



Nourish Your Roots Community Campaign

2020 Report



Prepared by Nourish Nova Scotia

Executive Summary



A flagship program of Nourish Nova Scotia, Nourish Your Roots (NYR) was developed in 2015 to help schools sustain their own healthy food programs like breakfast, cooking in the classroom and food gardens by selling locally grown produce as a school fundraiser. The program provides a ready-made market for participating Nova Scotia farmers and connects children and families to the healthy, local, and sustainable food choices available from Nova Scotia farmers.

For the 116 schools poised to use NYR as a fundraiser in fall of 2020, the news in June that students and schools could not participate due to the pandemic was devastating. Schools signed up for NYR as they identified a need to raise funds to sustain their food programs. Additionally, farmers across Nova Scotia had already planted crops for the 2020 program.

As a non-profit supporting healthy food programs, we had a choice to cease operations and hunker down or find a new path to do our work. We opted for the latter.

Together with partners across the province, Nourish made the decision in early summer to innovate a new community-style model, complete with an online ordering system, and a plan for execution that could work even in lockdown conditions. Soon after, the Nourish Your Roots 2020 Community Campaign, NYRCC, was born.

The new model offered easy online ordering, with over thirty community pick up locations across the province incorporating more than 170 deliveries. All proceeds were earmarked to schools who signed up to the program, and to the farmers who planted for it. Students and schools were not involved in selling boxes to family and friends as in years previous however, the benefit of this model was that NYRCC was more widely accessible to the general public through the online store with community pick up locations.



NYRCC had its share of challenges, but overall was deemed a success by partners, consumers and Nourish. Over 4400 boxes were purchased and while this accounted for about a third of sales in a “normal year” there were considerable gains in awareness of the importance of local agriculture and for the mission of Nourish overall.

Nourish is an organization that consistently builds monitoring and evaluation into program development. NYRCC was no exception. Results from the NYRCC survey provided important feedback on how the program went from the perspective of consumers and farmers. This information will be integral to helping guide future development of the program.



What 2021 will bring remains unknown, however based on what is known we intend to build in COVID-19 contingencies from the outset. Planning for NYR begins in January for delivery in the fall, allowing time for both farms and schools to express interest and organize/plan for the campaign. NYR will look and feel different again in 2021 and will reflect all we’ve learned over the last 6 years of delivering into schools and more recently, into communities. We look forward to the challenge, and delivering a robust NYR program again in fall of 2021.

The Nourish Your Roots 2020 Community Campaign

Nourish Your Roots (NYR) was moved out of schools and actioned in communities across the province in order to follow the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Public Health advice in regards to the pandemic.



All participating schools and non-profit childcare centres (116) were notified of the program changes through the appropriate channels (RCE/CSAP where applicable). The communication stated that Nourish would move forward to deliver the program into the community on their behalf, with schools and farms receiving the benefits. Nourish understood that schools needed to focus on a safe return to the classroom after a six month hiatus and that they were counting on the NYR revenues to help sustain their healthy food programs.

An e-commerce platform was built and integrated into the Nourish website to support online purchases. It is worthwhile to note that the e-commerce platform is not without significant costs, including a credit card processing charge and a fee for each online transaction. Nourish guarantees farmers a set rate for each box of produce, meaning these fees would need to come out of the profits extended to schools.

“I loved that we could order online, and that relatives from elsewhere in the province could easily support my son’s school while picking up veg in their own communities.”

- NYRCC Customer

The Numbers

Overall, Nourish supported 177 deliveries into 32 community sites across the province, including farm markets of participating farmers, over a 5-week period. The final total of boxes sold was 4417. Of these, 3345 had customers designate proceeds of the box to a specific school and 1072 buyers selected “No Preference,” looking to Nourish to make allocations on their behalf.

Farmers received a total of \$95,416.50, which represented wholesale value for the produce (\$21 per box) plus a fee toward the cost of deliveries. Nourish used the “No Preference” boxes to smooth proceeds across all orders to alleviate the processing fees and to give the intended profit of \$10 per box to schools. (E-commerce fees averaged \$1.84 per box.)

A total of 1239 boxes were donated into the community. One benefactor purchased 500 boxes and donated them through their own mechanisms. The remaining 739 boxes were distributed in two allotments, pre- and post-Thanksgiving, to 18 community organizations around the province. These implementation partners then distributed the boxes to families in their respective communities.

“Loved being able to select a school to support and either take home or donate to charity.”

- NYRCC Customer

With ten days to go in the campaign, Nourish launched the “corporate challenge” building on the idea of the benefactor that purchased 500 boxes. Nine organizations and businesses stepped up to purchase 407 boxes! Two organizations were agriculture related; the remainder included a variety of businesses from law offices and retail stores to restaurants, insurance companies and fitness outlets. All were excited to participate. Many donated the boxes and asked Nourish to look after the logistics, while others chose to use the boxes as staff and customer gifts.

Communications

Together with partners from Perennia and Taste of Nova Scotia, the Communications Team—a volunteer committee composed of Nourish board members, volunteers and staff—developed a communications plan to help launch and promote NYRCC. The campaign officially launched on September 11th, 2020 with a joint press release going to media outlets across Nova Scotia. The Nourish Executive Director took part in television and numerous radio interviews on both local and community based outlets. Several radio outlets approached Nourish and offered free public service announcements (PSAs) which they produced and ran for the duration of the campaign.



Social media was a big platform to promote the campaign. Andy Hay, Master Chef Canada runner-up, produced a NYR video and shared it with his Instagram audience, helping to boost followers on that platform.

Outreach to food bloggers landed photographer Michelle Doucette, who made two trips to Indian Garden Farm to capture the harvest and packing of NYR boxes. Michelle permitted Nourish to use these photographs in subsequent promotions.

Over the course of the campaign, Instagram followers increased by over 500 with NYR appearing in 63 “stories.” Taste of Nova Scotia published a NYR article on their BlogSpot, which provided over 25,000 engagements on Instagram in one day! They also managed a NYR contest on Instagram which accounted for a significant boost in followers. Facebook saw over 350 new followers with significant increases in engagement, comments and sharing. During the campaign, Twitter had over a quarter of a million impressions and over 100 new followers.

“I got my box today. It was very exciting opening it up to see what we got. What a fantastic deal! Thanks for this terrific project.”

- Instagram Commenter

“[...] Win, win, win for Nova Scotia farmers, local [...] students and their schools and those who get to purchase delicious, nutritious local produce.”

- Facebook Commenter

Community Partners

NYRCC was delivered into 32 community sites across the province over a period of six weeks in the fall of 2020. The “Buy Local NS” Coordinator from Perennia and staff at Taste of Nova Scotia were particularly helpful in brainstorming potential community sites and providing contact names around the province. The idea of reaching out to Home Hardware locations was suggested. These stores are owner



operated and exist in many smaller communities across the province. Through an initial meeting with an owner, contact information was provided for store owners around the province, in addition to offering their own location. In the end a total of six Home Hardware stores/



building centres were used as community sites, as well as a variety of Taste of NS members, community churches and fire stations. Several school NYR campaign contacts who had been part of the program in past years reached out and offered locations that were subsequently arranged as community sites.

Initially, when working to identify community sites, a requirement was that they were located in areas where there were participating schools. It was felt that these communities might have greater sales and customers would not have to travel too far to pick up their boxes. Given the short turn-around time to create community partnerships, some communities were underserved, despite best efforts. One such community was New Glasgow. With 3 schools in the region participating in NYR, they were required to travel to Truro or Antigonish which was not ideal and was reflected in sales.

Criteria for site selection included:

- Ability to operate during pandemic lockdown
- Good traffic flow/parking
- Preference for spaces with protection from the weather (sun or rain)
- Servicing multiple school/sites

Community Locations / Partners Map—Refer Appendix A

“Pickup was easy. As a teacher, it was nice to have the campaign still take place in spite of all of the rules and regulations surrounding COVID.”

- NYRCC Customer

Farm Partners

Seven lead farmers organized the packing and delivery of boxes with eight additional farms contributing to the boxes contents. Based on the growing year, most farmers had to buy-in at least one item for the boxes that they packed. The eight contributing farms included: Sawler Gardens (carrots, onions, beets, turnip, parsnip), Starr Best and Fairn Orchards (apples), Spurr Brothers (potatoes), Eykings (turnip and cabbage), Taproot Farm (squash, turnip, cabbage, leeks), Basinview (cabbage) and Nova Agri (potatoes).



All the lead farms also acted as pick-up locations using their existing farm market outlets, which worked quite well for most recognizing that some markets were located in more remote locations. Lead farms included Indian Garden, Elmridge, Noggins, Hanks, Riverview, Alder Meadow, and Longspell Point farm. Some farm markets requested volunteers for larger volume days and appreciated their help. One commented *“how lovely it was to see retired people involved”* (as volunteers). A suggestion for the future, should this model be employed, is to stagger pick up times to manage the flow of people at farm locations when order volumes are high.

Farmers cited the most important reason for taking part as *“supporting a healthy school fundraising opportunity,”* with *“making connections with local school communities”* being the second reason.

With the e-commerce model, orders were placed with farmers twice weekly. This had many farmers challenged with the turnaround time to harvest, buy-in, pack and deliver. One farmer noted the loss of efficiencies in packing and purchasing with this system and another stated they would not participate in future years if this remained in place. These comments will be factored into future model planning. Although all farms would have liked to sell more boxes, they agreed that if Nourish did not offer the program the \$95,000+ in farm proceeds would have been a lost revenue opportunity. In what was a challenging year, all farmers agreed NYRCC was good for raising awareness for their farms.

Farm Partners—Refer Appendix B

Donated Boxes and Community Implementation Partners

Twenty-eight percent of all boxes purchased were donated back into the community. This was a huge increase over previous years, and is indicative of the relationship between the online model and philanthropic activities, due to ease and convenience. Nourish worked to coordinate with 18 different community implementation partners across Nova Scotia to deliver NYR boxes to families in need. There were two main delivery periods for donated boxes: the week pre-Thanksgiving and the week at the end of the campaign. Pre-Thanksgiving donations numbered 885 and post-Thanksgiving, 354. Donation partners were our eyes, ears and wheels on the ground—from the Mobile Food Market in HRM to the Loyalist Food Bank in Shelburne and Family Resource Centres throughout the province.

“It’s a great fundraiser, and I appreciate being able to donate a box of fresh, local produce to a family / organization in need.”

- NYRCC Customer



Community partners were key to understanding local needs and conditions. Heading into month eight of the pandemic, the number of households experiencing food insecurity was at an all-time high. We relied on donation partners to get NYR boxes to where they were most needed. In addition to these organized donations, Nourish also developed a plan for donating boxes that were not picked up by customers. Local family resource centres, food banks and the Saint Vincent de Paul society were instrumental in ensuring any leftover NYR boxes were put to good use.

Volunteers

Volunteers play a key role in coordinating schools to promote, sell, and organize delivery and pickups. With NYRCC 2020, Nourish took on the role of supporting these key tasks across the province due to schools not being actively involved. Dawn Hare, hired on a short-term contract, helped to recruit, manage and train volunteers to support program delivery. Nourish purchased software to help with the process: “Sign-Up Genius” allowed members of the general public to help with the program on a day and time convenient to them. Overall, there were 84 unique volunteers who signed up, with many of them offering to volunteer for multiple shifts over the duration of the campaign—for example our friends from Credit Unions from around the province. Each community site had a “lead volunteer” that received additional training and was responsible for implementing the site plan and public health protocols for each location. In addition, lead volunteers received customer lists and managed phone call reminders to support customers to pick up their boxes.

In the Sydney and Truro areas, the local Rotary Clubs stepped in to assist with volunteer needs, which opened up more conversations about service club participation for future years. Members of the Legislative Assembly from all parties signed up for volunteer shifts to support the program. Others supported NYR by purchasing and donating NYR boxes.

Sample Site Plan—Refer Appendix C



Key Learnings

Implementation of the 2020 NYRCC along with the resulting survey revealed a number of key learnings that we will be taking with us into the planning for 2021:

- Running a school fundraiser, without direct involvement of schools and students as the face of the campaign will always be a limiting factor in terms of sales.
- Many individuals and businesses, not related to schools or students, found value in the campaign and in the work of Nourish.
- The ability for consumers to donate a NYR box into the community at large was an important feature of the community campaign, and we will need to continue this philanthropic opportunity.
- With no set selling periods as in past years, all schools can benefit from the program throughout the duration of the campaign vs the two-week window they have had in the past.
- Online ordering allowed consumers to support any school participating across the province. This was especially important for extended families living in different communities. For example, a grandparent living in Cape Breton could buy a box and pick it up locally, while supporting the grandson's school in Dartmouth.
- There are champions in every community that want to support this kind of initiative by providing space or volunteer resources.
- Thanksgiving and harvest season (the season of plenty) saw organizations and corporations stepping up in new ways. We will need to consider launching a corporate component at the beginning of future campaigns.

"Excellent produce! I love that this program supports local farmers and school nutrition initiatives."

- NYRCC Customer

Moving Forward



Planning for fall of 2021 has started. Nourish engaged an external consultant to help identify strengths and opportunities within the online community model. The 2021 program will be pandemic-proof from the outset, allowing Nourish ample time to build upon the successes of the past year, and mitigate the challenges. The expectation for 2021 is that schools will be able to reclaim ownership of the NYR program, actively participating and promoting NYR in order to support their own school food programs. School contacts will be engaged to inform the 2021 program to ensure it meets their needs and is successful within this community-delivered model.

The online model will be a permanent change as schools are reluctant to handle cash in this environment. Additionally, the NYR online platform promotes interaction with businesses and the public at large. This has proved beneficial for overall engagement in the program, ultimately meaning more support for school food programming and more awareness for Nourish and its branding partner, Taste of Nova Scotia. Nourish will capitalize on these opportunities, building a strategy from the outset.

"An extremely professional, organized, with children being at the forefront. Thank you for your ongoing work and dedication to Nova Scotia youth and our local farmers."

- NYRCC Customer

Conclusion

The pivot to move NYR out of schools and into the community using an online platform was designed and executed within a few short months. The support from across Nova Scotia was outstanding. From individuals buying boxes to businesses participating in the corporate challenge, Nova Scotians showed just how important school food and supporting local farmers means to them.

The Nourish Your Roots Community Campaign would not have been possible without the contributions of many. Planning partners, Perennia and Taste of NS, helped us to vision a new way of working under the most restrictive of conditions, in order to deliver a successful program. Community partners kindly offered their space, resources and networks to get boxes into the hands of consumers and donation recipients. Our farm partners demonstrated entrepreneurial spirit, and adapted their old way of working seamlessly into the new.

Thanks also to the NYR Coordinator Caroline Whitby, Nourish leadership, staff, and volunteers who stepped in deeply to the work—with positive attitudes and unrelenting doggedness to get the program delivered in a way that would make everyone proud.

Sincerely,



Margo Riebe-Butt, RD
Executive Director, Nourish Nova Scotia



Appendix A—Community Partners and Donation Partners

Community Partners and Pickup Locations



We ♥ our Community Partners!



1. Alder Meadow Farm Market - Amherst, NS
2. Antigonish Farmers Market - Antigonish, NS
3. Baddeck Home Hardware - Baddeck, NS
4. Boxing Rock Brewing Co - Shelburne, NS
5. Brady Home Building Centre - Liverpool, NS
6. Dr. Carson and Marion Murray Community Centre - Springhill, NS
7. Elmridge Farm - Centreville, NS
8. Hank's Farm Market - Millville, NS
9. Hubbards Barn - Hubbards, NS
10. Indian Garden Farms - Hebbville, NS
11. Longspell Point Farm - Kingsport, NS
12. Meadowbrook Meat Market - Berwick, NS
13. New Dawn - Sydney, NS
14. New Ross Home Hardware Building Centre - New Ross, NS
15. Noggins Alderney Landing - Dartmouth, NS
16. Noggins Santé Centre - Bedford, NS
17. Noggins Corner Farm Market - Greenwich, NS
18. Noggins Seaport Market - Halifax, NS
19. Olympic Hall Community Center - Halifax, NS
20. Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre, Port Hawkesbury, NS
21. Port Hood Home Hardware - Port Hood, NS
22. Riverview Produce - Yarmouth, NS
23. Smith's Cove Fire Department - Smith's Cove, NS
24. St. Mark's Anglican Church - Halifax, NS
25. Staples - Bedford, NS
26. Sweet Spot Chocolate Shop - Elmsdale, NS
27. Truro Agomart - Upper Onslow, NS
28. Walkers Livestock Feed and Supplies - Cole Harbour, NS
29. Waterford Home Hardware Building Centre - New Waterford, NS
30. Whycomomagh Fire Department - Whycomomagh, NS
31. Wilson's Home Hardware - Barrington Passage, NS
32. Windsor Home Hardware - Windsor, NS

Nourish Your Roots is a program of 

Appendix A—Community Partners and Donation Partners

Donated NYR Box Implementation Partners

⇒	Good Food Bus
⇒	Maggie’s Place (Amherst and Truro)
⇒	Peoples Place Family Resource Centre
⇒	South Shore Family Resource Centre Association (Representing 4 centres along the South Shore)
⇒	Kings County Family Resource Centre
⇒	Open Arms Resource Centre
⇒	Taproots Farm Community Outreach
⇒	Mobile Food Market
⇒	Parker Street Food Bank
⇒	Leeside Society Strait Area Women's Centre
⇒	East Hants Family Resource Centre
⇒	Family Resource Centre of West Hants
⇒	New Ross Family Resource Centre
⇒	Shelburne Loyalist Food Bank
⇒	Ward 5 Neighbourhood Centre

“I got my box today. It was very exciting opening it up to see what we got. What a fantastic deal! Thanks for this terrific project.”

- Facebook Commenter



Appendix B—Farm Partners

2020 Farm Partners—Lead and Supporting

Lead Farms	Supporting Farms
⇒ Noggins	⇒ Spurr Brothers
⇒ Elmridge	⇒ Sawler Gardens
⇒ Indian Garden	⇒ Starr Best
⇒ Longspell Point	⇒ Eykings
⇒ Riverview	⇒ Taproots
⇒ Alder Meadow	⇒ Basinview
⇒ Hanks	⇒ Nova Agri
	⇒ Fairn Orchards



“It’s so important for students to know where their food comes from and that they can visit a local farm.”

- NYRCC Farm Partner

Appendix C—Sample Site Plan



New Ross Home Hardware Building Centre Monday, October 5th Nourish Your Roots Community Campaign Fall 2020 Site Plan

Site Contact: [contact name] at [phone number]

Volunteers:

- The Lead Volunteer should arrive by **12:45pm** and bring a printed copy of the customer list. A copy will also be emailed to the site contact. Upon arrival, the Lead Volunteer should introduce themselves to the site contact and get set up (e.g., position signs).
- Remaining volunteers need to arrive before customer pick-ups start at **2pm**.



Delivery:

- Drop-off from Indian Garden Farms is between **1 and 1:30pm**.
- There will be a maximum of 168 boxes (4 pallets). The store staff will unload the pallets using a forklift and place them inside the large warehouse pictured above. The Lead Volunteer will count the boxes to ensure the number delivered matches the total number on the customer list **before the truck departs**.

Customer Pick-up:

- Pick-up will take place between **2 and 5pm**.
- Customers will park their cars and open their trunk. A volunteer will confirm order #, name and number of boxes. A volunteer will place the box(es) in the trunk.
- **NOTE: It is the customer's responsibility to ensure the trunk is closed.**

Closing Down Site:

- If there are any boxes left over at the end of the pick-up time, contact [name] at [phone number] from [donation implementation partner] and deliver to [address], or wait until someone from the centre has picked them up.
- Lead Volunteer should take signage with them. Arrangements will be made to pick them up.

Thank You for Volunteering!

Questions? Contact:

Nourish Your Roots Volunteer Coordinator: Dawn Hare, phone or text [phone number]

Nourish Your Roots Coordinator: Caroline Whitby, phone or text [phone number]

Please adhere to public health protocols at all times.