interest in food security issues is growing in communities across Ontario and around the world. Not only is it important to ensure that everyone has access to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, but many of us also recognize the interdependency of all aspects of the food system including agricultural, environmental, social and economic factors.

In fact, when we consider the characteristics of a "food secure community", we find that they are very similar to those of a Healthy Community. A food secure community:

- "features cooperation among all contributors in a local/regional food system, including growers and producers, citizen groups, community agencies, governmental

organizations, businesses, academic researchers and environmental advocates.

- Its actions are based on those of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion: building personal skills, strengthening community action, building healthy public policy and creating supportive environments
- It addresses issues in the economic, environmental and social aspects of the food system, and thus promotes adequate incomes for consumers and producers; local and diverse food production; environmental sustainability; protection of local agricultural lands and fish habitat; widespread access to healthy food; and food-based community economic development and social cohesion." (source: *Ontario Public Health Association Food Security Workgroup, 2002*)

In this issue of *Healthy Communities* you will read about just a few of the efforts being made to improve food security around the province. Initiatives such as the Sudbury-Manitoulin Food Charter, the Toronto Food Animators project and the Thunder Bay Community Food Assessment demonstrate a strong commitment to raising awareness and taking action at the local level.

We also invite you to share with us stories of successful food security initiatives in your community. We will post selected stories on our web site so that others might learn from your experience.



"The long term health of a community's food system is an important indicator of its vitality and sustainability. A logical and appropriate way to revitalize a community is by the development of a local food economy. Not only does an adequate, varied diet contribute to individual health, but the way food is grown, distributed and eaten also profoundly affects the environmental, spiritual and economic well-being of the community. Ecological, cultural and political analyses over the last two decades hold in common the vision of a more local, ecologically sustainable and democratically controlled food system" (G. Feenstra, G., 1997. *Local food systems and sustainable communities, Am. J. of Alternative Agriculture* 12:1 pp 28-36).

Building a Movement for Conservation

By Chris Winter, Executive Director,
Conservation Council of Ontario

It took a major blackout in August 2003 to remind Ontarians about the importance of conservation, and the Conservation Council of Ontario intends to make sure nobody forgets. The blackout opened a window of opportunity for promoting conservation in Ontario. Our challenge is to use it to create a strong, long-lasting conservation movement.

The provincial government has expressed its commitment to electricity conservation and also to establishing a “culture of conservation” in Ontario. The government set up a Conservation Action Team of parliamentary assistants from eight ministries and has partnered with the Conservation Council of Ontario (CCO) to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector in promoting and supporting conservation activities.

The CCO held a Conservation Summit in November 2004, bringing together over 200 conservation leaders to discuss how non-governmental organizations can contribute to meeting conservation targets, such as a 5% reduction in electricity consumption by 2007. Summit participants highlighted the need for a united and coordinated conservation movement in Ontario. The CCO has responded to this call with “*We Conserve*”, an initiative to coordinate and support NGO services and projects, develop co-marketing opportunities and develop provincial campaigns to promote conservation solutions.

Coordination: The trick is to coordinate efforts through networks and lead organizations. There are several networks in Ontario that bring groups together around conservation issues and services, including:

- Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and the Environment
- Climate-Air Connections



A Conservation Action Plan for Ontario Organizations

- Environmental Education Ontario
- Green Communities Association
- Ontario Environment Network
- Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
- Ontario Smart Growth Network
- Stewardship Network of Ontario

Within each of these networks, there are potential “lead organizations” that have the resources and expertise to develop policy and outreach campaigns. The CCO will work with existing networks and organizations and help to develop new networks as needed.

Co-marketing: There are many great projects and services that NGOs offer. Co-marketing is a way to package together similar projects and to provide Ontario’s municipalities, schools, and businesses with ready-made solutions to their needs. Energy conservation services for municipalities is an initial priority, especially given that the recent provincial budget now provides for long-term loans to municipalities for energy conservation projects.

Campaigns: Conservation campaigns are a way for several organizations to get behind a single goal. Two provincial campaigns currently being developed are “Lighten Up” and “Urban Villages”.

“Lighten Up” will promote compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) as a simple first step in electricity conservation. The Clean Air Foundation is the lead organization on this campaign which is expected to include community-based outreach and NGO membership education activities. The campaign will use CFLs to help promote other conservation activities, such

as the Green Communities Energuide for Houses audit (www.egh.gca.ca).

The “Urban Villages” campaign is being developed through the Ontario Smart Growth Network. It promotes the village concept as a desirable alternative to urban sprawl (a village is a place that has almost everything you need within walking distance). The campaign will provide communities with tools and promotional materials for developing and realizing a vision for an urban village, be it in a downtown neighbourhood, on the urban fringe, or in a rural community.

For More Information

The Conservation Council of Ontario has been around since 1951. Its mission is to promote a conserver society in Ontario.

In 2002, the CCO revised its mandate to emphasize the promotion of conservation solutions, as opposed to policy research. It seeks to play a key role in building a conservation movement in Ontario, one that involves a wide diversity of groups and volunteers.

The CCO is also a founding member of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition.

For information on the We Conserve initiative, visit the CCO’s website at www.greenontario.org. To find out how you can get involved, contact Chris Winter at (416) 533-1635, or by email at cco@web.ca.

If you are an OHCC member and would like to have your work profiled, please contact us at info@healthycommunities.on.ca or (416) 408-4841.

Spreading the Word - Toronto Food Animators

The Community Food Animators Project is working to improve access to affordable, culturally appropriate, and healthy food in Toronto. The project started in 2004 and is a collaborative effort of several established agencies that have a wealth of experience with community food programs. The project partners are: FoodShare, Second Harvest, "The Stop" Community Food Centre, the Afri-Can FoodBasket, and Public Interest Strategy & Communications.

Food animation is about helping communities to bring new projects to life and make improvements to existing services, using a community development approach. The Food Animators have helped to start 12 projects in five underserved neighbourhoods that have the interest and capacity to undertake new food projects. The project supports four types of programs: community gardens, community kitchens, fresh food access and emergency food access.

Community kitchens and gardens are well-known ways to improve food access and increase community involvement. Through the Improving Emergency Food programs, the Food Animators assist existing food programs to improve the

efficiency and quality of their services. The newest stream, Fresh Food Access, focuses on improving access to culturally appropriate, healthy food in ways that create public space and strengthen community interactions. This is done through farmers' markets, Good Food Box stops and finding new ways for produce vendors to reach local markets.

The Food Animators team is also developing new partnerships among the public sector, private sector and community agencies in order to build capacity for food programs. For example, they are working with the Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the Toronto District School Board to create policies that will make it easier for both the organizations and the communities they serve to implement food programs. These efforts will help to ensure that the Food Animators' efforts last beyond the life of the project.

The Food Animators project is funded by the City of Toronto and the Toronto Community Foundation. To learn more, contact Jennifer Reynolds: (416) 636-6441 x227 or jennifer@foodshare.net.

Adapted from an article by Rhonda Teitel-Payne in The Stop News, Spring 2005.



Kadija Hayir and Hodan Jama work at the Lawrence Heights East African Women's garden

Community Food Assessment in Thunder Bay

By Kim McGibbon, Public Health Dietitian, Thunder Bay District Health Unit

A Community Food Assessment (CFA) was completed in 2004 by the Thunder Bay Food Action Network and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. The purpose of the CFA was to:

- develop a profile of community characteristics, food programs and resources;
- assess food security of households and the accessibility of food programs; and
- share findings with the community and encourage residents to participate actively in the local food system.

The Assessment process included a literature review, interviews and focus groups with community members, and the mapping of food action programs along with income levels.

A number of key findings will be used to guide, support and raise awareness of the Food Action Network:

- Food programs are concentrated in low-income areas and the downtown cores.
- Local farmers produce a wide variety of products but they face many obstacles including a short growing season, high production costs, new rules and regulations, children leaving the farm, and difficulties getting products to market. Farmers feel that the general public is unaware of the difficulties they experience.
- People are still going hungry. Those at highest risk are recipients of social assistance, single parent households and First Nations people.

- Adults who had inadequate access to food voiced feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and had higher levels of stress and illness. Parents reported that their children were tired, cranky and had a hard time concentrating when they didn't get enough to eat.
- Eligibility requirements and lack of transportation were barriers to accessing many food programs. Also the amount of food provided through such programs is often inadequate.

Overall, poverty is still the main barrier to community food security. Efforts to promote local food production and consumption is a key part of the solution.

The CFA report included several recommendations:

1. Enhance food and nutrition skills through education. Specific measures might include improving access to dietitians, teaching cooking and food preservation skills, as well as using community kitchens and gardens to build skills and social networks.
2. Promote and support local food by creating partnerships with farmers and educating consumers about the benefits of buying locally grown food.
3. Address community needs by improving access to child nutrition programs, breastfeeding support, food banks and other programs.
4. Advocate to improve government policies around income and wages, and to create jobs in the food industry.

To see the full report please visit www.tbdhu.com/food/security/FAN_ReportSept2004.pdf.

New Resource to Raise Awareness of Food Security Issues

Thought about Food?: A workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy is a new resource that was developed as part of a series of research projects in Nova Scotia. It draws upon research and experiences from food security projects in Nova Scotia and also incorporates ideas, insights and advice from people involved in food security issues and actions across Canada.

The workbook can be used by anyone who is interested in starting a discussion about food security in their community. The goal of the workbook is to empower people in communities to raise awareness about food security and ultimately, to influence both policies and systems to address food security issues more effectively.

Developed by the Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, the workbook will be available by summer of 2005.



A draft version can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.foodthoughtful.ca>.

A new national project is also underway entitled "Capacity Building for Food Security through Mentoring." Funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada - National Project Fund of the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and Canadian Action

Program for Children (CAPC) - the goal of the project is to enhance capacities to address food security issues through policy change.

The project is guided by an 11 member Advisory Committee of "Food Security Mentors", consisting of CAPC/CPNP staff from across Canada. Using participatory approaches, these mentors will help develop a training process to use with the *Thought about Food* workbook and its accompanying facilitator guide. The mentors will also guide the development of a new video to be used with the training. The mentors will be encouraged to help others in their region effectively use these resources. All project activities, including the workbook and video, will be in both official languages.

For information and inquiries, please contact: Dr. Patty Williams (Principle Investigator) at Patty.Williams@msvu.ca or Susan Roberts (Project Coordinator 2005-2006) Susanr@cbr-aimhigh.com.

ecoCommunities

EcoCommunities, a joint project of OHCC and ecoPerth, was started in 2004 to help small and medium-sized Ontario communities take action on climate change. Since then, the project has gained great momentum, with 13 ecoCommunities groups established and others inquiring about how to get involved.

The first activity of the project was to compile the ecoCommunities Resource Kit (ecoKit), which includes instructions and materials for 17 community projects that had been successfully tested by ecoPerth. The ecoKit provides groups with resources to quickly and efficiently implement climate change projects in their communities. Materials can be downloaded from the ecoCommunities website (www.ecoperth.on.ca/ecocommunities/index1.php). There are also print and CD-ROM versions.

There are groups in every region of the province, most involving multi-organization collaborations and many community volunteers. The following

--- Project Update ---

are some of the projects that have been undertaken so far:

Local Flavour: This project encourages local food production and consumption, thus bypassing the extensive transportation and processing requirements of conventional food distribution. Four groups have initiated Local Flavour projects; in the Gananoque area, the group identified 76 local producers, developed a database, and designed a map and brochure to promote farm gate and farmers market sales.

Community Gardens are being expanded in Thunder Bay. Among the many benefits is the potential to reduce the energy used in transporting food.

Re-lamping Project: This is a door-to-door program to distribute compact fluorescent light bulbs to residents and facilitate re-lamping of homes. The ecoKit provides a spreadsheet that compares lighting strategies and provides comparisons of capital, operating,

maintenance and total lifetime cost. Five ecoCommunities are doing re-lamping projects.

Clothesline Photo Contest: This project was contributed to the ecoKit by the Superior Renewable Energy Cooperative (SREC). It is designed to increase awareness of the significant savings available by using a clothesline, compared to a clothes dryer which is a major energy consumer. This project was successfully implemented by SREC in 2004, as reported in the last issue of *Healthy Communities*.

EcoCommunities has received funding from Environment Canada (EcoAction) and the Ontario Trillium Foundation. These funds allowed us to provide project seed money as well as consultation, facilitation and technical assistance. In March, the first issue of the electronic newsletter *ecoConnections* was distributed, as a means of sharing information about community projects.

For more information about this project, please email ec@healthycommunities.on.ca.



NEWS BRIEFS

Share IT: Computers for Community

Computers and other electronic gadgets are generally safe to use but pose a threat when thrown away. This is because these items commonly contain toxic materials such as lead, mercury, arsenic and cadmium. When disposed of in landfill the toxins pose the risk of leaching into the soil and contaminating the ground water and food chain.

With this problem in mind, the Community Environment Alliance of Peel (CEA) has undertaken Share IT: Computers for Community (CFC) - a program to provide refurbished personal computers and IT skills to community members with limited incomes, while diverting computers from landfill. With the support of businesses and the community, the CEA plans to distribute 1,500 refurbished PCs by 2006. "The need in the community is immense," says Ranjana Mitra, the Executive Director of

CEA. "We plan to continue with the aim to providing community members with practical IT skills relevant for work and in learning. No one should be deprived of the use of a computer," she added.



A volunteer refurbishes a donated computer

The Share IT: CFC program involves collection of used computer equipment from government, businesses and members of the public. Computers are wiped cleaned of data and are refurbished by skilled volunteer technicians. Thanks to Microsoft Canada, every PC distributed through this program includes

a licensed operating system. The program also offers equipment to community-based non-profit organizations, charities and qualified self employed individuals in Peel Region. The program also provides co-op opportunities for new immigrants and students wanting to pursue a career in IT. Finally, the CEA will hold some special events in the spring to raise public awareness about the problem of "e-waste".

Since its launch in August 2004, the program has helped to divert more than 8.9 tonnes of electronic waste away from landfill. "The program has grown since its inception and our new facility (in Brampton) will allow us to better serve our clients and the community" says Ranjana. The Share IT: CFC is designed to provide a holistic benefit to the society, the environment and the regional economy - therefore contributing to a sustainable community.

For more information about this program or CEA, you may contact Ranjana Mitra at (905) 463-9941 or rmitra@communityenvironment.org. *Share IT: CFC is made possible through financial assistance from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.*

2005 National Conference on CED and the Social Economy

OHCC is proud to have been a partner in the 2005 National Conference on Community Economic Development (CED) and the Social Economy, entitled *Building an Inclusive Movement*. Held May 4-7, in Sault Ste. Marie, the conference drew 489 participants from every corner of the country for 65 workshop and plenary presentations, keynote addresses, site visits and enjoyable social evenings. Efforts to attract a diverse range of participants clearly paid off; the strong francophone, aboriginal and international representation provided rich, multi-dimensional perspectives.

By partnering with the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNET), Algoma University College and the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP) to organize this conference, OHCC was able to meet many of its objectives. The conference was a major training and networking event for

people interested in CED and its potential to create stronger, healthier communities. It offered tools, resources, and many opportunities for learning, dialogue and



OHCC President Dwight Gessie gives opening address in Sault Ste. Marie

networking with other practitioners and government representatives. It provided an opportunity for stimulating discussion on healthy public policy relating to CED and to Social Inclusion. In addition, it provided OHCC with exposure to a national audience and a chance to distribute materials to participants.

An opening address by OHCC President Dwight Gessie spoke to the importance of CED as a means towards achieving healthier communities, and the work that OHCC does to support CED efforts. He also made reference to OHCC's work on social inclusion and building inclusive organizations. Closing reflections by OHCC Executive Director Lorna Heidenheim highlighted some memorable moments from the conference. Two OHCC staff members presented workshops: "Building Inclusive Organizations" (Lisa Tolentino) and "The Economic Benefits of Taking Community Action on Climate Change" (Jeff Kohl). We also gratefully acknowledge the hard work of OHCC staff members Monique Beaudoin and Tricia Green, who were both part of the organizing committee and worked continuously throughout the conference, and to Jeff Kohl, who did a great job as part of the Master of Ceremonies team.

Finally, OHCC thanks the conference partners, organizing committees, sponsors, presenters, staff, volunteers and participants for making this a great event.

photo: Gilles Gagne

OHCC Board Nominations and Annual General Meeting

You are invited to join us for our 2005 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Toronto on September 9. The time and location will be posted on our web site www.healthycommunities.on.ca.

OHCC members are invited to nominate a candidate for election to the OHCC Board of Directors at the AGM to represent their category of membership (Community, Network or Provincial Association). Nomination forms were mailed to OHCC members on record as of May 2005. If you are a member but did not receive a form, please contact our Central Office to request one. Nominations are due by August 15th, 2005.

London's One Tonne Challenge Campaign

Thames Region Ecological Association (TREA) and the City of London are challenging all sectors of their community to the One Tonne Challenge - an effort to reduce energy, waste and water use and increase clean transportation alternatives.

The One Tonne Challenge (OTC) is part of the Government of Canada's Climate Change Plan, released in November 2002.

On average individual Canadians produce five tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions (GGE) annually. The OTC calls on all of us to take steps to achieve a national goal of reducing emissions by one tonne per person. Communities across Canada are participating in this program and will be delivering special OTC projects in their communities and sharing their experiences.

TREA and the City of London are co-leading the London OTC campaign, each with specific initiatives to engage Londoners. The City will be working with seven neighbourhoods with several programs as well as supporting the EnerGuide for Houses and the Commuter Challenge. TREA will be promoting the Commuter Challenge to businesses and Active & Safe Routes to schools with messages of drive less, drive smarter and don't idle. They will also visit gas stations and auto dealerships to discuss ways that they can encourage fuel-efficiency.

TREA will also work with condo associations on energy conservation, schools and retailers on pesticide reduction initiatives and help Boy Scout troops with their climate badge. Last year, TREA delivered a "Do Your Share for Clean Air" community awareness campaign. This involved successful

visits to more than 100 locations and talking to over 30,000 people at schools, businesses, churches and special events throughout the year.

For further information, contact TREA at (519) 645-2845, visit www.trea.ca or visit the Air Quality page at www.london.ca.

Our Newest Members



OHCC welcomes the following new members who have joined since the last issue of *Healthy Communities*:

Archie Allison
Toronto

Gloria Fischer
East Algoma CFDC
Blind River

Pete Mitrovic
For the Greener Good
Kakabeka Falls

John Osborne
Social Planning Council of Kingston & Area

Diane Van Dyk
West Elgin Community Health Centre
West Lorne

Neel Venugopal
Toronto

For OHCC membership information, please visit www.healthycommunities.on.ca/join_us/membership/index.html

Community Animators

Contact the Community Animator closest to you for more information about Healthy Communities or services offered by OHCC.

EAST

Kara Symbolic & Jeff Kohl (Westport)
Phone: (613) 273-5044
kara@healthycommunities.on.ca
jeff@healthycommunities.on.ca

CENTRAL EAST

Susan Larsh (Bowmanville)
Phone: (905) 623-2233
susan@healthycommunities.on.ca

NORTHEAST

Monique Beaudoin (Sudbury)
Phone: (705) 671-9983
monique@healthycommunities.on.ca

SOUTHWEST

Frances Shamley (Glencoe)
Phone: (519) 287-2618
frances@healthycommunities.on.ca

NORTHWEST

Paul Filteau (Thunder Bay)
Phone: (807) 683-6298
paul@healthycommunities.on.ca

DIVERSITY COORDINATOR

Lisa Tolentino
Phone: (416) 414-8778
lisa@healthycommunities.on.ca

GREATER TORONTO & GOLDEN HORSESHOE

Contact our central office
Phone: (416) 408-4841
info@healthycommunities.on.ca

CENTRAL

Leila Sherriff
Leila will be seconded to the Ontario Trillium Foundation from June to Oct. 2005. During this time, please contact our central office for assistance.

Food Security Network , continued from page 1

“we came to the conclusion that government sees agriculture as a mature industry that doesn’t require intervention. Municipal governments need to start playing a stronger role to support farming, and particularly organic farming. It also has to look at the distribution system and make it easier for local farmers to sell to the community.”

The final version of the Food Charter was completed in early 2004 and adopted by the Board of Health of Sudbury Manitoulin District in June 2004. The Board of Health was an important champion of the Charter and helped to promote it to other area communities.

In September of 2004, the network presented the Charter to the Council of the City of Greater Sudbury. In order to connect the Charter to the priorities of Council, they referred to Healthy Communities as one of the city’s strategic priorities, and explained how the Healthy Communities model could be adopted to address food security issues. The Council unanimously supported the Charter.

Two other municipalities in the District have also adopted the Food Charter: the Municipality of Killarney and St. Charles and the Township of Tehkummah. They are among a very small number of Ontario communities that have adopted a Food Charter.

Reflecting on the Network’s success, Doreen and Tammy note that it was rewarding to “see how important food is to people” and to learn how much collective knowledge exists in the community. They add that, “it’s so interesting to see the excitement that is generated in a room when we talk about this.” This project gave them “the opportunity to meet amazing people doing meaningful things to help people and the environment.”



Looking to the future, the Network will do more work to reach consensus among its members on key issues and will encourage all members to adopt the Food Charter in their own organizations. They also plan to do more education and outreach in order to broaden membership and to encourage additional input and ideas from community members. Finally, there are plans for an annual food security report card that would provide detailed indicators of the development of a strong local food system.

To view Food Charter, please visit www.foodshedproject.ca/food_security.htm.

This article was adapted from an interview conducted by Monique Beaudoin with Tammy Cheguis, Public Health Dietitian, Sudbury & District Health Unit and Health Committee Chair of the Sudbury-Manitoulin Food Security Network and Doreen Ojala, Project Manager, Foodshed Project and Co-Chair of the Sudbury-Manitoulin FSN.

Advice for communities undertaking food security projects

- Learn from the experience of other communities. The support and mentoring of Debbie Fields and Wayne Roberts from Toronto were invaluable to the process of developing a Food Charter in Sudbury Manitoulin. “Toronto’s experience validated the work that we were doing,” Doreen and Tammy point out.
- Involve your local Health Unit. The Sudbury & District Health Unit has played an important role in the Food Security Network as both a source of knowledge and information, and as a champion of their cause.
- Access available resources. The Ontario Public Health Association, Social Planning Councils, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ryerson Centre for Studies in Food Security and OHCC have excellent resources and research to help you.
- Get community input. Organize some community focus sessions and run with this issue. You will see that there is a lot of passion around it!

The Foodshed Project

The Foodshed Project has a vision to develop a sustainable local food system for the Sudbury area; one that is based on the foodshed model of community economic development and environmental stewardship. The foodshed concept connects us to local food sources and is a framework within which to understand where and how food is grown and how food flows within the community. Ideally, our foodshed should be as local as possible.

The Foodshed Project promotes empowering forms of food distribution such as community gardens and creative cooking classes. The foodshed concept attempts to bring back the control of the food system to the local community and to create accountability for the resources needed to grow food. When we shorten the link between producers and consumers we reduce environmental impacts of the food system and ensure markets for local producers. To support this vision, the Foodshed Project has published a “Climate Friendly Shopping Planner” which makes the link between meal planning and reducing our “food miles”. The Foodshed Project also supports direct farm-to-table programs as a way to connect residents to the local producers and keep food dollars in the community.

To learn more about the Foodshed Project, visit: www.foodshedproject.ca.