



Annual Report

2025-2026

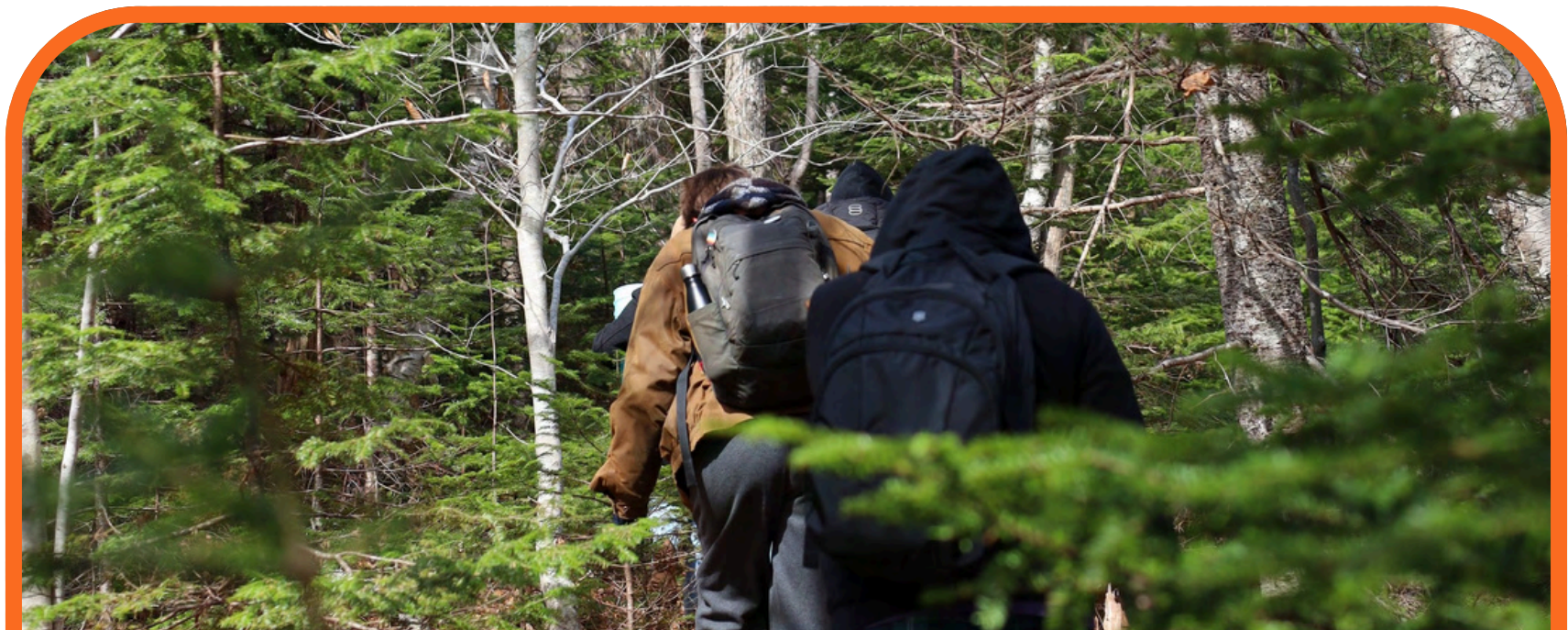


Land Acknowledgement

We are grateful to live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. This region is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, and we humbly commit to the mutual agreements of peace, respect, and friendship that are reflected in these living documents.

We acknowledge the many harms caused by colonization to Indigenous foodways—including the dispossession and disruption of traditional knowledge. Despite these past and ongoing impacts, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities across Turtle Island continue to resist, innovate, and protect these lands with strength and resilience.

It is our collective work to honour and uplift Indigenous food sovereignty, and we invite all those who engage with us to reflect on the historical and cultural influences that shape our food systems, what we eat, and our unique connections to food.



Sharing Our Story

Following the launch of our new Strategic Action Plan and Theory of Change in 2025, we set out to capture the story of our work through the voices and experiences of the youth and partners we collaborate with. That journey took us into gardens, kitchens, classrooms, and the many spaces where young people gather and learn. Along the way, we witnessed the powerful role that nutritious food plays in supporting well-being, the strength of community-led food systems, and the extraordinary potential of youth-led change.



Together, we can
plant the seeds.

Together, we can
grow the future.



[Watch our new video
in English or French](#)



A Message From Our Executive Director

This year reminded me that meaningful change grows through connection. Across Nova Scotia, we are cultivating a diverse network of youth, educators, schools, families, and community partners working together to strengthen food literacy in schools and community spaces where young people gather. Whether it's learning to cook, planting pollinator gardens, or advocating for a better food system, none of this work happens in isolation. Every partnership, relationship, and shared effort helps build a stronger food system while creating opportunities for young people to develop the skills and confidence to shape the future they want to see. At Nourish Nova Scotia, we are honoured to be part of this collective effort and grateful to witness its impact every day.



Aimee Gasparetto, Executive Director

Board of Directors



Debbie Madore



Janice Silver



Heather Morse



Maria Wilson



Nancy Saul-Demers



Monica Rodriguez



Helen Wong



Irene Ogada



Sue Vincent

Our mission is to inspire and equip young people in Nova Scotia to learn about food and transform the food systems around them.

We believe this work is essential to the well-being of young people. Food isn't just about eating—it's about learning, sharing, and discovering new things together. When kids share meals, cook, and explore food together, they build confidence, make connections, and gain an appreciation for where their food comes from.

When they have access to nourishing food, opportunities to explore it in fun and meaningful ways, and a voice in the systems that affect them, they can spark real change—transforming how food is grown, shared, and celebrated in their schools and communities.

Empowering that change is at the heart of what we do.



Building Knowledge & Agency

Helping young people build positive relationships with food begins by creating spaces that foster curiosity, exploration, and learning.

Through hands-on experiences, young people are developing practical food skills, learning where food comes from, and building the confidence to engage with food in meaningful ways.

Whether growing food in school gardens, preparing meals together, or sharing their ideas for a stronger food system through creative projects, youth are gaining knowledge and skills they can carry into their daily lives. They are learning to navigate food systems with confidence while building lasting connections to food, each other, and their communities.





Youth Food Skills

Our food literacy workshops are run in partnership with schools and community organizations and take place throughout the year.

They provide youth with hands-on opportunities to share meals, cook, and explore food together.

These experiences also nurture essential food knowledge that helps young people develop healthy habits and positive relationships with food.

23

Workshops delivered

18

Partners engaged

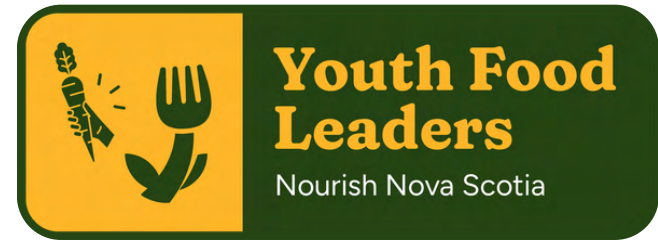
500+

Youth participants

“

"I learned that wellness isn't only about eating well and sleeping good, it's about making yourself feel good and feeling happy in your own body!"

- Youth participant, age 12



From Halifax to Membertou First Nation and the South Shore, Youth Food Leaders brought young people together to build food skills, strengthen cultural connections, and grow as leaders. Working alongside community partners across Nova Scotia, youth helped shape the program itself, ensuring their interests, experiences, and ideas guided the learning. This sense of ownership inspired many participants to take their learning beyond program sessions, recreating recipes at home, using community spaces to practice new skills, and contributing to food initiatives that strengthened their communities.

After two years of learning and refinement, Youth Food Leaders has evolved into a flexible program framework that enables youth-serving organizations to deliver locally adapted versions of the program in their own communities. The framework was piloted this year through our partnership with YMCA Southwest Nova Scotia and combines training, mentorship, and a curriculum with more than 50 practical tools and resources.

7

Program
partners

200+

Youth engaged as
youth food leaders

41

Workshops and
meals shared



“The skills they are gaining through the Youth Food Leaders initiative are already making a real impact. Many of them have begun cooking on weekends during our regular programming, preparing meals for other youth, and showing increased confidence in the kitchen. What’s even more exciting is hearing their personal stories. Youth proudly sharing that they are now cooking at home for their families, trying new recipes, and feeling more independent. This program has sparked genuine interest and empowerment. ”

- YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia staff

“The Youth Food Leaders program has given me the opportunity to experience more traditional methods of food gathering, build on my connections to the land and the urban Indigenous youth community, and feel more confident in my food making skills.”

- Juliana, on the Youth Food Leaders partnership with the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre and Native Council of Nova Scotia



A Growing Network of School Gardens

With support from the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, our Grow Eat Learn program has made significant strides in strengthening a growing network of school garden programs all across Nova Scotia.

This work was sustained through the dedication of four regional garden mentors, who collectively spent hundreds of hours supporting nearly 100 growing spaces across Nova Scotia public schools and schools supported by Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. These projects took many forms, including hydroponic growing systems, food forests, garden clubs, and food security initiatives. Wherever they took root, our team worked closely with students, educators, and school communities to strengthen school gardens as spaces for environmental stewardship, food literacy, and hands-on learning.

The benefits of the garden is learning how to grow plants, take care of them, and support them. It also teaches us how to be patient while the plants sprout. Also for people who want to be a farmer or have a job in agriculture, they can see how it is.

“

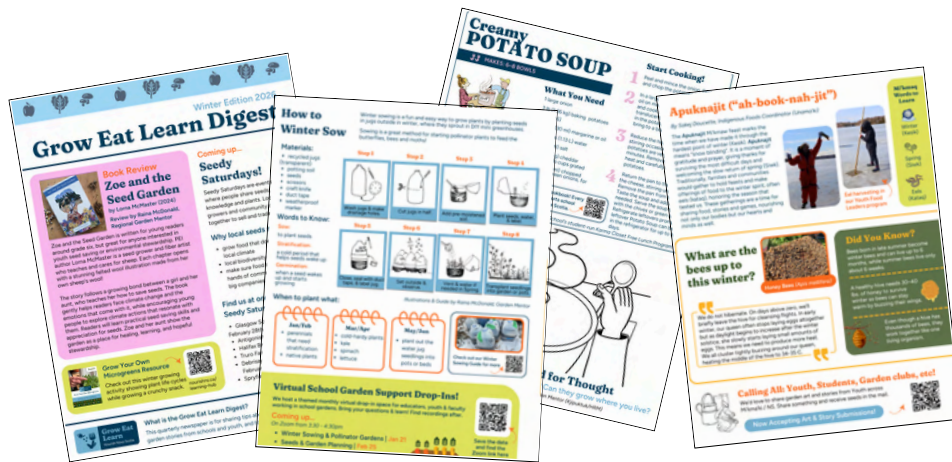
- Adhya Kumar
Student at Sackville Heights Junior High

Grow Eat Learn Highlights

From mapping unique garden spaces and mentoring garden champions to creating inspiring resources, hosting workshops and events, and cultivating climate action, the Grow Eat Learn Program covered tremendous ground this year.

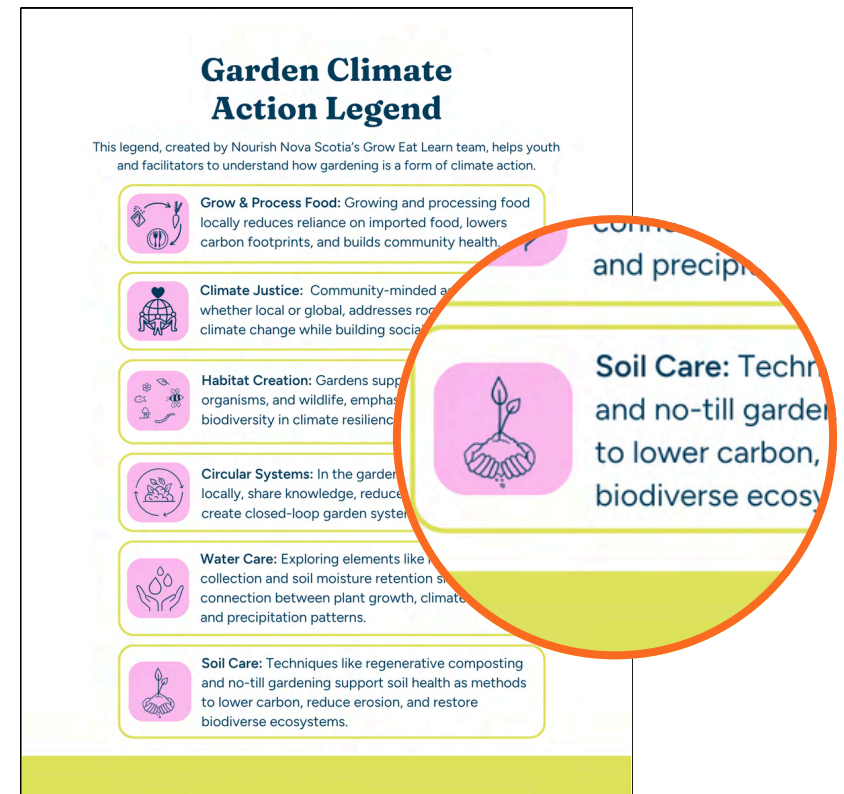
Grow Eat Learn Digest

This quarterly publication was created to celebrate youth voices, showcase garden-based learning, and share stories from across our network. Filled with beautiful design, inspiring stories, and student artwork, it offers a vibrant snapshot of the experiences, creativity, and impact growing in school gardens across Nova Scotia.



Garden Climate Action Legend

The Garden Climate Action Legend connects everyday garden activities to six climate action themes, helping students and educators see how school gardens support sustainability, well-being, and meaningful climate action.



[View the Garden Climate Action Legend](#)



Grow Eat Learn Trailer

The Grow Eat Learn Trailer is a self-contained mobile programming hub that brings garden education, food skills, and community building directly to youth across Nova Scotia. In its first year, the Grow Eat Learn Trailer engaged more than 900 youth through 14 events from the Halifax to Sydney. Activities ranged from making solar-powered pizza and kale chips to creating placemaking art, planting pollinator gardens and food forests, and hosting a Farm to School Snack film screening.

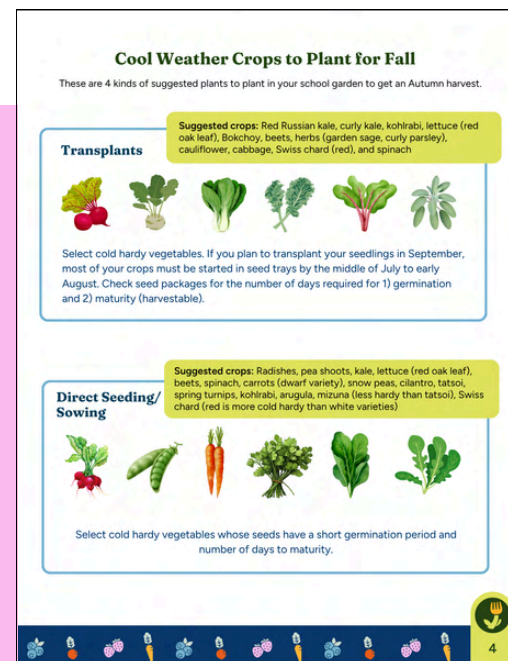
Learning Tools and Resources

Developed in close partnership with educators and community partners, these digital, print, and video resources were designed to support thriving school gardens by building educator confidence, strengthening long-term sustainability, and inspiring students to engage more deeply with garden-based learning.

[Winter Sowing](#)

[Apple Tree Guild Guide](#)

[Fall Planting Guide](#)



As the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund wraps up, our heartfelt thanks to the Grow Eat Learn team, Jess, Bria, Raina, Ruth, and Sakej, whose energy, expertise, and wisdom helped this program flourish and leave a lasting impact in the communities they supported. Across the 23-month project, mentors helped schools move from having an idea to developing an achievable garden plan, from having infrastructure to activating it, and from delivering one activity to establishing an ongoing practice among our network of Garden Champions.



The gardens, learning tools, relationships and climate-action practices developed through the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund laid a foundation for continued action. The project demonstrated that school gardens can be more than growing spaces: they can be places where young people develop agency, communities practice cooperation, biodiversity and food systems become visible, and climate action becomes something that can be learned, practiced and shared.



“

Having the utilities, storage, tools, and space to work on any sort of garden or project as a mobile unit is fantastic. It is a beautiful trailer that grants so much potential for the development of new infrastructure.

- Jacob Billington, CCRCE SchoolsPlus



Farm to School Snack

Nourish Nova Scotia

The Farm to School Snack Program continues to grow, **connecting more than 8,000 students with fresh, locally grown Nova Scotia produce** while fostering meaningful connections to local food, farming, and agriculture. Through monthly snack experiences and accompanying educational resources, students explored new flavours while learning where their food comes from, how it is grown, and the people who produce it.

This year, **19 schools across four Regional Centres for Education participated in the program**. One of the highlights was hearing teachers describe students as curious and enthusiastic to try new foods. Many shared stories about enjoying the featured produce with their families at home and connecting the snacks to cultural foods and traditions that are important to them.

It was also encouraging to see more schools involve students in preparing and distributing snacks, creating opportunities for youth leadership and the development of practical food skills.

We are incredibly grateful to the schools, community partners farmers, distributors, volunteers, and supporters, whose time, and dedication continue to make the Farm to School Snack Program such a success.



Students are interested in learning about the origin of each snack and where to find it locally. They discuss texture and taste and offer their opinions on each. It is nice to see students trying and enjoying new, healthy foods!

- Classroom teacher

Cultivating Vibrant Spaces to Gather and Learn

Positive relationships with food are shaped not only by what we learn, but by the environments in which that learning takes place.

This year, we worked with educators, community facilitators, and families across Nova Scotia to create supportive food environments where young people can grow, prepare, and enjoy food.

These inclusive and welcoming spaces foster curiosity, exploration, and meaningful conversations about food. They honour the connections between food, culture, tradition, and identity, helping people feel valued and supported in their food journeys.

By building the confidence, skills, and capacity of those who work with young people, we are helping create vibrant spaces where food literacy, wellbeing, and positive relationships with food can flourish.





A joyful collection of most-loved recipes

from school food programs in Nova Scotia

When the Nova Scotia School Lunch Program launched, we saw an opportunity to celebrate this important milestone while helping school communities better understand the recipes, people, and stories behind it.

The What's for Lunch? cookbook was created as a tool for teachers, parents, and community members to learn more about the Nova Scotia School Lunch Program and the value of school food programs more broadly. Featuring many of the menu items served in schools, the cookbook highlights stories and reflections from students, parents, and school staff that bring the impact of school food programs to life.

We are so proud of this book, which has now become the foundation for Recipes for Learning, a growing collection of lesson plans, cooking videos, and classroom activities designed to help educators bring engaging, hands-on food learning into their classrooms.



fries,
y if you

¼ tsp (1.25 ml) garlic
powder

¼ tsp (1.25 ml) onion
powder

½ tsp (2.5 ml) dried parsley

¼ tsp (1.25 ml) garlic
powder

¼ tsp (1.25 ml) onion
powder

½ tsp (2.5 ml) dried parsley

“

I read through the *What's for Lunch?* cookbook this morning cover to cover, and I couldn't put it down! It has a wealth of information about foods that represent so much history and culture in our province. We can see ourselves in this valuable resource. The recipes are appetizing, well done, and easy to follow.

The comments about food and cooking experiences from students and School Food Leaders around the province was a highlight for me. Food is personal and *What's for Lunch?* captures that concept. If I was still working as a consultant, I'd make sure every Family Studies teacher in the province who teaches Food & Nutrition gets a copy. Thank you for all of your hard work!

-SchoolsPlus Social Worker, Admiral Westphal Elementary

Get your copy of the *What's for Lunch?* cookbook

NourishFest 2025

NourishFest 2025 celebrated the launch of our *What's for Lunch?* cookbook while showcasing the impact of youth food programs in schools and communities across Nova Scotia. The Halifax Brewery Market buzzed with youth-led food stations, hands-on art activities, interactive games, and more than two dozen booths hosted by Nourish staff

and organizations such as Nova Scotia Loyal, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, The Station Food Hub, and Feed Nova Scotia. With over 200 attendees, the event highlighted the power of partnership and left participants with a deeper appreciation for school food programs and youth food leadership across the province.





Setting the Table

This year, we began developing *Language Matters*, the first module in *Setting the Table*, a professional learning series designed to help educators and facilitators create supportive food environments for young people. Developed in partnership with Eating Disorders Nova Scotia, the module explores how language, beliefs, and digital culture shape young people's relationships with food and their bodies. Drawing on the experiences of our staff and partners, the content will continue to evolve through testing and feedback from youth, educators, and community facilitators across Nova Scotia.

Building Braver Spaces

At the 2026 Roundtable Conference hosted by YWCA Halifax, youth, service providers, and community leaders came together to explore how to create more inclusive and empowering spaces for young people. Nourish Nova Scotia facilitated learning and dialogue on supportive food environments and food security, where participants shared both the barriers young people face and the solutions they envision. Through this conversation we heard a powerful message: food literacy builds the skills, confidence, and agency needed for youth to make informed choices and support their well-being through food.

Devour! The Food Film Fest

Amplifying youth voices through Nourish Youth Food & Film Challenge

As the youth programming partner for Devour! The Food Film Fest, we collaborate each year to deliver the Big Picture Program and the Youth Food & Film Challenge.

Leading up to opening night, the Big Picture Program brought more than 600 students to Wolfville for film screenings, conversations about food, and hands-on cooking workshops. This year, we also partnered with two Valley schools to host a youth-led film screening, bringing together **more than 100 young people to showcase their films**, engage in meaningful dialogue, and celebrate the winner of the Food and Film Challenge.

The excitement continued on opening night as we welcomed the challenge winner and two honourable mentions to the main stage. With their families watching proudly from the audience, the admiration and joy in the room was undeniable.

This year - like every year before it - was yet another reminder of the power and potential of youth to tell their food stories through film.

[▶ View the winning films](#)



Shaping Local Food Systems

Building strong local food systems requires collaboration, shared learning, and meaningful relationships. Through national initiatives such as Farm to Cafeteria Canada, the Right to Food movement, and the Coalition for Healthy School Food, alongside partnerships across Nova Scotia, we contribute to collective efforts that strengthen youth food education and advance more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems. Central to this work is the belief that young people have an essential role to play in shaping the future of food.

By creating opportunities for youth leadership, voice, and action, we are helping nurture the next generation of advocates and changemakers.



A Global School Food Movement

Nourishing Futures Forum

School Food for All: Nourishing Futures brought together more than 500 school food practitioners, educators, community food leaders, researchers, public health professionals, policymakers, and school food champions from diverse sectors to explore the future of school food in Canada. Nourish Nova Scotia staff participated as both presenters and attendees, engaging in valuable conversations about strengthening school food environments, advancing food literacy, and creating more equitable opportunities for young people to connect with food.

Atlantic School Food Infrastructure Fund

As part of a coalition of four Atlantic Canadian organizations—Food First NL, Food For All NB, Nourish Nova Scotia, and the PEI Home and School Federation—Nourish Nova Scotia helped distribute \$1 million in funding to strengthen school food infrastructure across the region. Funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the School Food Infrastructure Fund, a one-time initiative for the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the investments support projects focused on food production, processing, storage, and distribution.

These projects are helping schools and community partners build the capacity needed to provide healthy, reliable food access for students, strengthen provincial school food programs, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of Canada's newly introduced National School Food Program.

Nova Scotia Fund Recipients:

Hope Blooms Youth Social Entrepreneurial

Ventures, \$55,000

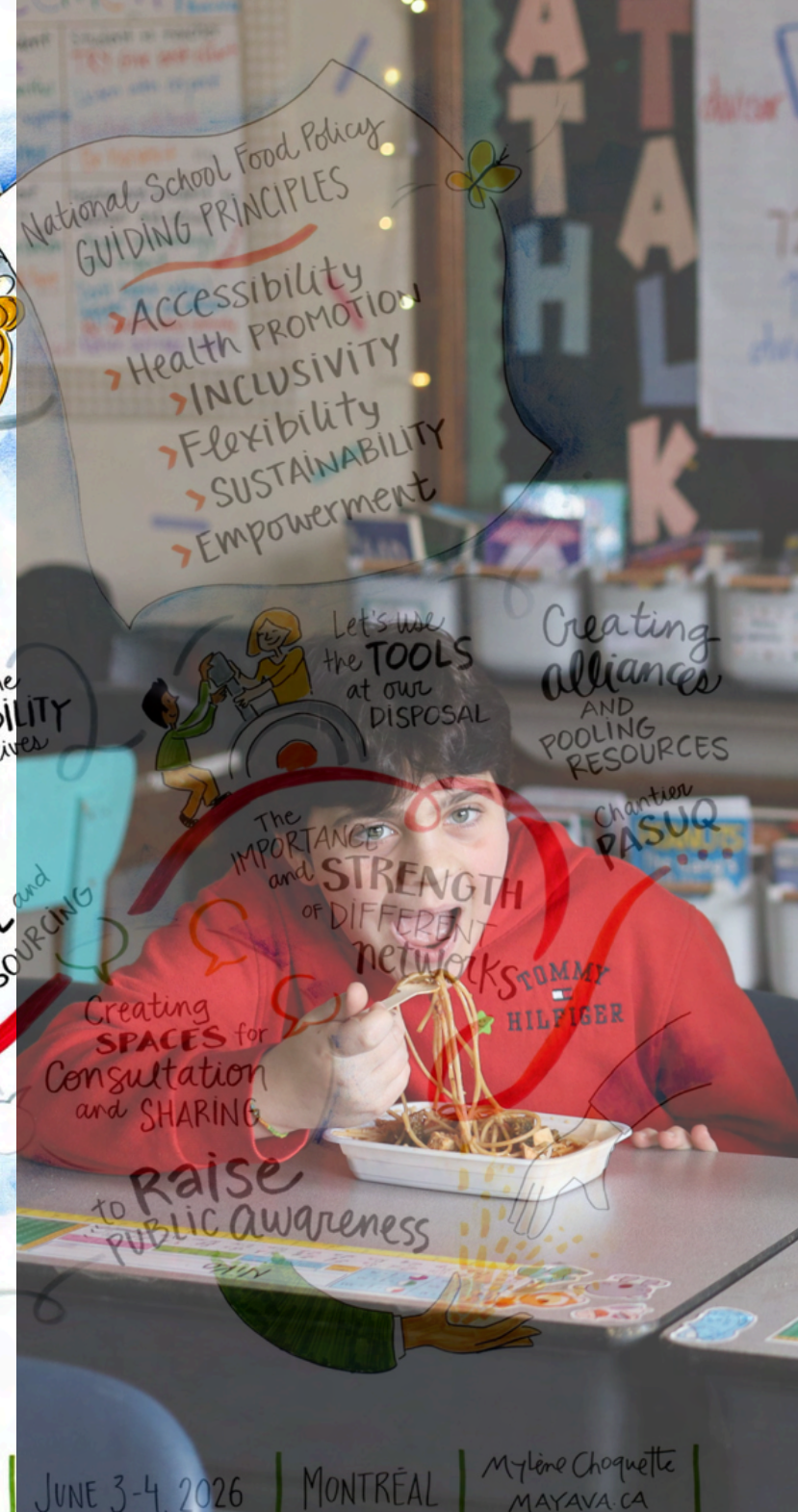
United Way Cape Breton, \$37,059

Summer Street Industries Society, \$150,000

The Station Learning Farm, \$149,569

Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, \$21,460





Uplifting Mi'kmaq Food & Food Ways

Nourishing Indigenous Food and Food Ways in Schools

As the provincial partner for Nourishing Indigenous Food and Food Ways in Schools, led by Farm to Cafeteria Canada, we continue to work alongside Mi'kmaq youth, schools, and communities to support and strengthen Mi'kmaq-led school food initiatives. One highlight was our partnership with Allison Bernard Memorial High School in Eskasoni, where we supported the completion of the school greenhouse through the installation of an irrigation system, the preparation of garden beds, and accessibility upgrades, including a tool storage wall. More than 120 students participated, many experiencing power tools and greenhouse plumbing for the first time while contributing to a space that will support hands-on learning and food growing opportunities for years to come.





Pictou Landing First Nation

Through a partnership with Pictou Landing First Nation School, we have been supporting student engagement to help shape a vision for school food. What began as separate conversations about garden projects and lunch menus evolved into a more holistic effort centred on elevating the most important voices in the school food environment: students.

Mi'kmaw School Food Provincial Gathering

In May 2026, we were honoured to co-facilitate a Mi'kmaw School Food Gathering led by the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, in collaboration with Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, Nova Scotia Health, Indigenous Services Canada, and the Tripartite Forum Committee on Health. Bringing together more than 70 Mi'kmaw Elders, educators, community members, and partners, the gathering created space to share knowledge, celebrate community strengths, and identify priorities for the future of Mi'kmaw-led school food systems. Building on the momentum of this gathering, partners are a shared learning report and a collaborative framework to support ongoing relationship-building and coordination around school food programs across Mi'kma'ki.

Collaborative Leadership and Action

Forming the Common Roots Urban Farm Leadership Collective

The Common Roots Urban Farm (CRUF) Leadership Collective was formed in 2025 when the future of the farm's two sites became uncertain. The collective brings together partners from the Ecology Action Centre, YWCA Halifax, Feed Nova Scotia, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, and JustFOOD Halifax. As part of our unique role, the Nourish Nova Scotia team is working alongside farm staff to strengthen youth engagement through targeted programs and volunteer opportunities for diverse youth.



Launch of the Halifax Regional Food Hub

As a founding member and director of the Halifax Regional Food Hub, we are helping address a long-identified gap in Nova Scotia's local food system. Built on strong relationships and a shared commitment to local food, the co-operative brings together a growing list of members and producers from across the province. After years of planning and collaboration, we were proud to celebrate the Hub's launch in June 2026. The co-operative is poised to strengthen regional food infrastructure, support local economies, and expand access to Nova Scotia-grown food, helping build a more connected and resilient food system for the future.

Youth Engagement: Partnership Highlights

Across our work, new and existing partnerships connect us with diverse youth and identify promising approaches to fostering youth engagement and leadership in food.

2026 Nova Scotia Envirothon

The 2026 Nova Scotia Envirothon brought together students from across the province to explore environmental challenges and solutions. As a program partner, we engaged students from grades nine to 12 in hands-on learning focused on climate action through pollinator gardens, we provided a local lunch, and we were proud to serve as judges for the youth competition.



March Break: A Workshop with a Kick

Through a collaboration with Upward Kitchens and YWCA Halifax, youth in North End Halifax rolled up their sleeves to create their own hot sauces. Using locally grown hot peppers, participants experimented with heat levels and flavour combinations, incorporating fruits and other fresh ingredients. By the end of the workshop, more than 50 bottles of hot sauce had been crafted, labelled, and taken home.



A photograph of two young girls wearing blue bucket hats and colorful shirts, focused on planting microgreens. They are using orange shovels to transfer dark soil from a large blue plastic tray into small white seedling containers. The background is bright and slightly out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Windsor Junction Summer Camp

On a hot day in July, the Grow Eat Learn Trailer rolled into Windsor Junction Summer Camp for a day of pizza making and microgreen planting. With more than 100 youth participating, it became the largest food literacy workshop Nourish Nova Scotia has facilitated to date.

100+ Youth participants

Blue Nose Marathon

In 2026, Nourish Nova Scotia participated in the Blue Nose Marathon Charity Challenge for the twelfth year. As one of our largest annual fundraisers, the event was a great success thanks to the dedication of our runners and walkers, the generosity of our donors, and the support of our community. Team Nourish had 22 participants who laced up their shoes and took part in every distance, from the Youth 2K to the full marathon. We were also grateful for the beautiful weather, which helped make it a memorable weekend for everyone involved.

107 Donations

\$4,761 Raised



Funding Partners

Farm to Cafeteria Canada

Feed Nova Scotia

Food First Newfoundland

Medavie Foundation

Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture

TELUS Community Boards

Corporate Supporters

Driscoll's

SimplyCast

East Coast Credit Union

Stay N Play Canine Centre

Farm Credit Canada

Tangier Lobster Company

Halifax Stanfield

Natural Forces

PRAXES Medical Group

Foundation, Non-Profit and Family Supporters

Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia

Community Foundation of Nova Scotia

Egg Farmers of Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Teachers Union

United Way Maritimes

Thank you for making our work possible

Funders and Donors

Thank you to our generous monthly and seasonal donors. Contributions from these individuals support essential youth food education across Nova Scotia. Your support is vital to our mission.

For others who may be interested in joining us, we invite you to learn more and contribute on our [website](#).

Sustaining Partner





Ensuring young people in Nova Scotia are well-nourished to live, learn, and play.

Nourish
Nova Scotia