



Wisdom2Action  
La jeunesse au  
cœur de l'action

# W2A: Food Matters

## A CONVERSATION ABOUT FOOD IN NOVA SCOTIAN SCHOOLS

# FOLLOW UP REPORT

PRESENTED BY:

 **DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**  
Healthy Populations Institute

**Max Bell  
Foundation**

  
**CIHR IRSC**  
Canadian Institutes of  
Health Research    Instituts de recherche  
en santé du Canada

**THURSDAY**  
APRIL 26TH, 2018: 9AM - 4PM  
MI'KMAW NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

# INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes a Knowledge Mobilization event held in Halifax, Nova Scotia on April 26th, 2018 by Dalhousie University's Healthy Population Institute. Several challenges and opportunities were identified through the research for children and youth to eat well in schools across Nova Scotia. This Wisdom2Action event aimed to share some of the outcomes of the research with key stakeholders and to identify some promising and best practices on how the school food environment in schools could be improved. Key stakeholders were brought together at the Food Matters event to help come up with best and promising practices towards providing healthier food choices to students in schools across Nova Scotia. This report highlights the outcomes of the discussions that took place at the event.

## BACKGROUND

### *HEALTHY POPULATIONS INSTITUTE*

The Healthy Populations Institute (HPI) is a Senate-approved research institute located at Dalhousie University. HPI is a leader in the field of population health and health promotion research through excellence in research, capacity building, and knowledge translation. HPI's mission is to improve population health and promote health equity by understanding and influencing the complex conditions that impact the health of communities. HPI places a special emphasis on informing policies and practices that can reduce the economic challenges facing the healthcare system. HPI's vision is healthy populations throughout the life course and across generations.



**DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**

Healthy Populations Institute

Supporting child and youth health is an important area of focus for chronic disease prevention. Good nutrition impacts children's health, well-being and learning, and if children are not adequately nourished during childhood, the impact can last a lifetime. Canada ranks 37 out of 41 countries in providing access to nutritious food for children, and it is often left up to individual provinces to act.

In 2006, the province of Nova Scotia was one of the first in Canada to introduce a School Food and Nutrition Policy. The policy, developed through extensive consultation with students, parents, teachers, community groups, industry and public health staff, mandated what could be served and sold in public schools, as well as what foods and beverages could be used for fundraising purposes. It also established

best practices for the promotion of nutrition education in the curriculum, community partnerships, and the creation of supportive environment for healthy food choices. The policy recognised that learning about nutrition in the classroom is most effective when it is reinforced with health-promoting environments that provide opportunities for students to practice what they learn. Ten years after the policy was launched, a team of researchers from HPI sought to understand the current state of policy implementation across the province through research. The project, co-led by HPI researchers, Dr. Sara Kirk and Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, was funded through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Max Bell Foundation.



## WISDOM2ACTION

Wisdom2Action is a social enterprise based at Dalhousie University focused on youth-engagement, evaluation and knowledge mobilization projects. The goal of W2A events is to facilitate cross-sectoral connection and knowledge sharing between a diverse group of participants, including researchers, academics, community-based organizations, policy

makers, and youth. The events provide a unique opportunity for participants to meet face-to-face, share practice-based evidence, evidence-based knowledge, local knowledge, and to promote promising practices with each other and with their wider networks so that they may better serve the needs of vulnerable children and youth in their region. HPI contracted Wisdom2Action for this event.

# WISDOM2ACTION: FOOD MATTERS

“ *School food matters because it matters to the health and learning of our children and youth. And who doesn't want the best for our future generation?* ”

Wisdom2Action (W2A) Food Matters: A Conversation About Food in Nova Scotian Schools took place at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, on April 26, 2018. The event brought together key stakeholders and youth leaders to discuss these challenges and opportunities, working together to build upon over a decade of research and policy action to support a healthier future for our children and youth, collaboratively, through food.

## APPROACH: HOSTING, HARVESTING AND EXPERIMENTING

Participatory methods and tools from the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Meaningful Conversations created a framework for the day with many opportunities for rich conversations.

Art of Hosting is a highly effective approach of harnessing the collective wisdom and the self-organizing capacity of groups of any size. Based on the assumption that humans give their energy and lend their resources to what matters to them, the Art of Hosting blends a suite of powerful conventional processes to invite people to step in and take charge of the challenges they face.

[WWW.ARTOFHOSTING.ORG](http://WWW.ARTOFHOSTING.ORG)





“ Always amazed by the event. I just love this style and how creative the workshop is. Always reports with those actually impacted, which is so important. [...] being authentic and having those who will be impacted by the issue, is so nice to see, as part of the host team.

— Event Participant

**Harvesting** refers to making visible what has occurred at the event – the fruits of the conversations. Graphic facilitation (by Louise Lyman, *Bravespace* for W2A: Food Matters), participant-led note-taking, video interviews, Twitter, and Instagram were some of the strategies we used to capture and share these conversations. Our approach to harvesting this gathering was based on experimenting with the question: How do we activate the wisdom that is present in the room and share it with a wider network?

This report outlines the agenda of the day, explains the processes used, and highlights the themes that emerged from the many shared stories and conversations. Notes in the World Café and Open Space sections were recorded directly by participants themselves during their discussions.

# MORNING MUSINGS

## CREATIVE REGISTRATION

As the participants arrived, they were invited to create an Instagram profile to start the process of connecting and sharing promising practices. Each person had their photo taken with an instant camera. They put their photo on a “Profile Card” along with their contact information and answered the questions: What do you hope to learn? and What do you hope to share? These “profiles” were posted on the wall so all participants could better connect with one another.

This harvesting tool immediately highlighted the richness and diversity of the people in the room and brought focus to everyone’s personal learning objectives and offerings. The wall of “profiles” functioned as a visual networking tool throughout the day.



## OPENING CIRCLE AND WELCOME

Next, participants were guided in an Open Circle where the day was framed, and all were welcomed to the space. Elder Debbie Eisan started the introduction and led the group in a short prayer.

Sitting in a big circle, participants were asked to share their names, organizations and what school food means to them in one sentence. Some of the thoughts that came from the opening circle were:

- Removing barriers to healthy food
- Nourish mind, body and souls
- Accessible to every student
- An opportunity to grow communities
- Every child has the opportunity to succeed
- Foundation for learning

# PECHA KUCHA

The Pecha Kucha format is simple: 20x20 – 20 slides using evocative images and figures that rotate automatically every 20 seconds. Using images encourages a story telling approach to information sharing. The result is an energetic and memorable presentation that is over in 6 minutes and 40 seconds.

“ *Supporting the health and learning of our youngest members of society should not be an uphill struggle.* ”



**Sara Kirk – School Food Nutrition Policy** – It has long been known that good nutrition supports physical and mental health for everyone and that it helps support children and youth when it comes to learning. One of the 17 global goals from the United Nations is, therefore, access to sufficient and nutritious food for all . Regrettably, the current healthy eating guidelines are not reflected in our modern food environment, which is evident in increasing rates of chronic diseases among youth.

Schools offer a safe environment where children can learn the skills they need and are therefore an important setting for health promotion. In our previous research, it was highlighted that academic achievement in subjects like math or English Language Arts was enhanced when children are adequately nourished. In 2006, Nova Scotia was one of the first provinces to create a school food nutrition policy that directed what could be served and sold in public schools. Unfortunately, policy directives to limit healthier food options are being ignored in favour of less healthy foods that are often cheaper and less time consuming to prepare.

To ensure healthy foods are available throughout the school day requires all stakeholders to be engaged in the process and contributing to the conversation. Our goal is to help you better understand the gaps we have identified through research and to ensure all voices can be heard to support healthy foods in schools.



**Jessie-Lee McIsaac – Complex System of School Food** – We wanted to learn more about the complex system of school food. We used two aspects of the work to achieve this. The first was through compiling existing research to identify what is already known about how broad and local system factors influence school food policies across the globe. The results of this review identified a few themes, like:

- The need to support schools with policy implementation;
- Developing a common purpose for food and responsibility for change among stakeholders;
- The importance of recognizing the unique characteristics of school communities.

The themes identified in this part of the research helped identify tangible opportunities for actions that exist across multiple levels of the system and interact with one another. This suggests that coordination across multiple system levels would be key in creation of supportive nutrition environments for children.

We also wanted to explore the Nova Scotia school food system to understand the interaction between different system levels and stakeholder roles using this complexity lens. The themes that resulted from this qualitative data suggest different opportunities to intervene and modify the school food system in Nova Scotia. Overall, our exploration of the interactions between system levels and stakeholders revealed the independence of factors that influence how a school can create a healthy food environment. We have tried to put the Nova Scotia school food situation within its broader system context so that future actions can consider and embrace the interdependence between various elements so that we can move toward more sustainable solutions.

**Melissa Stewart – Youth Photovoice Project** – In school food conversations, the youth voice is often missing in research, policy and practice. Photovoice is used to engage typically marginalized groups and aims to shift power, giving participants an opportunity to communicate their experiences visually as well as verbally. In our study, we engaged seven youth from four different schools in two different communities, one urban and one rural. We used photovoice to engage youth and reach decision makers regarding their experience on school food.



After a training session, youth took photos of their school food environment and came back to discuss their experiences with us. Some of the themes youth surfaced through this project are:

- Food was a very social thing and they cared about their friends being fed;
- Eating spaces mattered – youth would sometimes avoid eating at the cafeteria and instead choose places where they felt welcomed and safe;
- The quality of the food offered in school cafeterias was a frequent topic of discussion, with youth noting that the flavor of the food that was meant to be healthy was also an issue;
- They wanted to have options to eat and choose from,
- There is a huge lack of variety for peers with special diets

**“It feels like they’ve just sort of given up on trying to like do the allergies [...] if you have any like, any food limitations, you’re done.”  
– Youth Participant**

- There is a lack of opportunity for youth to share their feedback

**“There isn’t too much communication between the people consuming the food and the people putting out the food.” – Youth Participant**

- There is a concern for youth about the content of meals

**“I think the quality of what we’re being offered is an issue.” – Youth Participant**

Our youth participants felt that people needed to start talking to each other to make a difference. The youth recognize the challenges – let’s invite them to be part of the conversation to come up with innovative solutions for healthy, affordable, tasty school food.



# WORLD CAFÉ

Following the opening activities, the whole group participated in a “World Café”. This is a process used to foster interaction and dialogue with groups of all sizes. This tool is particularly effective in bringing the collective wisdom of large groups of diverse people to the surface.



World Café operates on the following principles:

- Speak from experience
- Listen to learn
- Be aware of your impact
- Record themes and outliers
- Connect ideas

***“People need to be engaged in the ‘right’ way. Then their voice needs to be put to action in a way that reflects their wants and needs.”***

***– Event Participant***

Participants were asked to form smaller groups and rotate between stations set up around the room to come up with experiences and ideas on the research themes presented in the pecha kuchas outlined above. They were given 6-7 minutes per theme to come up with ideas. Three questions were asked at each station:

- What are you noticing in the school food environment in Nova Scotia?
- How do you see the School Food Environment connecting to the broader community?
- What are your top three priorities for change?

For the first question, each group was given post-it notes that they could write their ideas on, which would then be gathered and categorized in the different themes that were coming up. For the second question, the post-it notes were removed from the groups and the groups were asked to share their ideas in a popcorn style discussion, where only those who wanted to share their ideas would. For the final question, each group was given three post-it notes to write down their ideas on, but with the limited number of post-its, they had to agree, as a group, what three main points they wanted to share with everyone. Overall, the groups were given 20 minutes to discuss the questions and their answers were harvested after each round was completed. Here are some notes from these conversations that were recorded by participants...

## Q1: WHAT ARE YOU NOTICING IN THE SCHOOL FOOD ENVIRONMENT IN NOVA SCOTIA?

- Peers
- Eating Spaces
  - Physical space matters
  - Students not allowed inside at lunch
  - Some cafeterias are not convenient
  - Lunchtime policies
- Surrounding environment and partnerships
  - Local farmer partnerships
  - Surrounding environment impacts school food
  - Proximity to commercial spots
  - Kids bring food to school – use outside school food service
- Essential role of students
  - How do we sustain youth engagement?
  - Youth voice missing
  - School based underground market
  - Student nutrition council at all schools
  - students care more
  - support students to become critical consumers
- Convenience and time
  - What is convenient for life is inconvenient for health
  - Time – no measure on time, no time to eat
- Access
  - Accessibility
  - Shouldn't be that hard to eat
- Inequity
  - We don't value food or who prepares it
  - Sites of inequity and power imbalance
  - Food is a feminist issue
  - Cafeteria workers need to make their salary
- Cost and food industry
  - When did we let for-profit models drive school food?
  - Food as fuel but food is industry
  - Healthy options more expensive
  - Cost often does not match food quality
- Options and quality
  - More options
  - Quality
  - Not a lot of fresh options
- School champions
  - Parents and volunteers drive good food in schools
  - Principals are champions
  - Principals and teachers are busy!
  - School breakfast programs
- Positive policy change
  - Healthy eating policy
  - Less sugary drinks
  - Fewer deep fryers
  - Healthy nutrition month support
  - South shore school food project cafeteria support
  - Everyday food on special offerings
- Structural complexities and inconsistencies
  - Tension
  - Name foods we do not want
  - Lack of communication
  - Infrastructure
  - Lack of urgency
  - Allergy awareness
- Creativity and inspirations
  - Shift
  - Community
  - Kids are ordering – skip the dishes
- Unsupportive
  - Treats are now the norm
  - Why are sugar treats used during special occasions?
  - Not supportive of healthy choice
- Stigma
  - Every lunch looks different
  - Diversity
  - You 'out yourself' with your lunch
  - Food insecurity
  - Celebrate food from home
  - Stigma around healthy food
- Parents
  - PTA's
  - Gardens
  - Advocate for good food
- Desire healthy foods
  - People want healthy
  - Desire for good whole food



## Q2: HOW DO YOU SEE THE SCHOOL FOOD ENVIRONMENT CONNECTING TO THE BROADER COMMUNITY?

- Connect youth to community resources
- Community gardens
- Influencing the family structure from within
- The role of policy

## Q3: WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE PRIORITIES TO CHANGE?

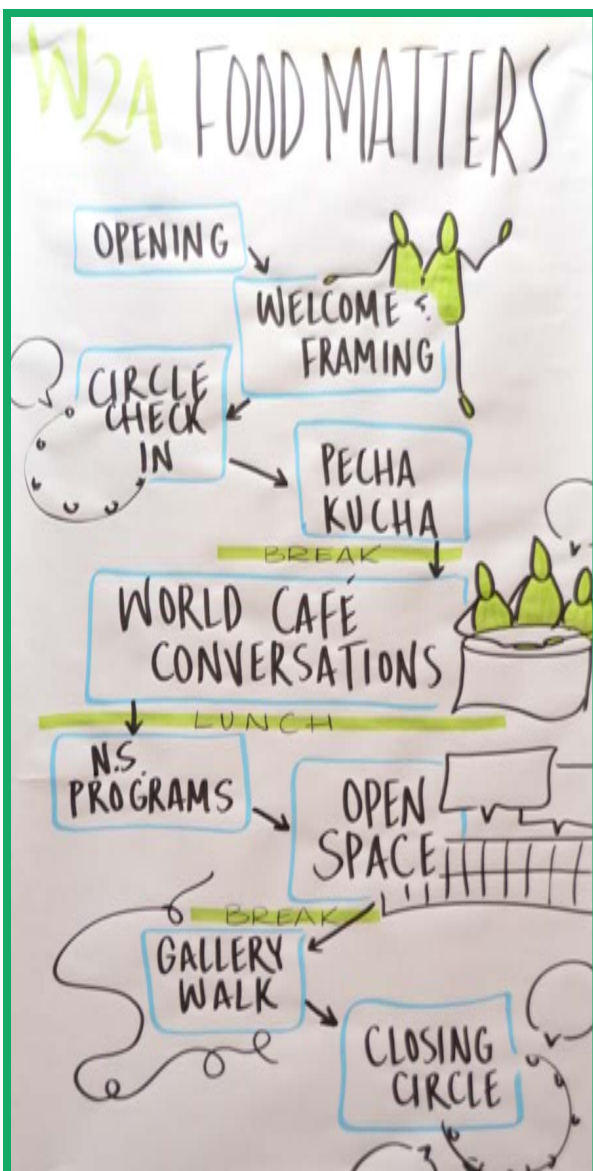
- Equitable funding
- Fresh food access
  - Access to fresher food i.e. gardens
- Community ownership
  - Ownership – youth and community
  - Enable champions
- Engaging youth
  - Survey students for ideas
  - Engaging youth as agents of 'change'
  - Marketing purchase power of youth
- Actions (availability and options)
  - Make fruit and vegetables available
  - Reduce sugary drinks
- Awareness
  - Where does our food come from? We have the right to know!
  - Raising awareness of the school food
- Communication
  - Communication i.e. student nutrition council
- Knowledge sharing
  - Knowledge sharing and collaboration (what works?)
- Shift food culture
  - Shift culture – “The importance of continuing to push for culture shift to value a culture of healthy eating.” – Event Participant
  - Food as essential to education
- Policy support and capacity building
  - Give support for the policy and build capacity
- Evaluate
  - The state of school food
- Physical space
- Food literacy
  - Valuing food literacy from an earlier age in curriculum
  - Healthy food linked to curriculum outcomes

# NOVA SCOTIA PROGRAMS

After the World Cafe was completed, representatives from five different organizations were asked to do a short four minute presentation on how their work impacts school food, providing further context to the broader school food environment.

## NOURISH NOVA SCOTIA – [NOURISHNS.CA](http://NOURISHNS.CA) - MARGO RIEBE-BUTT:

Nourish Nova Scotia helps schools support students to be healthy learners through their school food programming. Nourish provides leadership, financial and resource support to school communities. In Nova Scotia, 92% of schools offer a breakfast program with \$1.7 million in funding provided through Nourish, from the Department of Health and Wellness. Alongside stakeholders Nourish also innovated a farm to school fundraising program called Nourish Your Roots. This program helps schools support their own healthy eating programs through the sale of fresh and healthy produce—a great alternative to chocolate bars and cookie dough sales that also serves to strengthen the local food system. Nourish NS is also working in partnership with the Ecology Action Centre to create a province-wide Edible School Garden program that will help students develop the knowledge and skills to feed themselves well into a healthy future.



## ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE - [ECOLOGYACTION.CA](http://ECOLOGYACTION.CA) – SATYA RAMEN:

Ecology Action Centre is a member based environmental charity in Halifax taking leadership on critical issues from biodiversity to climate change to environmental justice. The food team inspires community transformation through food by: fostering leadership to increase access to healthy, sustainable and just food through community solutions; influencing policy development and change; and cross-sectoral collaborations to strengthen and connect efforts around food.

In the past, the food team's work included supporting community and school gardens and building food skills and food literacy. This work helped to inform the more recent development of the Plants to Plates program, which teaches children about food through fun, hands-on activities. Since late 2015, the food team has partnered with Nourish NS in the co-development of a provincial edible school garden program and is part of a planning committee for a grassroots engagement campaign to increase support for healthier food in schools. Through this work, the EAC's food team is keen to find ways to engage older youth in opportunities to facilitate change in their communities.

## *SCHOOL GARDEN - SCR.HRSB.CA/SCR/PARENTS/GARDEN-COMMITTEE – DEIRDRE EVANS:*

Deirdre co-chairs the St. Catherine's School Garden with another parent. She has been working on this project for approximately the last 10 years. The program serves a wide population of students who attend St. Catherine's School. The students plant a seed when they start, nurture the seed and learn about gardening and finally harvest and prepare a meal with the produce that they have helped grow in the garden. It is a large undertaking and when she first started, she was doing it on her own, but the program has grown since.

## *BREAKFAST PROGRAM - WWW.DHS.EDNET.NS.CA – BIANCA RIDLER:*

Schools need partners and someone to help with policy change. Bianca Ridler has been trying to start a school garden program at Dartmouth High School but has been having a lot of trouble because the land surrounding the school is city owned. Once they can get approved to use the land, there are still not enough people at the school to help prepare and maintain a school garden, so they need the community to get involved and help develop and maintain the garden. They need to really look at the policy and the standards that are in place and really think about how they can make this work. Collaboration is key and unless you get buy-in from the community, change will not happen!

## *FOOD SECURITY SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB - DAVIS PIER – BRYAN DANIELS:*

Davis Pier was engaged by the Provincial Government to run a social innovation lab focused on food insecurity in Nova Scotia. At the time of the W2A event, they were in the middle of the inspiration phase of their project, where they were talking to a variety of people and gathering ideas from many perspectives. These included people and families who are facing challenges with access to and affordability of food, in addition to researchers, organizations who are tackling the issues of food insecurity, and organizations that support vulnerable populations. These same groups of individuals will also be involved in developing creative solutions to address food insecurity that are complementary to the work that is ongoing around the province.



# OPEN SPACE



After the five organizations presented, participants were asked to form an open space format, which allows participants to host and take part in deep conversations regarding more specific topics. Open Space is a simple facilitation tool with a profound worldview that creates just enough structure for people to self-organize into the conversation they want to have.

Participants were asked to share tools, initiatives, approaches that they either came with or that were thought of in respect to the themes that were harvested from day one on. They used visual templates to capture their conversations.

## TOPIC 1: HOW DO YOU GET POLITICIANS TO PAY FOR THIS?

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Curriculum budgets > link to food budgets, global economic local impacts
- Youth as a Voice and supported to do so (safe space)
- Efficient use of resources via non-profits
- Post-Secondary yes to healthy food
- \$ Pressure link to other issues like mental health
- Youth fired up on issues: Environment/sustainability > related to food ecosystems, climate change, health
- Specific ask Fed and Provincial (aligned)
- More supports for younger students
- "Food on the menu" for MP/MLA convos as constituents > leading to elections
- YHC – platform commitment how can this tie in?
- \*Policy Window\* (annoying operational way to mobilize this) relationships, champions in government, target, key messages, evidence packages and positions > it's about selling to politicians > occasionally there are opportunities aka luck

### ACTIONS:

- More thoughtful leading up to election how to get this on a platform. (Make it an election issue)
  - Grassroots Campaign in Nova Scotia – increase awareness, increase investments (for both federal and provincial) combining efforts and youth voice

### TAKE AWAY:

- Growing awareness to make this an election issue. "Make an ask" (specific)

## TOPIC 2: THE IMPACT OF FOOD IN SCHOOLS

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Ability to learn
- Community building
- Food can define you
- Social hinderance
- The impact that healthy vs non-healthy food has on a child's well-being and education
- Time constraints
- Cultural diversity
- The value of food culture

### ACTIONS:

- Allowing time to eat > open time to eat, respond to hunger cues

### QUESTIONS:

- Why don't we monitor the policy in schools?
- How do we implement it?
- How do we make "the concept" of food more interesting?

### TAKE AWAY:

- Food in schools impacts the ability to learn and impacts education and life outcomes

## TOPIC 3: FOOD & BEVERAGE MARKETING TO KIDS

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Social media education tools – "critical thinking" effect of "influencers"
- Are people talking about marketing to kids?
- Sponsorship as marketing
- Industry innovations when restrictions put in place
- Comprehensive strategy needed for healthy food, not just restricted marketing
- Look for unlikely partner like healthful branded industry
- Use marketing tools to discuss media literacy

### ACTIONS:

- Regulations to restrict marketing
- More tools for educators to teach
- Media literacy

### QUESTIONS:

- Is sponsorship useful for marketing in public spaces?
- Impact of social media on advertising to youth
- Who do we need to push this effect to success? (like industry)

### TAKE AWAY:

- New frontier is social media influencers – "Kid Influencers"



## TOPIC 4: OUTSIDE INFLUENCES IN SCHOOL FOOD

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Influencers: students, local businesses, fast food corps., parents, community
- Parents are powerful influencers
- Food corporations (i.e. catering)
- Unhealthy food is accessible, healthy food is less accessible – balance is needed
- Culture as an influence – food can act as a way to bring people together
- What students want and need vs. what influencers think we want

### ACTIONS:

- Partner with local businesses who can help with healthy eating
- More platforms for students to speak out
- Meals from different cultures
- Student to student support
- Ambassador, mentorship program, community to students

### QUESTIONS:

- How can we use influencers towards more healthy foods?
- Who can help confront influencers? (who has the responsibility to interact with food corporations?)
- How do you help students speak up? (encouragement)

### TAKE AWAY:

- Let the students have more say in food



## TOPIC 5: SHOULD VENDING MACHINES BE IN SCHOOLS?

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Depends on what is in them
- More foods in schools
- Healthy vending machine
- Vending machine or person?
- Share
- High school

### ACTIONS:

- Where and what schools have vending machines? What is in these machines?
- Replacement with grab and go baskets with fruit and healthy snacks
- Snack program/committee – students, company

### QUESTIONS:

- Would students depend on them if they were healthy?
- Five W's of vending machines
- If we take them out, what will be the replacement?
- Are vending machine companies accountable?

### TAKE AWAY:

- Snack programs in schools for free - Fundraise/sponsor by a company but controlled by students

## TOPIC 6: HEALTH PROMOTION SCHOOLS COALITION

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Impact from students
- Process for student voice to be heard
- Education
- What is healthy?
- Food is a great cross-curricular topic
- Barriers to parent support – criminal record check, etc.

### ACTIONS:

- Create a process for students to suggest menu items
- Try to encourage farm to school i.e. supplies
- Can we have compulsory food course in grades 10-12

### QUESTIONS:

- What should nutrition group work on?
- Do we really know what healthy food is?
- How to help make vegetables taste good to youth
- How to re-engage parents

### TAKE AWAY:

- Make parent involvement easier



## TOPIC 7: EARLY CHILDHOOD

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Starting nutrition education in early childhood > is there an opportunity to access pre-primary programs?
- Pre-primary programs will provide two snacks
- In groups, kids are more likely to try new things
- Big change from early childhood centres (daycare, etc.) to school age (food looks very different)
- Marketing has a huge influence on what children eat starting from infancy
- ECC are totally responsible for food, shopping, menus, budgeting

### ACTIONS:

- Universal access to childcare report > economic investment
- Every dollar spent on children below the age of five resulted in \$6.00 in prosperity

### QUESTIONS:

- Can we access pre-primary?
- Does providing healthy foods in pre-primary offer protection? i.e. influence them later in life
- Can we change the rules around scheduling foods? Should it be based on hunger cues?

### TAKE AWAY:

- Learn from work already done > i.e. work done in schools and early childhood centres can inform pre-primary

## TOPIC 8: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT – INITIATING, DEVELOPING, SUPPORTING YOUTH ACTION TEAMS

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- What would engage youth?
  - “This experience” catalyst, inspiration
  - “I need to get into this”
  - Hadn’t realized how important this is to me”
- Switch to using the term “food” not nutrition
- Youth action (encompassing)? or food focused?
- Accessible framing/language of the group (i.e. “council” too formal)
- Power in student led
- What are the incentives (or do you need them?)
- Competing priorities for getting involved (leaders already involved in clubs and councils)
- Not daunting or scary accessible and welcoming
- Make it fun - make something together and have dialogue that might kick start an action group
- Nourish your roots
- KE current infrastructure (youth council 4 change, student commissions of Canada, UNICEF is getting into it, teens now talk – didn’t feel there was one that would lend to good convo
- Be willing to be flexible
- Research indicates stills need structure and support to help the youth teams “youth-adult partnerships”
- Build capacity, support identifying goals
- HPS (sub time to participate in planning. Can we invite youth to this planning?) Tri-county

### ACTIONS:

- Host dialogue, engaging events to start the conversation but not as a one off...so with resources to be able to respond and build on it
- Continuously identify ways to bring youth into existing conversations, planning and action
- Link into Health Promoting Schools infrastructure, planning and action

### QUESTIONS:

- What works? Key Ingredients
- Infrastructure for development
- Knowledge Exchange between teams across the Province

### TAKE AWAY:

- Invite youth voice into existing conversations and intentionally create space and resources to facilitate voice, sharing and action

## TOPIC 9: FOOD AND NUTRITION MANDATORY IN HIGH SCHOOL AND IN LOWER GRADES

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Less kids are learning nutrition
- It should be taught lower
- Nutrition programs need to be universal

### ACTIONS:

- Food/Nutrition courses should be mandatory to graduate
- Make sure children know what is in their food
- Implement Canada Food Guide in shopping – know what to buy

### QUESTIONS:

- Should food courses be mandatory to graduate high school?
- Should they have more hands-on work happening in schools?

### TAKE AWAY:

- To advocate mandatory nutrition courses to graduate in high school



## TOPIC 10: FINDING VOLUNTEERS

### NOTES & IDEAS:

- Invested
- Sustainable
- People want to know exactly what the volunteer position is
- Criminal record checks have become a barrier – if there isn't direct contact, do you need a police check?
- Why is it difficult to find volunteers? > can be a tight group > hard to bring in new ideas
- KIJJI for volunteers
- Summer gap > summer students
- O2 and Coop for students
- Volunteers build the community
- Huge sense of belonging
- Gentle approach – we all have our own stories/memories, value everything

### ACTIONS:

- Volunteer resources: volunteer signup.org or google docs to help organize volunteers: reduce barriers and increase accessibility
- Make volunteers tasks tangible and manageable and flexible
- Central place to connect and then organize from there
- Welcoming
- Assets – seniors, grandparents, parents, community, teachers
- Community volunteers and teachers are so valuable

### QUESTIONS:

- Can the police check fees be waived for schools?
- How do we tap into all the resources at post-secondary institutions (peer mentorship)?
- How to we generate a list of volunteers a region needs and a system to disseminate info?

### TAKE AWAY:

- Volunteers are a VALUABLE resource: Fostering a sense of collaboration through volunteers

## GALLERY WALK

After the Open Space portion of the day concluded, event participants were invited to look at the pictures and comments from the youth photovoice participants. This gave event participants an insight into the feelings and thoughts of the youth, regarding food they are served in school cafeterias.

After the event participants had sufficient time to look at the photos, they were asked to return to the large circle and share anything that they had learned or were going to take away from the day's activities, in one sentence.

# END OF EVENT

**“ It is important that yes we think about incorporating all cultures of food into schools, but sometimes even hotdogs and chips may be someone’s food culture and that’s okay. Even when we are busy trying to get rid of them.**

**– Event Participant**

## CLOSING CIRCLE

To close the event, Elder Debbie Eisan returned to share her insights on food in schools and how important our discussions were by telling us about the difficulties she and her family are facing with regards to one of her grandchildren and the views of some children on food in general. She also shared her hopes of having special days set aside during the year to celebrate the different cultures that make up our communities through the sharing of foods from different cultures. One example she gave was celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21st by serving traditional Indigenous meals like bannock and fish to the students. After she shared this with us, she closed the event by leading the circle in a closing ceremony and prayer.

## CONCLUSION

It has been proven that when children have access to proper nutrition they are more likely to succeed in school. The research conducted by HPI sought to explore the many factors that support and challenge healthy school food environments, including variable implementation of the existing School Food and Nutrition policy in Nova Scotia. This project adds to a growing body of research that seeks to understand how schools and communities can encourage healthy school food environments, increasing access to healthy food at school and enhancing child health and wellbeing. Through this Food Matters event, HPI was able to share important findings from their work with key stakeholders, engaging in a process of knowledge exchange that invited event attendees to reflect on the research and host conversations on how to use the information to inspire positive change. The youth voice was highly valued throughout the research and event hosting and HPI is committed to prioritizing youth engagement in their school food work. Academic articles providing more detail on the research findings are in progress. In the meantime, you are invited to share this report within your communities to showcase the many perspectives, reflections and strategies on how we can advance healthy school food in Nova Scotia.



# HEALTHY POPULATIONS INSTITUTE

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

[DAL.CA/HPI](http://DAL.CA/HPI)

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WISDOM2ACTION  
[WWW.WISDOM2ACTION.ORG](http://WWW.WISDOM2ACTION.ORG)

