



Public Health Association of British Columbia

FARM to SCHOOL salad bar DIG IN!

Communities roll up their sleeves to get local farm fresh salads in schools.

On June 3 and 4, 2008 more than 40 representatives from Fernie to Fort St John gathered in Quesnel, BC for a *Farm to School Salad Bar - Dig In!* In two short days parents, farmers, gardeners, agrologists, chefs, teachers, principals, community nutritionists and others came to better understand a farm to fork phenomenon that is sprouting up in communities across the continent.

"The idea is refreshingly simple. If we want children to eat more fruits and vegetables, we need to make access to such foods easier. In this program schools partner with local farmers who produce foods for the school's salad bar. Teachers, farmers, students – everyone benefits from growing, harvesting, preparing and consuming local farm fresh foods."

Inspired, participants rolled up their sleeves to create a common vision for the initiative.

"We envision a program that honors all of nature and all people; engages everyone (farm, school, community); nurtures our children; invests in our local food system; and blossoms and thrives everywhere."



A Vision for Crawford Bay Elementary and Secondary School. Artwork by Helene Carter, PAC Chairperson, Crawford Bay, BC.

Farm to School Salad Bar aims to improve the health of school children by increasing access to locally grown, nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods in at least 12 schools in British Columbia.

Partners.

Farm to School Salad Bar is an initiative of the BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA).

It is managed and administered by the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC).

It is guided by a 15 member advisory committee including representatives from BCHLA, PHABC, Healthy Eating Active Living in Northern BC (HEAL), Northern Health, Interior Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Land, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, the BC Farmers Market Association, and School District 28.

It is coming to life with the support of principals, teachers, students, farmers and others in communities across the northern and interior regions of British Columbia.

Excitement grew as participants toured Dragon Lake Elementary school to observe the program in action! The arrival of more than 170 children eager to feast on garden greens drew broad smiles from onlookers. Faces were animated, hands were washed and plates were heaped with local fare from romaine lettuce to bison chili.



According to Pam Tobin, Evaluation Consultant, *“Preliminary results following a one year evaluation of the program at Dragon Lake Elementary School reveal that children who participated in the program consumed more fresh fruits and vegetables and more variety of these items. Furthermore participating children were knowledgeable about their food system and more skilled in food preparation.”*



In its second year of operation Dragon Lake Elementary School will address one of its top challenges - securing farmers to grow local food! While a number of fruit and vegetable farmers exist in the Quesnel area, and the climate is relatively well suited to farming, the majority of fruit and vegetables grown by these farmers is in high demand. In many cases, produce is of short supply and there is a waitlist to access it. Dragon Lake Elementary School found that sourcing from these local farms will require more communication and preplanning with the farmers to secure partnerships. Despite this challenge, Dragon Lake Elementary has been able to offer local foods on their salad bar throughout the winter, and the program continues to strive to increase the amount of local items on the salad bar. An important milestone for the program during the conference was support given by the local farmers market group and a commitment to come together with school staff in the fall to explore ways to start growing together.



“The Farm to School Salad Bar program is an opportunity to reconnect the young generations to the farms that their food is coming from, and pique new interest in farming.” Erica Nitchie, First Nations Agriculture Liaison Officer, Ministry of Agriculture and Land.

As the *Farm to School Salad Bar - Dig In!* drew to a close, participants reported that they had a clearer understanding of the program, and that they felt energized, connected, and equipped to dig in when they returned home.

By way of a quick update...Our “Salad Bar” units arrived in PG and will be shipped out tomorrow morning along with the rest of our supplies. Amber (our coordinator), Tatjana (our community nutritionist), Erica (our representative from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands) Gary (our farmer) and I are all a GO for Wednesday June 18th! I am training all students this Wednesday on etiquette. We are so pumped!!!! Rick Miller, Principal, Mountview Elementary School, Williams Lake, BC.

For further information contact Joanne Bays, Project Manager, Farm To School Salad Bar - bays@telus.net

