Organizing to affect your Food System: FOOD POLICY AND ACTION GROUPS

Part 3 in the Sustainable Food Systems series

March 13, 2014 • 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Joan Brady
Owner
Sustainable Futures: Farm and Food Consulting

Catherine Schwartz Mendez
Public health nutritionist
Thunder Bay District Health Unit

RECORDING NOTICE: This webinar is recorded and will be made available to the general public on the HC Link website.
Food for a Change

Building Food Action in Thunder Bay

Catherine Schwartz Mendez, Public Health Nutritionist
HCLink Food Policy Webinar, March 13, 2014
Food Policy in Thunder Bay

1. Thunder Bay’s Local Food System
2. The Food Movement in Thunder Bay
3. Food Policy in Action
4. Lessons Learned
A Closer Look at Thunder Bay District

- Geographically isolated
- Canadian shield
- Northern climate
- Many First Nations communities, growing urban Aboriginal population
- Very active agricultural communities, increasing number of part-time farmers
A Healthy Diet Close to Home is Possible!

SAD/WLSHD Comparison

- SAD 2,775 Calories
- WLSHD 1,988 Calories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Category</th>
<th>Cal.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat, eggs</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veg.</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added Fats</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added sugars</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local Food Issues

Our complex, linear, dependent, industrialized food system:

• Food travels great distances to get to us
• Higher food prices
• Higher cost of a Nutritious Food Basket
• Higher food insecurity
A food system is composed of **five** key activities or components

- **Production**: Growing and harvesting produce, either for sale or for own use
- **Processing**: Processing and packaging food and drink; manufacturing packaging and machinery / operations
- **Distribution**: Storage, transporting and sale between producers, processors and retailers
- **Consumption**: Marketing, retailing; eating and drinking outlets; food preparation
- **Disposal**: Disposal of food and food-related items; waste management (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover)

Source: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH)
Sustainable Food System

Source: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH)
Strategic Advantages of Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy

- **Historic role** of Thunder Bay as transportation and service hub the logical place to centre a regional food strategy

- Thunder Bay’s **strategic location** at the head of Lake Superior protects and opens unique opportunities to link food and employment, food and nutrition, and food and community improvement
Who’s doing what?

• Northwestern Ontario food agriculture
  - with unique benefits and challenges!
• Food research and education
• Food security initiatives
  - Food Action Network partnerships
  - Community Kitchens/Gardens
  - Gleaning
  - Good Food Box
  - Regional Food Distribution Association
  - Farmers’ Markets
City of Thunder Bay Food Charter

• Build community economic development
• Ensure social justice
• Foster population health
• Celebrate culture and collaboration
• Preserve environmental integrity
Including Food in the Community Environmental Action Plan
City of Thunder Bay
2011-2014 Strategic Plan Implementation

• Strategic Plan supports development of comprehensive local food strategy
• To be undertaken by Steering Committee representing food system sectors and area community
Building Food into the City of Thunder Bay Official Plan

Regional Food Strategy

City of Thunder Bay

Food Action Network

Surrounding Municipalities

Thunder Bay District Health Unit

Thunder Bay Federation of Agriculture
Developing a regional food strategy
Food Summit March 2012

Regional 10.5.24–30.12
FOOD STRATEGY SUMMIT

DAY ONE
CLE BARN

Cultivating our Future

DAY TWO

WATERSHED

REGIONALS

RESULTS

STRENGTHS

JUSTICE

UNION

LEADERSHIP

KIDS

HEALTH

ADULT

HEALTH

WEALTH

JUSTICE

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER
Key Pillars of Focus

- **Access to healthy food** by ensuring an equitable distribution of food sources ie. retail, food programs, etc.
Key Pillars of Focus

- Encourage public sector procurement of local, sustainably-produced food to improve quality of foods served and sold in public venues and encourage institutional buying of healthy local food

e.g. Making the Connections for Public Sector Local Food Procurement research by Grey Bruce Centre for Agroecology, February 2013
Key Pillars of Focus

- Protect farm-scale production including agricultural land preservation, capital investment support and new farmer mentorship
Key Pillars of Focus

- Establish food infrastructure for storage, processing, distribution and marketing
Key Pillars of Focus

- Protect and encourage access to forest and freshwater food sources obtained by hunting, fishing and gathering
Key Pillars of Focus

- **Expand urban agriculture** through, for instance, community gardens, backyard chickens, pollinator corridors, edible landscaping and urban forests
Key Pillars of Focus

• Support a healthy school food environment to ensure access for all to meal and snack programs, embed food literacy in the curriculum, develop school gardens and create healthy food zones around schools.
Healthy Eating Makes the Grade

- Canadian Red Cross
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- City of Thunder Bay – city planners and city councillor
- Roots to Harvest
- 3 School Boards
- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Resource Librarians
- School Administrators
- School Board Trustees and Superintendents
- Cafeteria Staff
- Daycare Staff
- Board Purchasers
- Communications Officers
- Food Producers and Retailers
- Lakehead University
- Wider School Community
The Goal of HEMG

To improve student health by increasing access to healthier food options in and around schools in Thunder Bay.
August 2010 – July 2013

- Heart and Stroke Foundation Spark Grants
  $5000 + $50,000 (2 yrs)
- Coordinator, workshops, catering, tour, supplies, teacher release time
Healthy Food Zones around schools

Healthier School Food Choices
- Youth Food Ambassador Program
- High School Cafeterias

Support for School Food Gardens

Build Coalition Capacity
Healthy eating making the grade

BY CARL CLUTCHEY
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Smoothies and salad bars may permanently replace Twinkies and Tootsie Rolls as treat favourites if a program aimed at Thunder Bay’s high schools can tempt teenage taste buds.

The Healthy Eating Makes the Grade program was highlighted Wednesday at Superior Collegiate and Vocational Institute with a mouth-watering tasting of strawberry, banana and blueberry smoothies.

“They were better than average, because we made them,” declared 16-year-old student Mat Lesnick, a member of the school’s Food 4 Thought committee.

The Healthy Eating program, run by the local chapter of the Red Cross, has received a $25,000 boost from the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Red Cross chapter spokeswoman Tiina Ahokas said the money is being used to hire a co-ordinator to promote the program in all of the city’s high schools.

The program aims to ensure that

Superior high school students, from left, Mat Lesnick, Kirsten Spivak, Breann Dawson, Sarah Mason and Katie Johnson make a smoothie as part of Wednesday’s Local Healthy Eating Makes the Grade event.

non-fatty foods and that students

has about 900 students, the weekly salad bar has been a hit and usually sells out.

And while SCVI still offers french fries, the fries are baked rather than deep-fried. Gravy is available, but — perhaps not as tantalizing — it’s the low-fat kind.

Ahokas, who attended Wednesday’s smoothie event, said it was “refreshing to see the enthusiasm” among the students when offered healthy snacks.

SCVI principal Wayne Fletcher said the school cafeteria is constantly experimenting with new items, but must be mindful of provincial regulations that limit percentages of salt, sugar and fat.

Taco salad is usually popular, but desserts may not be as exciting as what some students are used to because of the low-sugar content, said Fletcher.

Students can buy a complete lunch at the school, and many do judging by the regular lineups, he said.

The price is right: a lunch of pop, corn chicken, mashed potatoes and
Healthy Zones around Schools

Subway
McDonalds
Tim Hortons
Coffee
Burger
Pizza
Sandwich
Grocery Store
Fast Food
Ice Cream
Bagel
Drink
Hot Chocolate
Fries
Energy Drink
Tim Hortons
Pizza
Sandwich
Grocery Store
Fast Food
Ice Cream
Bagel
Drink
Hot Chocolate
Fries
Energy Drink
Tim Hortons
Pizza
Sandwich
Grocery Store
Fast Food
Ice Cream
Bagel
Drink
Hot Chocolate
Fries
Energy Drink
Thunder Bay District
Health Unit
School Food Gardens

Sow the Seeds for School Gardens to Grow Student Success

[Image: A sign with the word "beans" written on it, and two children working in a garden.]
Current Projects

- Finalizing Food Strategy document, to be presented to local Councils and member boards in June
Current Projects

• Mapping project with Lakehead University’s Geospatial Data Centre
Current Projects

- Community Asset Mapping with Healthy Communities funding
Current Projects

• Partnership with City of Thunder Bay on a local food procurement project, focusing on day cares and LTC
Current Projects

- Ongoing community and policy engagement (e.g., EarthCare Forum, Open House in April, public art projects with CAHEP)
Keys to Success of Food Strategy

• Making **connections**
  • Among city departments
  • Between city and community
  • Within the community
• Building and strengthening partnerships with a focus on **strategy** and **action**
It’s a complicated journey!

- Serving a large geographic area with diverse communities/needs
- Navigating municipal departments – who does what?
- Transitioning from grassroots to a more formal political process, while still giving voice to people experiencing food insecurity
- Balancing political agendas that sometimes conflict with evidence
Challenges Cont’d

• Addressing the mismatch between legislation and current needs
• Acknowledging very diverse perspectives, goals
• Dealing with lack of product and physical infrastructure to support the small farmer serving a small population
• Addressing the tensions between funding requirements, research and community process
Lessons learned:

• Use technology to communicate.
• Recruit champions on city council and in city administration.
• Build relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders.
• Build education into meetings to learn from varying perspectives.
• Harness the media and have designated well-prepared spokespeople.
Thank you!

catherine.schwartz@tbdhu.com