



School Food
Programs in Canada:

15 Promising Cases



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Introduction

The Government of Canada's April 2024 announcement of a National School Food Program has made documenting promising school food models in Canada particularly timely. While Canada has never had a national program, there has been school food innovation at various scales across communities for decades. However, few studies describe the range of current Canadian school food program models. Canada's patchwork of different school food programs,^{1 2} often volunteer-run and funded by provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, local and national charities, and in some programs, parental contribution, presents an opportunity to document the range of practices. Many elementary schools in Canada do not have an industrial kitchen or a cafeteria/ designated eating area^{3 4} yet manage exemplary school food programs which other schools in similar contexts can learn from. The promising school food programs in this report illustrate the innovation that is already happening to support the health, education and overall well-being of children in communities in Canada.

This report responds to a need for insight into the operational details of school food programs that exist to meet the diverse needs of communities across Canada.⁵ This report is the first in a series that will form a how-to guide⁶ for school food program development for the Canadian context. Understanding how promising school food program models operate across a range of geographies, scales, cost models, and more, can help school food program practitioners, researchers, and educators think about and apply promising practices and methods to school food programming.



¹ School Food Programs (SFPs) are free or subsidized breakfasts, snacks, or lunches offered during the school day to junior kindergarten to grade 12 (JK-12) students over the majority of the school year (Ruetz & McKenna, 2021).

² Ruetz, A. T., & McKenna, M. L. (2021). Characteristics of Canadian school food programs funded by provinces and territories. *Canadian Food Studies La Revue Canadienne Des études Sur l'alimentation*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v8i3.483>

³ Browning, H. F., Laxer, R. E., & Janssen, I. (2013). Food and eating environments: in Canadian schools. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research* 74(4), 160–166. <https://doi.org/10.3148/74.4.2013.160>

⁴ Haines, J., & Ruetz, A. (2020). School Food and Nutrition - Comprehensive, Integrated Food and Nutrition Programs in Canadian Schools: A Healthy and Sustainable Approach [Discussion Paper]. Arrell Food Institute at the University of Guelph. https://afi-17cf1.kxcdn.com/wpcontent/uploads/2020/03/SchoolFoodNutrition_Final_RS.pdf

⁵ This report is one product from the following research project: Engler-Stringer, R., Field, D., Ruetz, A.T., Gilliland, J., Mercille, G., Kirk, S.L., Levkoe, C., Koc, M., Mosby, I., Renwick, K., Hoyer, G. & Skinner, K. (October 2022 - March 2025). Examining Canadian School Food Models to Inform Best-Practices and Decision-Making for a Universal and Nationally-Harmonized School Food Program. Project Grant, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Grant #183868.

⁶ The how-to guide is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Saskatchewan through a College of Medicine Research Award.

This report is organized in alphabetical order based on their provincial or territorial location (see Table 1 on page 5). These cases cover a variety of scales and food production models including:

- 1. On-site school kitchens** (British Columbia/BC, Saskatchewan/SK, Manitoba/MB, New Brunswick/NB, Northwest Territories/NT, Nunavut/NU, Ontario/ON)
- 2. Regional/School board-wide programs**
 - a. Two school-based centralized kitchens/hub kitchens (Alberta/AB)
 - b. Independent school kitchens (Nova Scotia/NS, Newfoundland/NL)
 - c. Centralized School Food Boxes (Ontario/ON)
 - d. Non-profit external caterers (Quebec/QC)
- 3. Territory/Province-wide programs**
 - e. One central kitchen and independent school kitchens (Yukon/YK)
 - f. Combination of independent school kitchens, a food hub and contracted vendors (Prince Edward Island/PEI)

The promising school food programs in this report illustrate the innovation that is already happening to support the health, education and overall well-being of children and communities in Canada.



Maskwacîs' central school food warehouse

Methods

A range of school food program models were selected to showcase including different meal types, school levels, food procurement models, funding models, geographies (urban, rural, remote and northern), scales of operation, cooking facilities, administrative and staffing models, and additional components like food literacy activities.

School food programs featured reflect the Coalition for Healthy School Food's Eight Guiding Principles including that programs are: 1) health-promoting, providing foods that reflect the Canadian Food Guide; 2) universally available to all children in a non-stigmatizing manner; 3) cost-shared among various groups; 4) flexible, including reflecting the context of the school and region and culturally appropriate; 5) utilize locally grown food and environmentally sustainable practices; 6) comprehensive, for example, including food literacy programming such as gardening or hand-on food preparation; 7) supported by guidance and accountability measures including program evaluations and an oversight body; and 8) committed to Indigenous control over programs for Indigenous students. These principles were developed based on extensive literature review and practice experience,⁷ and while programs presented in this report do not all reflect all eight of these, they each reflect at least the first two principles (health promoting and universally available).

Information on the school food program model, funding, costs, food procurement and preparation was gathered through school and organizational reports, site visits, and interviews with program leaders and partners. Food procurement included data such as, grocery store retail pricing, wholesale for profit pricing, at cost pricing, wild or foraged foods, etc., as well as the frequency and volume of food procured. Costing data collected included annual costs of labour, food and delivery, and kitchen/food service supplies where applicable. In some cases, start-up costs of purchasing kitchen equipment and appliances are also documented. Including indirect costs such as building maintenance and utilities was beyond the scope of this work. Program information was from the 2021/22 school year, although in some instances, 2022/23 or pre-pandemic data (2018/19) was used as practitioners felt this information best reflected typical program operations. The full costing methodology can be found in the report "Cost Analysis of Promising School Food Programs to Inform a National School Food Policy for Canada" which was funded by Agriculture and Agrifood Canada.⁸



⁷ Hernandez, K., Engler-Stringer, R., Kirk, S., Wittman, H., & McNicholl, S. (2018). The case for a Canadian national school food program. Canadian Food Studies La Revue Canadienne Des études Sur l'alimentation, 5(3), 208–229. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v5i3.260>

⁸ Ruetz, A.T., Michnik, K., Alaniz-Salinas, N., Doyle, E., Kirk, S., Korten, D., Tasala, K., Levkoe, C., Martin, A., Mercille, G., Heckelman, A., Renwick, K., Trask, N., Weber, N., Hoyer, G., McKenna, M., and Engler-Stringer, R. (2023, March 30). Cost Analysis of Promising School Food Programs to Inform a National School Food Policy for Canada. A report prepared for Agriculture and Agrifood Canada. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan.

Table 1: Organization of Report and Summary of Key School Food Program Characteristics

PROV/ TERR	NAME OF PROGRAM & MEAL TYPE	GEOGRAPHY	SCALE	PAYMENT MODEL	PAGE #
AB	Maskwacîs Education Schools Commission's Universal School Food Strategy/Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks Program	Rural	School Board & Regional	No cost to students and school staff	8
BC	Douglas Fir Secondary, Vancouver/Lunch Program	Urban	School	Paid; at no cost for some students	12
BC	LunchLAB, Vancouver/Lunch Program	Urban	School	Pay-what-you-can	15
MB	Rural Snack Program	Rural	School	No cost to students	19
NB	Nelson Rural School, Miramichi/Breakfast Program	Partly Rural	School	No cost to students	23
NL	School Lunch Association/Lunch Program	Urban & Rural	Regional	Pay-what-you-can	26
NS	RootED/Breakfast and Lunch Program	Rural	School Board	Paid; at no cost for some students	29
NT	Inuvialuit Regional Corporation's School Food Programs/Breakfast and Lunch Program	Remote	Regional	No cost to students	33
NU	Inuksuk High School, Iqaluit/Breakfast and Lunch Program	Northern, Remote & Urban	School	No cost to students	37
ON	Culinary Arts-animated School Food Programs, Thistleton Collegiate Institute, Toronto/Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner Program	Urban	School	No cost to students (Breakfast, Salad Bar Lunch, Dinner); Paid (Hot Lunch)	40
ON	Queen Elizabeth Public School and the School Food Box Program, Peterborough/Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks	Urban	School & Municipal	No cost to students	44
PE	PEI School Food Program Inc's Bon Appétit Lunch and Grab-and-go program	Urban & Rural	Provincial	Pay-what-you-can	48
SK	The Good Food For Learning Program, Saskatoon/Lunch Program	Urban	School	No cost to students	52
QC	La Cantine dans les écoles/Lunch Program	Urban & Rural	Regional	Pay-what-you-can; minimum of \$1.00 per lunch	57
YK	First Nations-led school food programs /Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks Program	Northern, Remote, Rural & Urban	Territorial	No cost to students	62

Maskwacîs Education Schools Commission's Universal School Food Strategy

Summary

An Indigenous-led school food program in rural Alberta animated by professional cooks and students who prepare free school meals for students and school staff in commercial kitchens. The program thoughtfully integrates curricula and utilizes large volumes of regionally produced foods. The Maskwacîs Education Schools Commission's comprehensive universal school food programs equips hundreds of students with critical food skills, creates full-time jobs for former students and other community members, and provides a stable source of revenue to the regional agri-food sector through direct procurement to the benefit of the broader community.

Profile



Rural



**Regional
& School
Board-wide**



Meal Type(s)

**Breakfast, lunch
and snacks**



Payment Model

**No cost to students
and school staff**



of Schools

10



**Food Production
Model**

**Two school-based
hub kitchens and
individual school
kitchens**



Started

2012

Background

Between 2006-2012, school food initiatives were inconsistent across schools and did not serve all students. Then, in 2012, the culinary teacher at Ermineskin Junior Senior High School was asked by the school to spearhead a breakfast and lunch pilot program. The success of the pilot program at Ermineskin Junior Senior School led to a request from the Education Authority to develop a Universal School Food Strategy (USFS) in 2013, also known as Nanâtohk Mîciwin which translates to "Variety of Good Food" in Cree. A critical step in securing the required funding for the USFS was creating a strategic fiscal proposal and getting it approved in the school district's annual operating plan. The funding for the first year of strategy implementation came solely from a reallocation of surplus funds from the previous school year, signaling that implementing a universal, free program was possible under current funding measures. Overall, appropriate funding and resources for the program were secured through annual strategic planning from existing education dollars.

Several years after the development of the USFS, Maskwacîs nations made the decision to work more collectively and amalgamated 10 schools from 4 separate authorities, creating their own independent school system in 2018. This new school system, the Maskwacîs Education Schools Commission (MESC), is fully owned and operated by Ermineskin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, Montana First Nation, and Samson Cree Nation. The MESC now oversees the expanded USFS in 10 primary, elementary, and secondary schools. The USFS provides breakfast, lunch, and snacks to K-12 students and staff at no cost. The program emphasizes nutrient-dense and culturally relevant meals with the aim of supporting healthy choices for students and families while eliminating unhealthy food and beverage marketing in schools.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Student participation in food preparation
- ✓ Support healthy choices for Maskwacîs students and Maskwacîs families by offering a wide variety of delicious, healthy food options throughout the school year
- ✓ Eliminate unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children and youth in all Maskwacîs schools
- ✓ Foster strong relationships between Maskwacîs schools and local food producers and other community partners to better support local food production strategies
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Reduce food insecurity

How does it work?

To ensure a seamless flow of food from producers to schools, MESC made the decision to manage its own supply chain, which includes picking up all the food they require for their program, in many cases directly from producers. MESC invested in their own trucks and logistics infrastructure which includes 2 pick-up trucks, a sprinter van, two 13-foot Izuzus, one 24-foot international tandem axle 24-foot refrigerated truck, and a mini-van. All vehicles are owned by MESC and the school board's transportation department pays for the maintenance and fuel. Owning their own vehicles allows MESC to deliver food directly to their schools, thus reducing reliance on external distributors and minimizing transportation costs.

MESC also has a central food warehouse, and two on-site school food production hubs equipped with commercial kitchens. The central warehouse has cold, frozen, and dry storage for seven to ten days' worth of food. The facility includes one large walk-in freezer, one large walk-in fridge, and a storage area that takes up half of the warehouse (see photo on page 5). The central warehouse is conveniently

Impact

Participation

- The program reaches nearly all of the students in the 10 schools (1,950 students in 2021/22). The only exceptions are a handful of students who have complex dietary restrictions such as a severe allergy.

Student Training

- In 2021/22, 16 students earning high school Foods course credits through food preparation and related activities aligned with Alberta's Foods curriculum.
- In 2024/25, a Registered Apprenticeship Program will start for high school students at MESC.

Job Creation

- Two trained Journeyman, a Cook and Baker, have the capacity to supervise 6 apprentice cooks and or bakers.
- 25% of the school food staff are former students who returned to work for the program and all receive a full-time salary, health benefits and favourable working hours. This is in comparison to typical food industry service jobs that do not include such benefits.

Local Economic Development

- Approximately 40% of the food in the program comes from within the province of Alberta (including meat, grains, and produce). All meat is sourced from a local Hutterite colony, and 100% of their potatoes and most root vegetables come from within the province.



located adjacent to MESC’s school board office, which is a 2-minute drive from the first school production hub at the Ermineskin Junior Senior High School and a 7-minute drive from the second school production hub at Maskwacîs Cree High School. The central warehouse directly supplies these two hub schools and they prepare meals for the nearby elementary schools. Smaller schools not supplied by

the school hubs have their own kitchens staffed by paid kitchen employees who prepare meals on-site. In total, there are seven kitchens across MESC’s 10 schools. The establishment of a dedicated food warehouse within the community provided MESC with increased control over food quality, inventory, and sourcing, including wild meat.

Sample Menu

The menu planning is led by the Program Director in collaboration with the Lead Chefs at each school. The menu is designed based on the availability of items such as seasonal produce, with flexibility given unpredictable fluctuations in supply and cost savings. For example, vendors regularly liquidate stock and MESC monopolizes on these opportunities to purchase a large quantity of a particular food item at a discounted rate.

To minimize food waste, the Program Director is guided by a general menu planning pattern that considers food preparation time, shelf life, overlapping ingredients, repurposing of leftovers, and the use of vegetable scraps and bones. For example, Monday dishes tend to be pasta dishes, which are quick to prepare given the limited time. Tuesday allows some preparation time from the previous day, so Tuesday meals tend to include items that may be partially prepared the day before, such as whole chickens. Meals on Wednesday tend to include soup, using the bones from the chickens used the day before, which are turned into stock with any vegetable scraps, and so on. The salad bars and sides vary day-to-day, depending on the availability of produce.

WEEK OF JANUARY 13-17	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Breakfast	Pancakes, Sausage, Fruit, Milk	Cereal, Porridge, Fruit	Ham, Eggs, Hashbrowns, Fruit, Milk	Cereal, Porridge, Fruit	Breakfast Sandwiches, Fruit, Milk
Lunch	Pasta/Meat Sauce, Caesar Salad, Fruit Salad, Spinach Salad	Chicken Caesar Wraps, Pasta Salad, Broccoli Salad, Fruit Salad	Hamburger Soup, Bannock, Caesar Salad, Fruit Salad, Pasta Salad	Stir Fry/ Noodles, Caesar Salad, Asian Salad, Fruit Salad	Pizza, Caesar Salad, Fruit Salad, Pasta Salads
Snacks	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	



Resources and Costs (2021 - 2022)

Yearly Operating Budget	Start-up Costs	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Cost per Student/Meal
\$2,029,002	In 2013, a \$67,000 budget surplus was used to start and operate the program in Ermineskin Junior Senior High School (serving 315 students) for the first year. Since the school already had a large kitchen, the money mainly went towards food and small equipment. MESC negotiated with the federal government in the initial year of the new school board's amalgamation in 2018 to secure funding to expand the program to all of their schools, costing approximately \$350,000 to upgrade facilities and equipment and purchase their two initial distribution trucks.	Federal funding for education on reserve flowed through Indigenous Services Canada (96%). Approximately 4% is provided by the provincial government.	No cost to students and school staff \$1.42 (Food costs for breakfasts, lunches, and snacks); \$4.47 (most expenses) ¹
Features of Food Procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Local food procurementWild caught meatSchool board-owned food transportation trucks		Number of Staff & Labour model Hybrid 26 full-time staff with secondary support from students. Full-time staff include a Director, two Kitchen Staff Supervisors, one Distribution Team Lead, and 22 cooks.	Facilities & Preparation 7 kitchens across MESC's 10 schools

¹ Expenses include food costs, disposable cutlery and plates but excludes fuel and vehicle maintenance is paid by MESC's Transportation Department.

Unique Program Features

- Sustainability:** Meals are served on reusable plates with reusable cutlery.
- Staff Meal & Supervision:** School staff are offered meals for free, in exchange that they sit and eat with students and provide lunch time supervision.
- Regional Food Infrastructure:** MESC's direct food procurement made possible through the central food warehouse and delivery trucks plays a crucial role in fostering Indigenous food sovereignty and strengthening the community's cultural connection to their traditional country foods.
- Local Food Literacy and Procurement:**
- Land-based learning** including foraging is part of the high school's Cree language and Foods classes. Students participate in foraging seasonally and does not provide a significant amount of food to the program.
 - In September 2022, MESC initiated the **Wild Game for Community Program** to support the purchase of 'country food' (i.e., wild meat) from local hunters. This program offers hunters an honorarium to cover expenses associated with hunting and sharing the harvested animals. The Wild Game program will be fully implemented in Spring 2024.
 - In 2023, MESC started a school-based and managed apiary which is planned to replace 50-70% of refined sugar with honey. In 2023, the apiary of 10 hives produced 400 kg of honey. In 2024, MESC purchased additional hives and equipment to yield up to 2.5 tonnes of honey per year.
 - Overall, the inclusion of wild meat, locally grown and harvested food not only enhances the nutritional value of meals but also contributes to revitalizing cultural traditions, strengthening the bond between students, their communities, and the land, and Indigenous food sovereignty.

Authors and Method

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Partners: Brady Weiler, Program Director, **Scott Hall**, former Program Director, Maskwacis Education Schools Commission

Method: Data was collected from June to September 2022 with some updates in 2024.

Douglas Fir Secondary

Summary

Douglas Fir Secondary Culinary Arts program focuses on experiential food literacy learning opportunities for culinary students. Secondary students prepare and serve healthy and affordable meals, emphasizing culturally responsive food options that reflect the culturally-diverse school community.

Profile



Urban



School



Lunch Program



Paid; at no cost for some students



1



School production kitchen and Culinary Arts Program



2018

Background

Located in the Metro Vancouver regional district, Douglas Fir Secondary is a suburban grade 8 – 12 school with a population of 1300 students. The Culinary Arts program at the school focuses on food literacy and food service industry skills. Students develop food preparation skills and self-efficacy in preparing meals within the school cafeteria for their peers. The food prepared by the Culinary Arts program is available for all students and staff at a low purchase cost, including soup, pasta, burgers, and an entree along with sandwiches, salads, and desserts that cater to dietary needs and preferences. For example, prices include soup at \$1.50, pasta for \$3.00, and a maximum entree price of \$5.50. The school community includes many Muslim students who consume Halal foods and observe Ramadan fasting practices. Menus are designed to meet these cultural practices and also incorporate at least one vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free option to meet additional dietary needs in the school community.

In recent years, there has been an increased prevalence of food insecurity in the community, and some students cannot afford even low-cost foods. In response, the school district provides additional funding for the teaching chef to further reduce food prices and make meals accessible to all students. In the 2022-23 school year, 115 students who could not afford the meal price accessed the program for free. Current facilities, financial capacity, and staffing are unable to keep up with the increasing demand for meals.

How does it work?

The operating budget for the Culinary Arts program is provided by the school district, including funds for a local food supplier contract that includes delivery. There is additional funding to source Halal proteins

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Support culturally responsive dietary needs
- ✓ Increase students' consumption of nutritionally dense food
- ✓ Increase students' food literacy capacity and self-efficacy
- ✓ Expose students to new local and cultural foods
- ✓ Increase program efficiency and stretch tight budgets
- ✓ Increase local food purchases

and products needed in smaller amounts from local grocers and funding for serving ware. Funding for the teaching chef and assistant salaries also comes from the school district. The teaching chef, in conjunction with the school district's Food Services, develops nutritionally dense menus consistent with Canada's Food Guide (2019) that meet student dietary accommodations. Items are offered at cost, and due to the high demand and interest for the type of meals offered, the cafeteria regularly sells out of items.

For those students who need additional support, families go through an application process for a subsidy covered by the school district, where they select from among the foods and a beverages offered for a maximum total of \$5.50. For example, one student might choose a soup (\$1.50) and a pasta (\$3.00). Another student might choose a sandwich (\$3.50) and a drink (\$2.00).

The teaching component of this program follows the British Columbia curriculum, where the senior Culinary Arts students engage in food literacy education through skill building in food preparation, industry food safety standards, and food service. Students also learn about and engage in cultural celebrations through preparation of traditional and fusion foods. In addition, the students engage with where food comes from: through donations from *Agriculture in the Classroom's Take a Bite of BC* including foods such as wild salmon, eggplants, and cheese.

Impact

Increasing Access

- 9% of the student population are enrolled in the 2022-23 subsidized lunch program: ~115 students out of ~1300 students compared to 30 students in 2018.
- *"Having foods that all students can afford or get on the lunch program. So even if they're not in the lunch program, Chef tries to price our foods in a way that is reasonable for people to buy..."*
– Vice Principal

Relationality in the School

- *"Knowing an extra 150 kids' names, you know, is really important. And it makes them feel really good about themselves. When I, you know, say, you know, have a great day and I say their name. I think that a lot of students look forward to having that connection. And I look forward to it, too, because I think the kids are great."* – Youth Care Worker
- *"One of my goals is to help them be able to make food for themselves [and] have some confidence with that. It's also to give them a sense of we're doing this for our school as well. So, there's a lot of pride. The kids are quite surprised when they come in here and see all that we do. And they're very proud of the product, and they like that we make good food."* – Teaching Chef

Culturally Responsive Meals

- *"We're doing it based on what our students need, not just on what somebody else thinks our students need, because that can be two very different things."* – Vice Principal
- *"The rising costs of food for families... that kids can come to school and know that they're gonna get a good meal. Yeah, it's huge. You know, I know that kids go home fed, and they get food and that makes me feel good."* – Teaching Chef

Eating with Dignity

- *"Once they get through the line, nobody's gonna know that they're on the lunch program, because they have the same thing."* – Teaching Chef
- *"Our actual structure of how we get these kids into the lunch program. But we just wanted to give them a little bit more dignity. And so, they're all able to have some choice, and not just given...given food, we're giving them choice."* – Vice Principal

Unique Program Features

The Douglas Fir Secondary Culinary program emphasizes the importance of cultural responsiveness and inclusion of all individuals in the following ways:

- Most protein foods offered are Halal and are served to the whole school community, regardless of cultural background.
- During the 4 weeks of Ramadan, the cafeteria reduces the servings due to the number of students fasting; however, students can take their food home for when they break their fast.
- The Teaching Chef encourages students to bring in their family recipes to make and serve within the cafeteria. Foods that have been prepared include fufu, injera, falafel, and empanadas.

Sample Menu

Example Lunch Menu:

Daily hot menu items include a soup, pasta, burger, and an entrée. Additionally, cold menu items include sandwiches, salads, sushi, and desserts, available from self-serve fridges. On one particular day, the following dishes were served to students:

- **Soup:** Butternut Squash (gluten free / vegan)
- **Pasta:** Vegetable Cream Curry (vegetarian)
- **Burger:** Chicken Burger with Fries
- **Entrée:** Garlic Lime Chicken with Potato Wedges and Salad



Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Cost per Student/Meal
\$100,000 ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School District funding from Provincial Government (100%) • Quarterly donations from Agriculture in the Classroom's Take a Bite of BC (0%) 	<p>For subsidized students, an allocation of a maximum of \$5.50 /student towards lunch items</p> <p>Average meal cost across all items: \$2.88</p>
Features of Food Procurement	Number of Staff & Labour model	Facilities & Preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on Halal foods • Local Food Distributor: weekly delivery (85%) • Halal proteins and spices from local grocer: monthly (10%) • Smaller quantities of product if not available through large distributor: monthly (5%) 	<p>School staff:</p> <p>1 Teaching Chef (salaried): full-time;</p> <p>1 Culinary Assistant (hourly wage): 32.8 hours/week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized kitchen • In-school preparation and service by students

¹ This particular Culinary Arts program has been successful in maximizing their budget, resulting in a "profit". Any residual funding compensates for other programs in the district that operate at a loss.

Authors and Method

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Partners: Douglas Fir Secondary School, School District

Method: Data was collected from February 2023 to June 2023.

LunchLAB, Vancouver

Summary

LunchLAB is a multi-component school lunch program that provides nutritious and culturally relevant food to students while also engaging them in food production, preparation, service, and clean-up alongside Chefs-in-Residence. LunchLAB works with a designated Edible Education teacher who manages the school garden and is responsible for incorporating food literacy into the school curriculum.

Profile



Geography

Urban



Scale

School



Meal Type(s)

Lunch



Payment Model

Pay-what-you-can



of Schools

3



Food Production Model

On-site school kitchen



Started

2019

Background

LunchLAB began in 2019 as a collaboration between two not-for-profit organizations, Fresh Roots & Growing Chefs. These organizations came together to design a model for a community-led accessible “pay-what-you-can” school lunch program that would strengthen the local food system, provide non-stigmatizing meals, and empower students to cook, serve, and share food with their peers alongside their teacher and Chefs-in-Residence, comprised of a Lead Chef and Sous-chefs. LunchLAB operates in Vancouver School Board (VSB) schools at Lord Roberts Elementary, John Norquay Elementary (new in Fall 2023), and Total Education High, as a multi-component program that provides nutritious and culturally relevant food to students with hands-on mentorship and embedded food literacy. At Lord Roberts Elementary, LunchLAB is an extension of the Edible Education curriculum, where LunchLAB works collaboratively with an Edible Education teacher who manages the school garden and teaches food literacy to students.

Lord Roberts Elementary has a diverse student population of approximately 650 students in kindergarten to grade 7. Over 40 different languages are spoken within the school community. John Norquay Elementary is a large school of almost 700 students, including a Mandarin Immersion Program. Total Education High has a population of 80 students in grades 11-12. The latter is an alternative secondary school program available for “at risk students who struggled in the traditional public education mainstream.” The school provides alternative teaching methods and works directly with Youth and Family Workers who liaise with social services to provide additional support to students.

Although content on all three schools is provided, this case study summary focuses on the program at Lord Roberts Elementary.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase local food purchases
- ✓ Support the regional food sector
- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Increase food Literacy

How does it work?

Participation

At Lord Roberts Elementary, LunchLAB provides up to 200 meals 2 times per week. Students who are enrolled in the VSB school meal program (~60 students) are automatically enrolled in LunchLAB. LunchLAB absorbs all of the costs incurred by the students who are automatically enrolled via the VSB school lunch program, as they do not receive funding/donations for these select students, however, this may change in the future. The remaining 140 spots are offered to students in grades 4-7 and parents are asked to register at the start of the school year. A suggested donation of \$5/meal is presented to parents, but they are also invited to pay what they can.

Every class at Lord Roberts Elementary rotates through Edible Education which operates out of the school's multi-purpose room. Edible Education is taught daily, Monday through Friday. LunchLab also operates out of the multi-purpose room twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Grades 6-7 students are invited to apply to be on the Chef Team or Clean Team for LunchLAB which involves working with the Chefs-in-Residence to prepare, serve, and clean up after lunch. Approximately 100 students are selected for the Chef Team and 100 students are selected for the Clean Team. Both teams are divided into three cohorts: Fall, Winter and Spring. Each cohort has ~32 students on the Chef Team and roughly ~32 students on the Clean Team. The cohorts are further divided into teams of ~8 students that rotate every 4 weeks.

Impact

LunchLAB is not a universal free program but is universally accessible to all students in Grade 4-7 on a Pay-What-You-Can model. There is an explicit interest in increasing operation days and scaling up at existing schools, as well as expanding to new schools. However, the size of the school kitchen and multi-purpose room presents barriers to scaling up at Lord Roberts Elementary. Varying infrastructure and conditions at different schools pose challenges for expansion.

- **200 grade 4-7 students** – 31% of the student population at Lord Roberts Elementary. Participation is capped at 200 students due to limited seating capacity.
- **80 grade 4-7 students** – 8% of the student population at John Norquay Elementary. The program is aiming to expand to 200 students in Spring 2024.
- **30 grade 11-12 students** – 38% of the student population at Total Education High School.
- **310 students total** being served by the LunchLAB program 2-3 days/week

Student Experience

The Chefs-in-Residence incorporate food literacy themes raised by the Edible Education teacher in interactions with the Chef Team students. For example, Chef Team students learn how food preservation and pickling can mitigate food waste, then make pickled vegetables and serve them in the salad bar.

After the food has been prepared and serving tables are set up, the Chef Team students and the Clean Team students eat together with adults in a communal setting ahead of the arrival of their peers. After eating, these student leaders serve their peers the main dish. There is also an open salad bar containing fresh and pickled fruits and vegetables, and a water station. Students can serve themselves from the salad bar as many times as they want. Student participants are given approximately 40 minutes to eat together in a communal setting. 11 long tables that seat

approximately 14 students are set up and fill the multi-purpose room where LunchLAB operates.

Clean Team students station themselves at a table where their peers stack their used cups and food trays. The Clean Team students clean off and rinse the dishes in preparation for the dishwasher. The entire LunchLAB crew, including student leaders and parent volunteers, work together to clean up the multi-purpose room. Then the student leaders return to the classroom and the Chefs-in-Residence and parent volunteers finish cleaning up.

Food Procurement & Logistics

Food procurement is managed by the Lead Chef at Lord Roberts Elementary. A portion of the food (~25%) is rescued and donated. The remaining (~75%) is purchased by the Lead Chef. The majority of the food is sourced from locally based organizations and businesses. During the growing season, LunchLAB incorporates food grown and harvested from the school garden.

The program adheres to the Canada Food Guide (2019), food safety standards, and sanitation standards. The Chefs-in-Residence, composed of one Lead Chef and two Sous-chefs arrive at 9am to begin preparing for lunch and stay till 2pm. The Chef Team students arrive at 10:50am and stay till 1:10pm. The Clean Team students arrive at 12:10pm, take out any recycling, before eating alongside the Chef Team students, Chefs-in-Residence, Edible Education Teacher, and parent volunteers.

Sample Menu

Entrée: Chilli Con Vегgie

Vegetarian bean chilli baked with cheese, served on brown rice and/or with whole grain bread.

Salad bar:

- kale marinated in Hollyhock dressing
- spiralized carrots
- spiralized kohlrabi
- chopped cucumbers
- chopped baby tomatoes
- chopped apples
- assorted pickled vegetables
- toasted pumpkin and sunflower seeds
- black olives



LunchLAB recruits parent volunteers to help with food preparation, setting up tables, and cleaning. A program manager is “on call” to provide added support when necessary. Most of the food preparation is done at the school by the chef team, students, and parent volunteers. Some food

Unique Program Features

The program’s main principles are to foster health, well-being, and sustainability through: 1) promoting food knowledge/skills, leadership, and critical thinking via student engagement in food production, preparation, service, and clean-up as an extension of a larger food literacy curriculum (i.e. Edible Education); and 2) embedding the program in the school community and local food system through parent involvement and connections to local businesses, farms, resources, and other assets.

The lead chef at Lord Roberts Elementary not only lives and works in the community, but is also a parent of a student currently enrolled at the school.

Previously, Fresh Roots had connections to local farms (e.g. UBC Farm, KPU Farm) but these food sources were lost during the pandemic. Fresh Roots is currently working to re-establish connections to local farms to supply fresh and locally produced foods to LunchLAB.

preparation, such as making sauces, is done in advance by cooks at a commissary, a commercial kitchen rented by third parties to prepare and store food. The sauces are stored in the freezer and eventually brought to the school by the chef. The

commissary also serves as the site where food and supplies are delivered. Delivering food and other supplies directly to the school is challenging due to the multi-purpose-room lacking both direct road access and adequate storage space.

Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Cost per Student/Meal
TOTAL \$128,100-\$134,940 Operation costs SUBTOTALS \$28,166 Labour/Admin \$47,880-\$54,720 Food and beverage purchases \$21,888 in Food and beverage donations \$2,000 Equipment	MAIN FUNDING City of Vancouver (public/govt): \$45,417 (41%) ¹ LunchLAB Registration (parental contribution): \$40,428 (36.5%) ADD'L FUNDING BC Gaming (public/govt): \$10,000 (9%) Osprey Tree Foundation (community sector): \$10,000 (9%) ² PAC Donations (parental): \$2,500 (2.3%) Whole Foods-Kids Foundation (private): \$2,500 (2.3%) ³	\$9.36-\$9.86 per student per day ⁴ Facilities and Preparation Commissary with commercial kitchen is rented by 3rd parties to receive, store, and prepare food School Multi-Purpose Room with small kitchen and some commercial equipment used for final meal preparation and meal service
Features of Food Procurement	Number of Staff and Labour model	
Rescued/donated food (~25%) Purchased by lead chef (~75%) from local farms and other local suppliers School Garden (seasonal) Majority of food is sourced from locally based organizations and businesses	Lead chef (hourly): 1 part-time Sous chefs (hourly): 2 part-time Edible Education Teacher (salaried): 0.8 FTE, paid by VSB	Program Manager (salaried): 1 Full-time, 20% dedicated to LunchLAB Communications Coordinator (salaried): 1 fulltime, 5% dedicated to LunchLAB Executive Directors: 2 full-time, 10% dedicated to LunchLAB

¹ The provincial government limits funding to food only.

² NGOs allow funding to be spent on any aspect of the program.

³ Businesses do not have funding limitations.

⁴ If operation costs are estimated at \$128,100-\$134,940 for the current year, and the program at Lord Roberts Elementary serves 180 students 76 days out of the year, then the cost per person per day is estimated at: \$9.36-\$9.86

Authors and Method

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Partners: Brent Mansfield, Edible Education Teacher at Lord Roberts Elementary, Madi Bourette-Knowles, Director at Growing Chefs and Sherry Stevenson, Executive Director at Fresh Roots.

Photos by: Brent Mansfield and Trudy Tran

Method: Data was collected from January 2023 to March 2023 and included a site visit at Lord Roberts Elementary and four interviews. Additionally, the researcher worked with two Fresh Roots staff to verify the collected data and ensure accuracy. Most of the data collected were for the 2022/23 school year.

Universal, Rural Snack Program

Summary

The universal snack program in this rural Manitoba school has been running for ten years under the leadership of the school principal and staff. The mid-morning snack program serves fresh fruits and vegetables and other nutritious foods to 90% of the student population, as well as school staff, five days a week throughout the school year. The snack is prepared at the school by an Educational Assistant (EA) in a 30-40 minute window in the school's canteen. Having the funding for a specifically paid staff member to support the school snack program is an improvement school staff would like to see in the future.

Profile



Rural



School



Snack



No cost to students



1



On-site school kitchen



2013

Background

The school's population includes 130 students in Kindergarten to grade 9 from the surrounding communities, including Métis settlements and offers a school of choice for nearby First Nations reserves. Sixty percent of the student population identifies as First Nation or Métis. The school snack is meant to supplement student lunches and snacks brought from home, especially with fruits and vegetables, and provide exposure to new foods for students. Fruits and vegetables are a focus of the snack program as families might not get these foods regularly at home due to cost, availability, and access.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Create a culture of wellness and healthy eating in the school
- ✓ Improve food security
- ✓ Increase program efficiency and stretch tight budgets

Impact

Universal Access

- 90% of the total enrolled students (130 students) use the snack program daily.

Culture of Wellness

- Beyond the nutritional qualities of the school snack, snack time facilitates conversation and role modelling around healthy eating and habits as staff participate and eat with students and use it as an applied learning opportunity to link to the school curriculum. According to the principal, another key benefit of the snack program is that it sends a message to families and the community that “we value healthy food here [in the school].”

Improved Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

- School staff note that eating fresh foods can be a challenge for families as the prices for groceries at the local store are higher than most families can afford, and travelling to larger centres for groceries is an added challenge. Exposure and access to fresh fruits and vegetables is limited for some students. Since the program started, school staff have noted a significant increase in the number of students who will eat a new fruit or vegetable at school.
- Teachers connect the snack program to learning in the classrooms and the teachers note this makes a difference, including students bringing increasingly nutritious options from home.

How does it work?

Snack Overview - The mid-morning snack program serves fresh fruit and vegetables and other nutritious foods for free for students and staff, five days a week throughout the school year. Students have a fifteen-minute, school-wide break to eat the school snack, and students and staff eat together in their respective classrooms. The snack is prepared at the school by a staff member in the school’s canteen. The snack is prepared for staff and students by one person in 30-40 minutes, although more time would mean a wider variety of snack items could be added to the menu.

Snack Equipment and Service - All the groceries and equipment for the snack are stored in the school

canteen. There is a cooler for fresh foods and cupboards for non-perishable food items, like fruit cups, trail mix, crackers, and cereal as well as basic program kitchen equipment and reusable tableware. To minimize food waste, prior to preparing the snack, staff go to each classroom and count how many students want to eat the snack that day. Vegetables and other snack items are divided into cups and placed on trays for delivery. The Kindergarten class snack is prepared and delivered first to give the younger students more time to eat.

Menu Planning - The menu is created based on feedback from students, alignment with provincial nutrition standards, and food access, availability, and time considerations.



Shopping and Food Delivery - Food is purchased in bulk, twice a month by the principal and one teacher. These staff drive to the nearest urban centre on the weekends for groceries and unload them at the school.

Program Administration and Reporting - Grant and expense management is done by the school principal with support from the school secretary.

Flexibility to Support Student Needs - Long school days are a reality for these rural students; the majority take a 10-40 minute bus ride to and from school each day and are hungry when they get to school. According to one teacher, a morning snack program “just makes so much sense [...] If you’ve ever talked to teachers, the morning is crucial, right? That’s where you get all your good learning done, because the kids tend to be more focused, more alert [and the morning snack program only adds to this].”

Committed and Connected Community - What motivates staff members to keep the program going without paid school food staff is a passion for student wellbeing and community service as staff want to create a healthy community for the children. Staff were persistent to keep the program going; the culture and ‘buy-in’ for the snack program did not happen overnight. Student acceptability and high participation was developed through the leadership efforts and role modelling of the school principal and staff over time.

Sample Menu

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Quartered Oranges	Yogurt with Berries	Quartered Apples	Sliced Carrots & Cucumbers	Cheese and Crackers
 				

Resources and Costs (2021 - 2022)

Yearly Operating Budget	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Cost per Student/Meal
\$28,177.00 ¹	In-Kind from School (88%) & Private/ Government/NGO (12%)	Production cost per student per day with in-kind school staff labour = \$1.11
Features of Food Procurement	Number of Staff & Labour model	Facilities & Preparation
<p>Food is purchased through grocery retail/bulk purchasing in the nearest city (100 km away/ approximately 1.5 h by car). Staff use personal vehicles to pick up and deliver/unload food to the school.</p> <p>A small amount of program funding is spent at the local store for bananas and milk. This purchasing accounts for 15% of program food purchasing.</p>	<p>No specifically paid SFP staff.</p> <p>Principal and 1 teacher for shopping, unloading groceries approximately 4 hours/ every 2 weeks.</p> <p>1 education assistant for 1 hour/snack prep per day.</p> <p>1 school administration staff for grant writing and reporting for 3/ hours/month.</p>	Residential-scale Kitchen

¹ Includes \$4,150.00 for food only from CNCM and \$24,027.00 in-kind labour from school staff

Start-up Costs

One-time Start-up Expenses for Universal Snack Program in Rural Manitoba.

Equipment	
\$5,629.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refrigerator (residential) (\$1126.40) Cooler (commercial) (\$1590.00) Stove top/oven (residential) (\$1113.30) Stainless steel sink (residential) (\$212.80) & faucet with sprayer (sprayer \$230.00) Dishwasher (residential) (\$722.40) Reusable cups (\$2.99 for 6), bowls (\$2.99 for 6), cutlery (\$5.99 for set of 16), plates (\$2.99 for 6) x 150 persons Trays (\$1.99) x 12

Unique Program Features

- **Simple Formula for Other Schools** - The shopping, storage, equipment, preparation and service of the snack program is simple and could be an operational model replicated in other schools, especially ones with little to no experience with administering and operating school food programs.
- **Paid School Food Staff Needed** - The principal acknowledges if she were gone, the snack program may not remain a priority in the school as there are no paid staff specific to the position. To prepare the school snack, the principal assigns an EA. Although school staff value the snack and its role in student learning, direct in-classroom support and managing acute student needs are the main roles of school EAs; if a more urgent student need arises that the EA needs to attend to, the school snack cannot be prepared. In the future with additional staff, many of the tasks the principal and EAs contribute to the snack program can be replaced by a paid school food staff, leaving more time for the principal and EAs to focus on duties specific to their own training.
- **Rich Opportunities for Experiential Food and Nutrition Learning** - Like many schools in the province, the school has no specific funding for food literacy; but as a rural school, the school hosts a unique environment for land-based and food and nutrition-related learning for students. The school is situated on six acres of land, with forested trails that are used for exploring, walking, biking, cross-country skiing, and outdoor play activities. Staff also take students on field trips to areas surrounding the school, such as Lake Winnipeg, to integrate the unique ecological, geographical, cultural, and historical elements of the community into student education. While most of these activities are not portrayed to students from a food-related lens, linking these favoured activities to the snack program is a high impact opportunity for student learning and wellbeing.
- **Culturally Relevant Foods as an Area of Future Development** - Many of the students at the school are First Nations or Métis. School staff are receptive to further education and learning on how traditional foods are defined and understood by the First Nations and Métis peoples in the area, and how to incorporate these foods into the school snack program given further funding and staff capacity. For example, the school can partner with knowledgeable community members and Elders to learn the traditional names of the lake and forest plants, their uses, and potential ways to steward these plants and incorporate them into the snack program.

Authors and Method

Researchers: Kaylee Michnik, R.D., PhD Candidate, University of Saskatchewan, kam538@mail.usask.ca

Partners: Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM) and Lord Selkirk School Division

Method: Data was collected from January 23- 27th, 2023. In-depth (1-2 hours) in-person/online interviews were conducted with the main snack program staff (n=4), including two Educational Assistants, one teacher, and the principal. All of the interviewed staff lived in the community (5-25 years) and worked in the school for numerous years (5-25 years). Interviews were also conducted with two staff from a program funder.

Program observations occurred over three consecutive days during school hours, focusing on snack preparation, delivery, eating in the classroom, and clean-up.

Financial information and participation rates were taken from program year-end reports for 2021-22.

Breakfast Program, Nelson Rural School, Miramichi

Summary

Every school day, this K-8 school of 300 students welcomes all students to a two-part breakfast program, with approximately 40% of students participating. Students may opt for a sit-down breakfast in the cafeteria (e.g., toast, cereal, milk, oranges) staffed by community volunteers or a grab-and-go option (e.g., apples, cheese strings, yogurt) staffed by a school employee. The school provides trays of fruits and vegetables to each classroom (at no cost) about five times per year, often on holidays. The school also participates in the provincial school milk program, offering 237 mL cartons of 1% white milk at lunch for a subsidized price.

Profile



Partly Rural



Scale

School



Meal Type(s)

Breakfast



Payment Model

No cost to students



of Schools

1



Food Production Model

On-site school kitchen



Started

2010 or earlier

Background

This breakfast program has operated for more than 23 years. A teacher coordinates the program, assisted by a long-time parent volunteer, with active support from the principal. A second teacher oversees a “Green Team” of students that manages recycling and composting from the cafeteria. Program success is facilitated by strong community support and a large volunteer base.

The program operates daily and the primary factor in choosing the menu for the program is to make the food as healthy as possible. The menu follows the province’s Healthier Eating and Nutrition in Public Schools Policy, emphasizing foods the students like to eat.

The school also participates in the provincial school milk program, which is available to students as part of the cafeteria lunch service.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Provide healthy foods for students and help prepare them for their school day
- ✓ Augment the food intake of students who come from low-income backgrounds and/or who may have long bus rides
- ✓ Contribute to a welcoming, positive school experience, one of several food-related initiatives at this school

Impact

Universally Welcoming & Accessible: Access to the breakfast program (both the cafeteria and grab-and-go outlet) is very near the school entrance, with two large signs announcing the breakfast program. The program signage, operations, school leaders and volunteers convey a welcoming atmosphere, as part of an overall positive school atmosphere.

Volunteer Support: Volunteers and community support are the backbone of the program. Two volunteers, who are part of a large volunteer group, ensure the sit-down breakfast operates smoothly.

Student Learning and Health: A key reason for offering the program is to help students focus on their learning and provide nourishment to support their health and development. The teacher-coordinator commented that a key outcome is that students can focus on learning after they have participated in the breakfast. The principal noted that school breakfast helps to fuel their day and provides students with some nourishment.

Environmental Sustainability: The school aims to model environmental sustainability, with high student involvement. The 'Green Team' oversees recycling and composting from cafeteria waste. The school garden club uses the finished compost.

How does it work?

With the active support of the principal, the program's teacher coordinator and lead parent volunteer coordinator recruit and manage the program volunteers. A total of 21 volunteers, plus spares, support the program on a rotating basis, with two volunteers helping per day. The school custodian also assists with the program.

The school independently procures food. The teacher phones the school's food order to a local grocery store, which then delivers it to the school, or occasionally the principal goes to the store to purchase foods such as apples.

Sample Menu

In general, the menu for the sit-down breakfast is as follows:

100% whole wheat bread (prepared using a conveyor toaster) with optional toppings: jam, margarine, cheese spread

Breakfast cereal (e.g., two types of Cheerios, two types of Life cereal, and Rice Krispies)

Fresh fruit (e.g., cut-up oranges)

Milk (1% white milk to drink or use on cereal)

The menu for the grab-and-go options consists of a variety of items that students can eat at their convenience, for breakfast or as snacks. The program organizers ask students to take a maximum of two items. On the day of the school visit, the options were: apples, cheese strings, frozen yogurt tubes, cheese crackers, granola bars, and blueberry bars.

The program is offered to all students. The sit-down option is in the school cafeteria and offers toast, cereal, milk, and fruit. For the grab-and-go option, students arrive at a window that displays the available foods, except the yogurt tubes, which are kept in the freezer. The school requests students take a maximum of two items.

The main equipment for the program consists of a conveyor toaster, a cooler, and a freezer, with a small storage area for packaged food. The program has its own storage and equipment, separate from the cafeteria lunch service.

Periodically, especially on occasions such as Halloween, the breakfast program purchases fruit and vegetable trays for each classroom. This initiative keeps focus on healthy foods the students enjoy, especially when candy is available.

Over the last 10 years, program funding has increased with a local non-governmental

organization serving as a primary funder. Local community groups (such as firefighters), businesses, and occasionally individuals, provide additional support. Local community groups (such as firefighters), businesses, and occasionally individuals, provide additional support. The provincial government provides a small grant.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development operates the school milk program, with funding from the Dairy Farmers of New Brunswick. The school’s participation in the milk program is longstanding and although the program permits schools to order white and chocolate milk at a reduced price, the school purchases 1% white milk

only. The school sells the milk as part of the cafeteria lunch service; other food at lunch is not subsidized.

In addition to the breakfast and milk programs, a local not-for-profit organization runs a lunch cafeteria service, which aims to offer healthier food to students at cost. The school offers a range of activities such as cooking classes, a gardening group, and a learn-to-fish opportunity using the river near the school. A student group also oversees an award-winning recycling and composting program (that includes recycling and composting waste from the cafeteria, worm composters in classrooms, outside composting, and classroom recycling) to contribute to environmental sustainability.

Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget Not available	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding Primary funding for the breakfast program was from a local community organization Dairy Farmers of New Brunswick help fund the milk program	Cost per Student/Meal Not available
Features of Food Procurement Follows the provincial school nutrition policy, Healthier Eating and Nutrition in Public Schools	Number of Staff & Labour model School staff (salaried): 1 teacher supported by other staff and 21 volunteers (plus spares)	Facilities & Preparation In-school preparation

Unique Program Features

The breakfast program is one of several food-related initiatives offered, including a learn-to-fish program. The physical education teacher takes students in every grade fishing at least once during the school year. As well, students in grades 6-8 can learn to fish as part of an elective class. The fishing initiatives are independent of the breakfast program, however, these initiatives are a unique indication of the important role of food at the school. The school also offers a cooking class, and all students participate in the school garden, which in turn supplies some vegetables for a paid school lunch service.

Authors and Method

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The data for this school was collected as part of another research project, which influenced data collection.

Partners: School principal and staff
Method: A two-day school visit occurred in June, 2023. The Principal reviewed a draft of this report for verification.
Photo: Mary McKenna, 2023

School Lunch Association

Summary

The School Lunch Association (SLA) program operates as a charity in 42 schools. Funding for the program is mainly through parent/guardian contributions. Parents can pay any amount, from nothing to the full cost of the meal, otherwise known as a pay-what-you-can (PWYC) model. Families register online and order in advance. The SLA hires and trains food service staff. Food for the program is purchased from food distributors who deliver food to schools. One hot nutritious meal is offered on each day of service.

Profile



Geography

**Urban
& Rural**



Scale

Regional



Meal Type(s)

Lunch



Payment Model

Pay-what-you-can



of Schools

42



Food Production
Model

Independent



Started

1989

Background

The SLA program has been operating in the province since the late 1980s. The program operates with a centralized procurement model (meaning menu development and food ordering are centralized), but with the food prepared at each school. Until recently the schools selected to join the program were close to the established distribution and administrative network in St. John's where the program began. However, in the last five years, the program stretched outside of St. John's, given significant population growth in areas surrounding the city and a high need for the program expressed by rural communities. Outside of St. John's, the SLA is offered in Clarenville (approximately a two-hour drive from St. John's), Musgravetown (a two-and-a-half-hour drive from St. John's), and Gander (over a three-hour drive from St. John's). In 2023 the province announced it would be funding an expansion of the province's school lunch program to all junior kindergarten to Grade 9 schools. The offering of the program in schools outside of the capital city has been an important expansion and learning opportunity to test how the model functions in other regions.



CBC

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase students’ fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Increase program efficiency and stretch tight budgets

How does it work?

The SLA has an Executive Director (ED) who oversees operations under the direction of a volunteer board of directors. The ED oversees relationships with schools, food providers, employees, funders, media and researchers. The ED oversees the budget, staffing, menu development and food procurement. The food needs, food infrastructure and procurement for each school are individually tailored by the two operation managers who are both Red Seal chefs. They take into consideration the number of meals ordered, any site-specific cooking limitations, allergies and school contextual factors, all of which can vary from day to day. Typically, 2-3 students (usually grade 5 or 6) help staff serve the food daily. The process of deciding on menu items and sourcing food to make those menu items is a balance of choosing foods that children enjoy and which can

Impact

Universal Pay-What-You-Can

- The program is universally available in schools where it is established but it is not available to all schools in the province.

Health Promoting

- This program offers a healthy lunch in an environment heavily oriented towards unhealthy food. It is feeding a large number of school children every day.

Increased Program Efficiency & Value

- The SLA credits the PWYC charity model of its programs with providing long-term sustainability to be able to grow to the needs of the population with an efficient and cost-effective meal service.

also be procured affordably. The program’s spaghetti sauce is a favourite with the students. An additional staff member, the operational instructor, visits multiple sites each day if and when they run out of specific items and also conducts site evaluations. In addition, there is a procurement manager, a donor relations staff member, a front desk administrator and a finance manager. The SLA is in regular communication with the province’s healthy eating experts and with food suppliers to source products that meet the NL Provincial School Food Guidelines. The SLA also works with the food distributors to bulk purchase items.

Sample Menu

Example Weekly Menu:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Beef Taco	Cheese Pizza	Waffles	Chicken Penne Alfredo	Grilled Cheese Sandwich
Whole Grain Rice	Caesar Salad	Lite Syrup	Garlic Naan Bread	Mediterranean Orzo
Carrot Sticks	Sliced Cucumbers	Breakfast Turkey Patty	Mixed Veggies	Sliced Cucumbers
Orange Wedges	Diced Pears	Mandarin Oranges	Sliced Pears	Peach Quarters
Milk or Water	Milk or Water	Milk or Water	Milk or Water	Milk or Water



Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Cost per Student/Meal
TOTAL \$4,161,652 ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent contribution (75%)• Provincial government (17%)• Fundraising and donations (4%)• Wage subsidy (3%)	\$2.06 (includes all expenses)
Features of Food Procurement	Number of Staff and Labour model	Facilities and Preparation
Local distributor	74 FT/ PT staff + 8 Administrative staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site-specific kitchen equipment• Each school cooks on-site with paid staff

¹ Total projected expense



Unique Program Features

- One reason for the increase in provincial funding is because the province committed some of the revenue from a sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) tax introduced in 2022 to school food programs (including the province-wide breakfast program- Kids Eat Smart).
- Because of its long history, the organization also holds significant institutional memory within an educational and health system landscape that has been undergoing frequent reorganization.
- Partly in connection to its involvement in the Coalition for Healthy School Food, the SLA has been called on by other programs to serve as a best practice model (specifically for recent program development in PEI and QC).

Authors and Method

Researchers: Emily Doyle, Postdoctoral Fellow, Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of NL, emilyd@mun.ca, Sara Kirk, Professor at Dalhousie University, sara.kirk@dal.ca

Partners: John Finn, Executive Director, School Lunch Association

Method: Data was collected from Nov 2022 to June 2023

Photos by: Emily Doyle, (school visit in 2023), unless otherwise credited to SLA or Heather Gillis at CBC.

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation's School Food Programs

Summary

This case study looks at how the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation's (IRC) school food program in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) has taken root in two coastal communities of the Northwest Territories: Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk. This case study highlights that food programs take shape differently based on the remoteness, community size, local capacity, available infrastructure, and lived realities of the communities in which they operate.

Profile



Remote



Regional



Meal Type(s)

**Breakfast/
Lunch**



Payment Model

**No cost to
students**



of Schools

7



**Food Production
Model**

**On-site
school kitchens**



Started

2021

Background

The Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) is a land claim area that spans six Northwest Territories communities and overlaps with the Gwich'in Settlement Area to the south.¹ There are seven schools in the six ISR communities, with a total enrolment as of 2018 of approximately 1,200 students.² In 2021, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) began to roll out its school food program by hiring school cooks to prepare morning meals for students throughout the school year across the six ISR communities of Inuvik, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, and Sachs Harbour.³ This initiative has since



Figure 1. Map of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

expanded and evolved in each community and now provides a range of supports including breakfasts, lunches, and summer meal support for families, with each community's food program taking its own form.

¹ Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Western arctic land claim: The Inuvialuit final agreement [Internet]. Ottawa: Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; 1984 [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from: https://www.eia.gov.nt.ca/sites/eia/files/inuvialuit_final_agreement_0.pdf

² Government of the Northwest Territories. Operating plan for 2018-2019 school year [Internet]. Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council (BDDEC). 2018 June [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from: https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/2018-19_bddec_operating_plan.pdf

³ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Inuvialuit corporate group update [Internet]. Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. 2022 Jan [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from: <https://irc.inuvialuit.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/January2022Newsletter.pdf>

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase student access to and consumption of healthy foods
- ✓ Ensure reliable and consistent food provisioning for students
- ✓ Support student attendance and participation in school

How does it work?

Considerations in Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk, NWT

While Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk are both remote communities, it is important to distinguish three characteristics of each community which have impacts on each school food program's operation: community access, community population, and school registration. Paulatuk is a fly-in only community, with a population of under 300,⁴ and a small school of 83 students.⁵ While only 350 km from Paulatuk as the crow flies, Tuktoyaktuk is road-accessible most of the year via the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk highway, has a population of close to 900 people,⁶ and has a school population of over 200 students.⁷

Similarities between the two school food programs include:

- Funding and coordination support is provided by the IRC to retain staff and assist with food procurement from local vendors for the school food program.

Impact

Since the IRC started to roll out its school food program, the impact has been far-reaching⁸. Some key impacts of the program that were discussed as part of interviews for this case study include:

Health Promoting

- In both cases, breakfast or lunch consists of healthy food. In Tuktoyaktuk, cooks served soups, stews, sandwiches, and other nutritious meals for lunches (Personal Communication, Nov 21, 2023).

Access to Food

- Approximately 1,200 students were enrolled full-time for school in one of the six ISR communities in 2018-2019.⁹ Since the IRC's school food program started to roll out in 2021, all students have access to a breakfast and/or lunch program, free of charge.
- In Tuktoyaktuk, all students have access to a cold breakfast, and every school day upwards of 40 students go to the Youth Centre for a hot lunch (Personal Communication, Nov 21, 2023).
- In Paulatuk, it has been expressed that the school food program "provides food that doesn't cost the families anything, so it alleviates [the financial pressure] a little bit - five meals [a week] and a snack a day" (Personal Communication, Nov 15, 2023).

Building a Sense of Community

- In Tuktoyaktuk, the cooks come in every weekday, even on professional development days and during bad weather, so that students do not miss out on a chance to have healthy food (Personal Communication, Nov 21, 2023).

⁴ Statistics Canada. Census profile, Paulatuk [Internet]. Statistics Canada. 2016 [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=6101014&Geo2=PR&Code2=61&SearchText=Paulatuk&SearchType=Begin&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=6101014&TABID=1&type=0>

⁵ Personal Communication, Nov 15, 2023.

⁶ Statistics Canada. Census profile, Tuktoyaktuk [Internet]. Statistics Canada. 2016 [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=6101036&Geo2=PR&Code2=61&SearchText=Tuktoyaktuk&SearchType=Begin&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=6101036&TABID=1&type=0>

⁷ Government of the Northwest Territories. Operating plan for 2018-2019 school year [Internet]. Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council (BDDEC). 2018 June [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/2018-19_bddec_operating_plan.pdf

⁸ Information for this case studies comes from anonymized interviews conducted in November 2023 with school food program administrators.

⁹ Government of the Northwest Territories. Operating plan for 2018-2019 school year [Internet]. Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council (BDDEC). 2018 June [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/2018-19_bddec_operating_plan.pdf

- All students have access to food in some form every day of the week throughout the school year.

Differences in the operation of the school food programs include:

- Differences in meals served:
 - The school in Tuktoyaktuk is currently under renovation and cannot serve hot lunches on-site, therefore hot lunches are provided offsite to students by cooks hired through the IRC. A cold breakfast is served in classrooms each morning.
 - Principals, teachers, and administrative staff currently run the breakfast program in Paulatuk due to challenges in hiring a breakfast coordinator locally, which is served to classrooms each morning. There is no lunch program in Paulatuk currently.
- Differences in food procurement:
 - Tuktoyaktuk has a Stanton's (local grocery store) in the community that they can order from, but road closures can impact food availability and quantity.
 - Food orders from Stanton's (local grocery store) are flown into Paulatuk from Inuvik, where minimal infrastructure for storing food impacts what can be ordered and in what quantity.

Program Coordination

The Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council (BDDEC) is the educational body that oversees the schools in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and the Gwich'in Settlement Region.¹⁰ The role of BDDEC, however, is distinct from that of the IRC. BDDEC schools have funding to purchase snacks and pre-packaged food items for students and have run various forms of school food provision programs prior to that of the IRC. The IRC currently works across the region to coordinate the purchasing of food for school breakfast and lunch programs. They provide the funding to buy and ship the food to each school, the salaries for school cooks, where

- The Tuktoyaktuk lunch program has been described as beneficial to “communication for the kids”, as they have time outside the classroom to socialize with each other (Personal Communication, Nov 21, 2023).
- In Tuktoyaktuk, the larger community has also supported the lunch program, with moose being donated in the past for soups (Personal Communication, Nov 21, 2023).

Increased School Attendance and Participation

- An interviewee in Tuktoyaktuk expressed that “food is definitely a catch (to attendance). We have a lot of kids that need to have food and nourishment” and that there is a connection between behaviour in kids and kids being hungry (Personal Communication, Nov 22, 2023).

applicable, and the administrative support for meal planning and training staff.

The IRC works closely with school principals to run the food program but operates independently from BDDEC. This means that the hiring of school cooks is done by the IRC, and these hired individuals report to the IRC, not the local schools. In Tuktoyaktuk, this also means that hot lunches are planned, and ingredients are purchased at the local Stanton's grocery store by the cooks with support from the IRC's School Food Program Coordinator and Manager. In Paulatuk, where there is currently no hired cook, school administrators coordinate their food orders with support of the IRC School Food Program Coordinator and Manager, and have teachers and support staff run their breakfast program.

In addition to program coordination and oversight, financial accounting, distribution, and reporting is done at the regional level by the IRC School Food Program Coordinator and Manager. While the IRC's school food program is regionally administered, each school's food program is unique in its operation, capacity, and coordination.

¹⁰ Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council (BDDEC). About us [Internet]. BDDEC. 2021 [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from <https://beaufortdeltadec.ca/about-us>

Sample Menu

In Paulatuk, breakfasts include fruit, cereal, yogurt, oats, and smoothies for students, depending on what food comes in for the school on the plane.¹¹

In Tuktoyaktuk, breakfasts look similar, and are served to each classroom through a meal cart. Hot lunches in Tuktoyaktuk, however, are offered to students offsite at the local Youth Centre, a 3-minute walk from the school, while Mangilaluk School is undergoing renovations. Here, two staff work part-time to make healthy food for the students, which has recently included soup, stew, subs, salads, pizza, and homemade bread and bannock, in addition to juice or water for the students.¹²



Resources and Costs

Funding for the school food program across the ISR is provided by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, who initially obtained funding for a three-year program through Canada's Inuit Child First Initiative,¹³ and they have since extended their funding. Schools also use their budget to purchase snacks (e.g., yogurt tubes) and other meal items for students.

Unique Program Features

Many kitchen spaces in both communities are shared by multiple programs, which can lead to challenges with cleanliness, organization, security, and functionality of equipment and supplies. Kitchen space, appliances, and secure storage of equipment and supplies are critical to offering school meals and food programming. In Tuktoyaktuk, while the Youth Centre is currently used for the community lunch program, there is also a school kitchen used by the school foods course and the Community Centre. In Paulatuk, aside from the school kitchen where breakfasts are prepared, the Paulatuk Visitor's Centre Boardroom is another location where food programming takes place. The use of community spaces for food preparation and the unique infrastructure of each community are important considerations for school food program development.

Authors and Method

Researchers: Alissa Sallans, MSc Candidate, University of Ottawa, asall070@uottawa.ca, Kelly Skinner, Associate Professor, University of Waterloo, kiskinner@uwaterloo.ca, Sonja Ostertag, Research Assistant Professor, University of Waterloo, sonja.ostertag@uwaterloo.ca.

Partners: Interviews were conducted with individuals knowledgeable about the IRC school food program in Tuktoyaktuk (n=3) and Paulatuk (n=2).

Method: Data was collected in November 2023.

Photos: Kelly Skinner, 2023.

¹¹ Personal Communication, Nov 15, 2023.

¹² Personal Communication, Nov 21, 2023.

¹³ Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Inuvialuit corporate group update [Internet]. Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. 2022 Jan [cited 2024 Jan 20]. Available from: <https://irc.inuvialuit.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/January2022Newsletter.pdf>

South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE) RootED School Food Program

Summary

The RootED school food program was established by a committee of health and education leaders at the South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE)¹ who aimed to level the playing field for the region's schools. The program is driven by a vision that all students enjoy wholesome, affordable school food. This includes the offering of 'equity meals' a term used by SSRCE to describe those meals served to students free of charge. Students receiving these meals have been identified at a school level for whatever reason and are able to access a free meal on that day. At a regional level, SSRCE's school food program is maintained by a Regional Food Service Manager and a Regional Food Service Accounting Clerk. The Youth Pathways Consultant and Public Health Nutritionist help coordinate the program alongside SSRCE staff including the Director of Finance, the Director of Operations, and a representative from SSRCE Human Resources department. A not-for-profit entity, RootED, supports the program by securing funding and engaging with the community to raise awareness about the program.

Profile



Geography

Rural



Scale

Regional



Payment Model

Paid; at no cost for some students



of Schools

23



Food Production Model

School District-wide program with independent kitchens



Meal Type(s)

Morning meal and Lunch



Started

2016

Background

In the past, school food services in the South Shore region were managed independently by schools and led by individual principals. Around 2006, with the initiation of the Nova Scotia Health Promoting Schools program, a partnership and relationships between Public Health, Nova Scotia Health and SSRCE staff evolved. In response to conversations with school staff, a team at the regional level recognized that cafeterias in the region were having difficulty implementing Nova Scotia's Food and Nutrition Policy. They recognized equity issues between the region's schools around who could and could not access healthy school meals. The team decided to make change at the regional level. In consultation with school leaders, they decided to manage school food programs regionally starting in the 2016-2017 school year. Since then, the program has evolved to include hiring regional supportive staff and creating a non-profit, RootED, which supports the school food program (<https://ssrce.ca/south-shore-food-project/>). The onset of COVID-19, which raised concerns about access to healthy food and also about volunteer availability for school breakfast programs, led to a quick implementation of both breakfast and lunch being coordinated by SSRCE's school food program. This has allowed for more consistent expectations and services for all food services (school food programs and cafeteria services) in schools in the region.

¹ Nova Scotia public schools are organised by the Provincial Government into regional centres for education (https://www.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/docs/ns_schoolboards_map.pdf)

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Address regional disparities in the quality of school food offerings
- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Increase program efficiency and stretch tight budgets

How does it work?

All cafeteria workers receive professional development from SSRCE. There are regular school visits from RootED's regional food service manager to support day-to-day operations, ensure compliance and provide support with training, equipment, menu planning, etc. SSRCE's regional finance clerk calculates costs to ensure healthy meals are cost-effective. The schools report to SSRCE on:

- Total breakfasts served
- Total lunches served
- Total equity meals served
- Labour hours
- Cafeteria revenue
- Food and supplies expense
- Wage expense
- Equipment expense
- Other expenses

All revenues from food are to be reinvested into the food program. This is a policy adopted by the leadership team who observed that in the past some schools were redirecting food profits pay for other school expenses.

Impact

Regional Coordination

- The program is universally benefitting all the schools in the region and helping to level the playing field between the different schools; however, students have to pay for their lunch or receive equity meals on a 'needs' basis.

Local Food Procurement

- In 2018, the program received funding from Invest Nova Scotia (an NS economic development corporation) to introduce salad bars and to source local food for the salad bars. It was noted that acquiring local food for schools was a challenge including coordinating how the food gets from the producers to the schools, food safety, and matching supply and demand for a variety of products. Overall the salad bars are a huge success with an increasing numbers of schools adding them to their regular food service schedule.

Equity Meals

- In the 2021-2022 school year, 36,557 equity meals were provided.

Increased Program Efficiency, Partnership & Value

- Advocates within education and health systems provide leadership and vision for this program, working as a team, because they see the value in the work.
- An example of added value is that one of the program leaders, the Youth Pathways Consultant, has been building connections between the culinary trades curriculum and the school food program. An example is cutting up vegetables for the school food program during a knife skills class.

Volunteer Support

- RootED's volunteer board of directors helps build awareness and raise funds for the program. The board also includes involvement from youth and other equity-seeking groups.

Sample Menu

RootED School Food Program

Cafeteria Prices



RECESS

Recess Item	Elementary	Jr. High	Sr. High
Baked Goods (Muffin, Cookie, Black Bean Brownie etc.)	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50
Nachos & Salsa	\$2.00	\$2.50	\$3.00
Fruit Cup & Dip	\$2.00	\$2.50	\$3.00
Yogurt Parfait	\$2.00	\$2.50	\$3.00
Cheese & Crackers	\$1.50	\$2.00	\$2.50
Smoothie	\$1.50 (1/2 cup)	\$2.00 (3/4 cup)	\$2.50 (1 cup)
Veggie Sticks & Dip	\$1.50	\$2.00	\$2.50
Banana, Apple or Orange	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00

LUNCH

	Elementary	Jr. High	Sr. High
Main Lunch	\$4.50	\$5.50	\$5.50
Other *	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50

*Eg. Sandwich. School menus may vary.

EVERY DAY ITEMS

\$2.50 Items (all grades)	\$3.00 Items (all grades)
Cup of Soup	Cup of Soup with Biscuit or Roll
Grilled Cheese	Small Caesar Salad
Toasted Bagel with Butter or Cream Cheese	1/2 Chicken Caesar or Ranch Wrap
Small Pasta or Grain Salad	Small Garlic Fingers and Donair Sauce
1/2 Egg, Tuna or Ham Sandwich	1/2 Ham and Cheese Sub (3")
	Baked Potato with Broccoli and Cheese Sauce

DRINKS

Milk (Not included in meal price)	\$0.40
100% Juice 200ml Boxes	\$1.50
Bubly - Carbonated Water	\$1.50
Bottled Water	\$1.50

Drinks offered may vary

September, 2022



Resources and Costs (2023)

Yearly Operating Budget

\$1,751,000

Main Sources & Distribution of Funding

- Cafeteria sales
- Nova Scotia's School Healthy Eating Program funding
- RootED fundraising
- Further support from Nova Scotia's Department of Education¹

Cost per Student/Meal

\$4.43 is the average unit cost of a meal including all operating expenses required to produce and distribute the meals.

Of this total amount, cost of food = \$2.66 and the cost of wages= \$1.77.

Facilities and Preparation

In-school preparation

Features of Food Procurement

On a school-by-school basis, the food service workers order their food for breakfast and lunch from food distributors such as SYSCO or OH Armstrong. SSRCE staff provide guidance related to costing and procurement.

Number of Staff and Labour model

Administered by a School Food Program operations committee, a Leadership Team, and the RootED Board.

The SSRCE school food program staff include a regional food service manager who works with each school's food service worker(s), and a financial clerk.

¹ The program does not break even and has been given leeway to have unrecovered costs covered by the Department of Education.

Unique Program Features

Similar to the NS Auditor General's report (2022), the NS Public Health 'School Healthy Eating Programs' report (2021-2022), found that while there is diversity across schools in NS regarding food delivery methods, the SSRCE is distinct in that it runs all the cafeterias within its region.

The NS Public Health 'School Healthy Eating Programs' report (2021-22) found that the education-led, not-for-profit model, exemplified by the SSRCE, is a promising practice characterized by strong partnerships and leadership for healthy school food at the regional level, resulting in consistent expectations for healthy food environments in schools. Other regions within NS seek support and guidance from SSRCE.

Authors and Method

Researchers: Emily Doyle, Postdoctoral Fellow, at Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of NL, emilyd@mun.ca, Sara Kirk, Professor at Dalhousie University, sara.kirk@dal.ca

Partners: Meg Sawler, Youth Pathways Consultant SSRCE Shelley Moran, Public Health Nutritionist, Nova Scotia

Method: Data was collected from June 2023 to March 2024.

Breakfast and Lunch Program at Inuksuk High School, Iqaluit

Summary

Daily breakfast and lunch twice per week (Tuesday and Thursday) are available for students and staff members at no cost. Breakfast is served daily by a Student Support Assistant where students can stay to eat in the cafeteria or take food to go. The lunch program, served twice per week, is made by students and their teacher during four morning Foods classes, and together they serve 80-175 students depending on attendance, time of year, and the menu.

Profile



Geography

**Northern,
Remote
& Urban**



Scale

School



Payment Model

**No cost to
students**



of Schools

1



Food Production
Model

**On-site
school kitchen**



Meal Type(s)

**Breakfast
& Lunch**



Started

**Lunch program
started around 2017**

Background

Inuksuk High School is the only secondary school in Iqaluit, the capital of the Canadian territory of Nunavut. It offers grades 9 through 12 (ages 14-18) to a student population of about 410.

Nunavut is part of Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing 51 communities across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (northern Yukon and the Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Québec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador), which makes up 40% of Canada's land area and 72% of its coastline. Nearly 70% of Inuit homes in Nunavut are food insecure, one of the highest rates for an Indigenous population in a developed country (Nunavut Food Security Coalition, n.d.).

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Student participation in food preparation
- ✓ School food program animated by Foods classes
- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Teach students food skills
- ✓ Reduce food insecurity

Impact

Lunch Program Participation: 80-175 students, depending on the time of year, which equates to 20% - 32% of the school population. Breakfast program participation is not tracked.

Student Involvement & Food Literacy: Students work in the school kitchen to help prepare lunch through their Foods Class. The Foods class curriculum is part of Alberta Career and Technology Studies (CTS) curriculum.

How does it work?

The breakfast coordinator sets up a cart with food prepared in the walk-in fridge (bagels, yogurt, cheese, cereals, milk, fresh and frozen fruit). Each morning she brings the cart out and finishes preparing the food. Breakfast is available for students and school staff, including the daycare staff, in the cafeteria before the school day starts, and additional food is left out for those who come in late. The breakfast program manager is a long-term paid staff member who begins and ends her day earlier than the other school staff.

Sample Menu

On May 16, 2023, the lunch served was macaroni and cheese with cut veggies and dip. Trays of mac and cheese were served alongside two large food prep bins of broccoli, red peppers, green peppers, and snap peas with ranch dip.



Resources and Costs (2023)

Yearly Operating Budget	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Cost per Student/ Meal
~\$80,000	Program funding comes from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and is distributed by the Department of Health via Community Wellness funds to each community in Nunavut.	Unavailable Served no cost to students and staff
Features of Food Procurement	Number of Staff & Labour model	Facilities & Preparation
The food for both the breakfast and lunch program is delivered by Baffin Cannery. Baffin Cannery receives sea and airlift food to their warehouse that they deliver to restaurants, hotels, the high school, and is also open to the public.	Hybrid School staff (salaried): 1 full-time Foods Teacher (support needed to expand), 1 Student Support Assistant whose salary is paid by the school oversees the breakfast program, and several students through multiple Foods classes help prepare lunch.	In-school preparation

Unique Program Features

Lunch leftovers are available in a sliding full glass door fridge at the back of the cafeteria for students who arrive after the lunch service. Students can also take these meals home at the end of the day.

In addition to the lunch prepared for the school, sometimes in the Foods class additional meals will be prepared for the students in the class. For example, one day the class made their own homemade personal pizzas from scratch to take home. These additional meals are part of the instruction but also to help students have meals throughout the week.

Due to the cold climate in the North, there are limitations on what foods are available seasonally and in what form. For example, foods tend to be frozen or canned to reduce cost and spoilage. For example, the Foods teacher opts to serve snap peas only in the Spring as they tend to freeze during transportation otherwise, and the breakfast program defrosts frozen fruit for yogurt parfaits.

Students need a certain number of CTS credits to graduate, however, class attendance is often low during the Spring as families travel South to visit

family or miss school to hunt on the land. During the site visit 3-5 students arrived for the Foods classes. Last-minute adjustments to the menu plan for simpler options are often required this time of year. For example, frozen macaroni and cheese with veggies and dip is a quick backup option when time and student capacity is limited. The students learned how to read the preparation instructions on the macaroni and cheese and chopped veggies during the class. The Foods teacher explained that it takes students significant time to prepare foods like chopped vegetables as they get comfortable with the knives, so the pace is slow. It can take multiple days to prepare one meal due to this kind of food preparation. She gave the example of making stuffed peppers taking 3 days to prepare. This highlights the need for more paid and trained staff to support the Foods Teacher so the program can teach both the food skills and nutrition knowledge required by curriculum and serve lunch, which is only done twice per week given limited capacity.

Authors and Method

Researchers: Amberley T. Ruetz, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Saskatchewan, amberley.ruetz@usask.ca

Partners: Inuksuk High School

Method: Data was collected from February to May, 2023.

Photos: Amberley T. Ruetz, 2023

Culinary Arts-animated School Food Programs at Thistletown Collegiate Institute, Toronto

Summary

Thistletown Collegiate Institute, a secondary school in Toronto, Ontario, self-operates a large quantity kitchen providing three meals daily to students. Led by a Chef Faculty Instructor, the program is operated by three food preparation assistants and students. Students enrolled in a specialized culinary and hospitality program play a key role in program implementation.

Profile



Urban



School



Payment Model

No cost to students (Breakfast, Salad Bar Lunch, Dinner); Paid (Hot Lunch)



of Schools

1



Food Production Model

On-site school kitchen and Culinary Arts Program



Meal Type(s)

Breakfast, Hot Lunch with a Salad Bar, Hot Dinner



Started

Current format since 2007

Background

Thistletown Collegiate Institute's school food program uses a self-operated catering model led by a professional Chef who transitioned from industry work into education. The program includes a universal free breakfast, a paid hot lunch with a free salad bar, and a free dinner program for students who participate in an after-school tutoring program. The Chef Instructor, paid assistants, and dozens of culinary students work onsite to prepare scratch-made meals from whole fresh ingredients. Students from the school's Hospitality and Tourism Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program participate in cooking while developing food literacy skills and contributing to various community initiatives.

The program's workforce includes students from the SHSM program and the students enrolled in a culinary elective course. The SHSM program is a dedicated curriculum for grade 11 and 12 students focused on learning a specific economic sector while gaining credits toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The Chef Instructor starts their training with an introduction to food safety, sanitation, and food theory before they begin actively participating in food production. Students are highly engaged in meal preparations, offering meaningful contributions to the school food program while gaining food service knowledge and attaining course credit, along with more general skill-building in time management, cooperative working, and community engagement. The professional Chef Instructor and extensive student involvement are critical aspects of the program's success.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase students' access to healthy food
- ✓ Provide food literacy education including applied culinary skills
- ✓ Offer a successful SHSM program that integrates with their program
- ✓ Foster community connections, supporting mutually beneficial relationships
- ✓ Expose students to a wider range of healthy foods

How does it work?

- The Chef Faculty Instructor leads the school's SHSM program and culinary education. He also manages the school food programs, which include a grab and go breakfast, hot lunch, salad bar and dinner.
 - Breakfast is universal and free, and served grab-and-go style from a table in the cafeteria.
 - The hot Lunch runs from Monday to Thursday and costs \$5.50 and is served alongside a salad bar that is free for every student.
 - Dinner is funded by a partner organization and is free for students participating in an after-school tutoring program. The Chef Instructor develops menus based on student demand and available budget. The students and three staff Food Prep Assistants (FPA) operate four daily food service production shifts.
- Food procurement is through local wholesale channels, retailers, bulk suppliers, donations from community partners, and an on-site community garden.

Impact

Program Participation

- Breakfast and the lunchtime salad bar feed a large portion of the 520 student population.
- 50% of students take breakfast; the salad bar is a new addition but is attracting many students.
- Approximately 50 to 100 students participate in lunch, depending on the menu.

Curriculum Integration & Food Literacy Education

- The SHSM program and Culinary elective classes include approximately 124 students, providing them a food literacy education as they operate the program.
- In partnership with PACT (<https://www.pactprogram.ca>), the school has a garden on the property. The garden contributed more than 900 pounds of produce to the program as well as produce to 5300 local residents in 2022. Students in the SHSM and Culinary courses also use the garden for agricultural education, occasional outdoor cooking classes, and as a venue for catered events.

Community Support

- The Chef Instructor and students have catered thousands of meals to support fundraising events for school, community, and charities. For example:
 - In September 2022, the school's Garden Party raised \$30,000 to help fund their annual international culinary trip for the SHSM students. Student tour destinations have included Italy, New York and Spain.
 - In November 2023, the Chef Instructor and his culinary students, with support from additional volunteers, cooked and distributed over 5,000 hot meals to 11 nearby shelters using products donated by a Canadian meat supplier.

Sample Menu

The Chef creates diverse menus tailored to student preferences, reflecting the school's multicultural community. Weekly themes such as Jamaican, South Asian, Italian, and Greek cuisine offer variety and celebrate different cultural backgrounds.

Sample Breakfast: Breakfast is a universal free, grab-and-go model that is available each day for all students. It includes homemade granola, muffins, fruit salad, apples, bananas, and oranges.

Sample Lunch: The lunch program is a two-course hot lunch at a cost: \$5.50. Lunch includes a main (usually a protein), a side dish (usually a vegetable), and a salad. Most lunch main courses and side dishes are served hot, held in a buffet style steam table for service. Lunch also includes a universal free full salad bar. Menu items include:

- **Mains:** barbecued chicken, jerk chicken, and lasagna.
- **Sides:** braised collard greens, roasted sweet potatoes, cornbread, and French fries.
- **Salad Bar:** a variety of vegetables, greens, olives, or a Greek salad, a pasta or bean salad, and sliced fresh fruit or a fruit salad.

Dinner consists of surplus lunch menu portions prepared by the students and FPAs during the day.

Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget	Funding		Cost per Student/ Meal
Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Government¹ • Toronto Public Health • School Board² • Toronto Foundation for Student Success • Loblaw's Inc • Student contributions by paid lunches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner funding by Braeburn GBC • Fundraising through catering enterprises, for both internal and external clients • Produce donations through the garden-PACT Urban Peace Program (PACT) 	<p>Breakfast average production cost is \$1.50 - 2.00, but provided at no cost to students (100% paid for by Student Nutrition Ontario).</p> <p>Lunch cost ranges from \$4.00 to \$6.00, students pay \$5.50. The program runs at break even.</p> <p>Dinner average production cost is \$4.00 to \$6.00, but provided at no cost to students (100% paid for by a local NGO, Braeburn GBC).</p>
Features of Food Procurement	Number of Staff & Labour model	Facilities & Preparation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food wholesalers, local retailers • Food donations from local businesses • School garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chef instructor (salaried): 1 full-time • Food prep assistants (hourly wage): 3 part-time • Students (unpaid, eat for free) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site commercial kitchen • Back up kitchen (outdated but functional for emergencies) • In-school preparation • Servery and cafeteria 	

¹ The majority of the funding for food is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

² Kitchen infrastructure and maintenance costs are partially funded by the school board, and some equipment is purchased through the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program's budget. The school board covers the cost of Chef Hoare's position as a teacher, as well as the salaries of the three Food Prep Assistants. Kitchen infrastructure and maintenance costs are funded by the school board and to a limited extent through internal enterprise efforts.

Unique Program Features

- Exemplary integration of food literacy into the school curriculum using on-site culinary training, student involvement with the school food program, and experiential learning in the school garden.
- The school garden supplies the program and supports local residents.
- The Chef Instructor and students cater events to fundraise for the school food program, the community, and charities.



Authors and Method

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Method: Data was collected through interviews from June 2023 to January 2024 with site visits conducted in June and October of 2023.

Queen Elizabeth Public School and the School Food Box Program, Peterborough

Summary

This elementary school adopts a balanced school day schedule,¹ providing universal daily breakfast snack bins, bi-weekly universal pancake breakfasts, and hot lunches for specific classes. Since 2014, *Food for Kids*, a partnership that includes the Peterborough Public Health Unit and a local charity, supplies the school with a supplemental ‘school food box’ which offers additional locally procured fruit, cheese, and grain products for their program.

Profile



Geography

Urban



Scale

School & Municipal



Meal Type(s)

All-Day Cold Breakfast/Snack Bins, Occasional Hot Breakfast and Lunch



Payment Model

No cost to students



of Schools

1 (49 schools across the Peterborough area)



Food Production Model

On-site school kitchen and centralized school food box



Started

2007

Background

225 students are enrolled at Queen Elizabeth Public School (QEPS) in grades K-8 in English and Core French. About 60% of the community lives in subsidized housing. QEPS’s School Food Program (SFP) delivers snacks and occasional hot meals utilizing a universal format that ensures food is available free of charge to all students. The SFP coordinator is a Learning and Life Skills Studies (LLS) teacher who volunteers her time.² She works with three education assistants (EA) and a school administrator to run the program.

The program receives the bulk of the food for its snack and hot meal programs from *Food for Kids* (a partnership that includes the Peterborough Public Health Unit (PPHU) and a local charity, Peterborough Child and Family Centres). *Food for Kids* coordinates the delivery of a School Food Box approximately twice per month (~15 boxes per year), to each school that offers an SFP in Peterborough City and County (~750 boxes per year across the region’s 49 schools). The School Food Box Program typically includes fruits and vegetables (Ontario-grown when in season), grain products such as granola bars, and local cheese to supplement the school’s program. The School Food Box program started with a grant from the Ontario Greenbelt Foundation in 2014 to get more Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables into schools.

¹ A Balanced School Day operates with a modified schedule mainly concerning classroom activities, and provides two opportunities for students to sit down and eat in their classrooms through nutrition breaks as opposed to eating at recess or during instruction time. See: Balanced Day Information (tdsb.on.ca).

² LLS is part of the Special Education program focusing on providing opportunities for students with developmental disabilities allowing them to participate in mainstream activities including literacy, numeracy and social skills.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase local food purchases
- ✓ Support regional growers and producers
- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new and local foods
- ✓ Increase program efficiency and stretch tight budgets
- ✓ Maximize limited volunteer time

How does it work?

Breakfast bins are delivered to classrooms each morning by staff and students. All Peterborough City and County schools, including QEPS, receive a School Food Box of fruits and vegetables (Ontario-grown when in season) and local cheese twice a month to supplement the school's independently purchased food. The School Food Box program is made possible by volunteers who pack individual school boxes from food centrally procured by *Food For Kids* at a discount. These boxes are free of charge to schools and align with the Ontario balanced school day model's emphasis on nutritious snack breaks (rather than a lunch hour). Schools are notified of the box contents one week before delivery. Every school (both elementary and secondary) receives the same box, regardless of the school size. Therefore, one box may last one day in larger schools and multiple days in smaller schools.

All hot meals (breakfast and lunches) are made on-site. Food preparation and service are done by students in the LLS class with the support and supervision of their teachers and EAs. Two LLS classes help prepare a school-wide pancake breakfast twice a month (this was originally offered once a month but was expanded in November 2022 due to demand). Additionally, the LLS classes prepare a hot lunch for themselves twice a month

Impact

School Food Box Program:

Increased Program Efficiency & Value

- *"The box has given us new fruit and veggies to offer to our students! It also means we have more food to serve our students."* - Volunteer School Coordinator
- *"This box has literally kept us going all year! It helps so much by cutting down on costs as well as shopping and always ensures we have fresh food to include in our snack bags!"* - Volunteer School Coordinator
- *"The food boxes are very helpful: they reduce the amount of shopping the volunteers have to do. Also reduces times and driving costs that volunteers take on"* - Volunteer School Coordinator
- 96% of publicly funded schools in the city of Peterborough and Peterborough county region can access the School Food Box program, and 50% of students in the region participated in 2022.

Local Food Procurement

- In 2018-19, the School Food Box program included 91% of Ontario-grown produce (18,199 lbs) and 100% of local cheese (1,248 lbs). The Box adds fresh food without additional costs.

Universal Participation¹

- 100% of QEPS students (225) participated in the all-day breakfast snack bin program, and 100% (20 of 20) of the LLS students participated in the twice-monthly hot lunch program in 2022-23.

(serving 20 students and 3 staff). The school's kitchen facilities were renovated from 2018-2022 and their kitchen equipment was largely upgraded to facilitate food preparation and cooking on-site (this includes: two large wall ovens, chest freezer, large single-door standing fridge/freezer, storage shelves and new small wares).

¹ Universal participation: all students enrolled in school participate in a SFP (Ruetz & McKenna, 2021).

Sample Menu

All Day Cold Breakfast/Snack Bin: Includes yogurt, apple sauce, raisins, veggies (baby carrots and sliced cucumbers in a plastic bag), bananas, apples, oranges, granola bars, crackers, bagels/muffins, cheese, and cereal in pre-portioned bags).

Example of Food for Kids' School Food Box: The amount of fruits and vegetables vary depending on time of year due to seasonal price fluctuation. As a result, more fresh produce is available in September, October, November and June than in January, February and March. In 2018/19, an example box included:

- 15 lbs of apples
- 3 bags baby carrots
- 6 lbs bananas
- 2 lbs clementines
- 100 pre-wrapped cheese squares (blocks of cheese prior to COVID).

Hot Breakfasts: Twice a month pancake breakfast. Includes two pancakes, or sometimes a bagel and fruit.

Hot Lunches:

- 20 hot lunches provided twice a month to two LLS classes 20 LLS students + 3 staff served on average.
- Hot lunches vary greatly based on input from the LLS students. Past meals have included macaroni and cheese (which was then compared to a boxed version), as well as lasagna, spaghetti, chicken caesar wraps, naan pizzas, grilled cheese and soup, tacos, and in warmer months, barbequed items.



Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

QEP's Yearly Operating Budget	Main Sources & Distribution of Funding ³		Cost per Student/Meal
\$10,875.88	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Government, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (34%)⁴ President's Choice Children's Charity (61%)⁵ Toonies for Tummies' Campaign by The Grocery Foundation (5%) 		<p>Meal Production cost: \$0.40 per snack (includes food and transportation with food donations and subsidized labour not included).</p> <p>Meals and snacks free of charge for students.</p>
Facilities & Preparation	Number of Staff & Labour model	Features of Food Procurement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-catering, independent procurement and production Centralized delivery (School Food Box) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff (salaried): 1 full-time LLS teacher 3 full-time Education Assistants LLS Students (unpaid) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on local foods and regional suppliers Donations from companies (e.g., Quaker, Kawartha Food Share) Grocery store purchases as needed 	

³ Implementers hope to see permanent funding for universal snacks and full meals soon.

⁴ The provincial government limits funding to only be spent on food.

⁵ Funds are to be used for food, supplies and equipment.

Unique Program Features

- **Staff and Student Run:** the program relies on staff and students to deliver the program without parent/ community volunteers.
- **Food Literacy:** at QEPS, the LLS students receive hands-on food literacy education through supporting nearly all aspects of school meal provision (i.e., budgeting, procurement, preparation, service and waste management).
- **School Staff Participation and Student Engagement:** staff sit with the LLS students for pancake breakfast. This creates a community feeling and demonstrates healthy eating behaviours (note this is championed and led by the school nutrition Coordinator but does not include all students).

Authors and Method

Researchers: Nicole Weber, Research Assistant, George Brown College, University of Toronto, nicole.weber@utoronto.ca,

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Partners: Tara Loucks, QEPS, Teacher, SFP Coordinator, and Luisa Magalhaes, Peterborough Public Health Unit, Registered Dietician, lmagalhaes@peterboroughpublichealth.ca

Method: Data was collected through an interview and a site visit in the winter of 2023. Student participation figures are from the fall of 2022.

Photos: School Food Box photo, Luisa Magalhaes, Registered Dietitian, Title photo by Juan Ellul on Unsplash, Oranges photo by erol-ahmed on Unsplash



PEI School Food Program Inc's Bon Appétit Lunch Program

Summary

The PEI School Food Program Inc (PEISFP) is a non-profit organization that operates the first province-wide 'pay-what-you-can' school lunch program in the country. The non-profit is responsible for the delivery of the *Bon Appétit* program that serves ~3500 meals per day across the 62 public schools in Prince Edward Island (PEI). The program is offered through three different food production models: an internally operated hub model; an externally contracted vendor model; and a separate model to adapt to the Commission Scolaire de Langue Francaise (CSLF) facilities. The program serves about 3,500 meals per day in 62 schools.

Profile



Geography

**Urban
& Rural**



Scale

Provincial



Meal Type(s)

**Lunch and Grab & Go
(breakfast, lunch and
snacks)**



Payment Model

Pay-what-you-can



of Schools

62



Food Production
Model

**Combination
of school kitchens,
a food hub and
contracted vendors**



Started

2020

Background

PEI's school food landscape transformed rapidly, starting with the Home and School Federation's advocacy. In 2015, the Federation adopted a resolution calling for a universal free school lunch program. By 2017, the Public Schools Branch received a grant from the provincial Department of Agriculture to research school food models in other jurisdictions and engage in consultations. By 2019, the program was mentioned in the 2019 Premier's speech and ministers' mandate letters and a year later a pilot pay-what-you-can (PWYC) program began in six schools. Despite school closures during the pandemic, the program was launched island-wide by the PEI Government in September 2020. In July 2021, the program was transferred from the government to a newly created non-profit organization, the PEI School Food Program, which now oversees the province-wide PWYC program.



Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase local food purchases
- ✓ Support the regional food sector
- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Increase program efficiency and stretch tight budgets

How does it work?

The PWYC model provides equitable access to families who choose the amount they pay. Families set up an account online for biweekly ordering and are encouraged to pay if able. The menu offered is the same across the different models and many factors are taken into account when determining the menu including nutrition, cost, required containers, and ability to procure ingredients. The PEISFP prioritizes local food purchasing and considers the availability of local products and the local distribution network in the planning and costing of the menus.

The three food service delivery models include:

1. An internally operated hub model operated by the non-profit (PEISFP) where all food is purchased by the large hub kitchen and deliveries are made by staff or a third party. This model also has a grab-and-go option which offers a series of healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack items throughout the day (select options are PWYC). Four of the PEISFP hubs use a point-of-sale (POS) system to allow students to be able to select the amount they can pay.
2. An externally contracted vendor model in which contracted vendors prepare and deliver meals and are compensated for meals and delivery.
3. Five French schools operated by the CSLF use their facilities to provide meals. The PEISFP reviews menus and provides feedback, shares program communication, and supports the operation of the PWYC program.

Impact

Universal Pay-What-You-Can

- 31% of students in the province use the program (all publicly funded schools can access this program).

Increased Program Efficiency & Value

- The internally-operated hub model is demonstrated to be most cost-effective.
- The presence of competitive foods is a risk. For example, in some schools vendors may serve competing foods alongside the offerings of the school food program.

Local Food

- Both hubs and vendors are encouraged to purchase locally and are provided with a listing of locally available products through the local distributor. Through the hub model, there is more control over food sourcing. Two limitations to local sourcing are cost and logistics - it is easier to receive all food from one supplier versus many food deliveries from different suppliers. The PEISFP recently engaged in research with local organic producers to discuss the potential of a central distribution system for local foods. More investigation is necessary to determine the percentage of food served that is sourced locally.



In both the hub model and the vendor model, a central site is used for food preparation, and meals are delivered to satellite schools. Some receiving schools are equipped with hot-holding cabinets to meet food safety standards. If a hub is located within the school, the meals are distributed in the school or students can access meals through the cafeteria's grab-and-go option.

The program uses compostable or recyclable storage containers and cutlery. Meals are designed to be healthy and made from whole foods. There is a vegetarian and meat option offered every day with each having a gluten-friendly option.

Sample Menu















Menu available online¹


BAKED CHICKEN & CHEESE ROLL-UP WITH MEXICAN RICE

 CONTAINS POULTRY |  GLUTEN FRIENDLY OPTION AVAILABLE

INGREDIENTS: Whole wheat tortilla, Chicken, Cheddar cheese, Taco seasoning, Brown rice (Canola oil, Green pepper, Corn, Onion, Garlic, Salt), Salsa, Sour cream

ALLERGENS:

Eggs	
Milk	
Mustard	
Peanuts	
Crustaceans & Molluscs	
Wheat and Triticale 	
 Gluten Friendly Option Available 	
Fish	
Sesame and Seeds	
Soy	
Sulphites	
Tree Nuts	



Below is a list of frequently offered items in the Grab and Go service:

- water
- sparkling water
- chocolate and white milk
- whole fruit
- yogurt parfaits
- smoothies
- pita and hummus or salsa
- veggies and dip
- healthier baked item
- sandwiches
- wraps
- salads

Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget	Cost per Student/M meal	Number of Staff and Labour model
\$4,685,000	<p>Production cost: Average cost per hub meal=\$5.46¹</p> <p>Average cost per vendor meal= \$6.71²</p> <p>Suggested Full Price: \$5.50 (2024 price: \$5.75)</p>	<p>Board of Directors</p> <p>Six-member Board of Directors</p> <p>Management Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Director• Operations Manager• Food Service Manager (Quality Assurance & Vendors Relations)• Food Service Manager (School-Based Programs)• Administrative and Technical Assistant <p>Food Service Team (5 hub sites)</p> <p>Six Kitchen Managers</p> <p>Two Cooks</p> <p>Eight Kitchen Assistants</p>
Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Features of Food Procurement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provincial Government (80%)• Parent Contribution (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on local foods• Locally contracted distributors	
Facilities and Preparation		
For both hub and vendor models a central site is used for preparation of the food which is delivered to satellite schools. Some receiving schools are equipped with hot holding cabinets.		

¹ Including food, supplies including cost of container, delivery/mileage, rent on one site, wages/benefits, grab and go revenue [cafeterias only], inventory/ # of meals

² Including food, supplies, \$6/ meal, delivery/# meals

Unique Program Features

- The creation of the menus and also an early inventory of school kitchen facilities across the island took place in conjunction with Canada's Smartest Kitchen (<https://smartestkitchen.ca/>), the research and development arm of The Culinary Institute of Canada located in Charlottetown.
- PEISFP hosts taste testing days with students and parents to get feedback on the menu.
- The shutdown of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic had two effects which enhanced the adoption of the program. The pandemic created the conditions where it was economically favourable for vendors to enter into contracts with the program because their traditional sources of revenue were disappearing. Secondly, awareness of food insecurity resulted in the government and communities investing in school food programs.



Meet the team behind the scenes of the Kinkora Hub: Michelle, Jennifer, and Michelle. They provide meals for: Amherst Cove Consolidated, Englewood Elementary, Somerset Consolidated and Kinkora Regional High.

Authors and Method

Researchers: Emily Doyle, Postdoctoral Fellow, Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of NL, emilyd@mun.ca, Sara Kirk, Professor, Dalhousie University, sara.kirk@dal.ca

Partners: Katelyn MacLean, Executive Director, PEI School Food Program

Method: Data was collected from November 2022 to June 2023.

Good Food for Learning Universal Lunch Program in Saskatoon

Summary

Over two school years (September 2021- June 2023), two Saskatoon elementary schools implemented a universal, curriculum-integrated lunch program as part of a population health intervention research study called Good Food for Learning. This initiative was a partnership between the University of Saskatchewan (U of S), Saskatoon Public Schools Division (SPSD) and CHEP Good Food Inc., a community-based food non-profit in Saskatoon. The schools are located in low-income neighbourhoods and host a culturally diverse student population, including many newcomer and Indigenous students. The schools previously offered lunch programs to students who ‘needed it’ and were limited by funding and staff capacity. The pilot intervention scaled the lunch programs to double the food production to feed all students and staff for two years.

Profile



Urban



School



Lunch



No cost to students



2



On-site school kitchens



2021 to 2023

Background

The school lunch programs offered a variety of hot meals that included vegetables and fruit, whole grains, dairy products, plant proteins, and meat. Lunch was available daily to all students and staff, at no cost. Meals were prepared to accommodate student allergies and intolerances, as well for vegetarian and Halal diets. The programs followed four-week rotational menus that were adapted based on student and staff feedback, equipment, skills, knowledge, food donations, and included culturally diverse options. Two additional cooks were hired for the program. Cooks received training in managing the menu, recipes, and special student dietary needs. In addition, investments were made in upgraded kitchen equipment and infrastructure.

The school lunch program included six food and nutrition lesson plans in each grade, Kindergarten through grade 6. Teachers received an introduction to the lessons at the start of year one and year two. The lesson plans met standard Saskatchewan curriculum and were woven across multiple subject areas including science, social studies, health, and math. Both schools had existing gardens with Indigenous and non-Indigenous edible and medicinal plants, and some opportunities for gardening, composting, agriculture, and cultural food learning. Students were provided additional opportunities to participate in food and nutrition-related learning including cooking and serving lunch, growing food in and outdoors, Indigenous food sovereignty teachings, and ecological/ sustainability learning.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Offer lunch program universally
- ✓ Improve food literacy
- ✓ Expose students to new foods

How does it work?

Menu - Students received hot meals daily using a four-week rotational menu. A main dish (i.e. chilli, casserole, stir fry) was served alongside choices of fruits and vegetables, with milk and water to drink. Adaptations to the main dish were made for student allergies and intolerances, as well as for vegetarian and Halal diets .

Service - Students were served a hot lunch meal five days a week. Students lined up for the food by grade and were served buffet-style by one or two supervising staff or school cooks. Water and milk were served to students by supervising staff. Younger students were typically served first to accommodate the extra time needed to eat.

Eating Area - Students ate lunch in their home classroom, communal eating areas in the school (ie. wide hallway spaces with movable tables and chairs), and designated lunchrooms. School staff were encouraged to eat with the students.

Time - Students had approximately 25-30 minutes to eat their lunch.

Portions - Students could access multiple portions until the food was gone or the lunch period was over.

Impact

Participation - Average participation in the program was 77% (based on observation and parent surveys), with lower participation among the youngest grades (i.e. Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and grade 1 students). However, many students who brought a packed lunch from home also used the program to varying extents (i.e. to 'top-up' their lunch with fruits, vegetables, milk, main dish, etc.). Participation in the program increased on average 25% between year 1 and year 2. By year two, the schools were serving an average of 120 and 223 lunches/day.

Evaluation - Evaluation activities as part of the project included documentation of how the program was implemented and the impacts of the program over the two years (outlined in detail in a [protocol paper](#)). This evaluation included regular participant observation, interviews with school staff, focus groups with students, and interviews and surveys with parents to understand how the program worked and its impacts from diverse perspectives. In addition, there were studies to assess the diet quality of students, and their knowledge, attitudes and practices related to food and nutrition, done before and after the program was implemented. The data is being compared to two schools who did not receive the universal lunch program to see the effects of the lunch program. Final results from the study are expected in 2024-2025.

Scalability - Although the pilot project is complete, funding for Good Food for Learning has been secured to grow the program to additional schools in Saskatoon. The expanded program will continue to be evaluated.



SFP Staff and Student Responsibilities Included:

RESPONSIBILITIES:	POSITION(S):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grocery shopping, purchasing, and grocery pick up/organizing delivery, supporting menu planning Grant management, budgeting and partnership development 	Led by Community School Coordinator with support from cooks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meal preparation (chopping, washing, packaging, cooking, and portioning food) Cleaning meal and snack dishes, cleaning kitchen, laundry, recycling 	Led by cooks with support from school staff (teaching and educational assistants) and community volunteers when needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serving lunch including setting up serving tables and area, organizing trolley carts, and refilling food 	Cooks, school staff (teaching and educational assistants, principal) and community volunteers when needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning lunchroom(s) and kitchens including taking out garbage, recycling, sweeping, and general maintenance 	Custodial staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunchtime supervision and role modeling 	School staff (teaching and educational assistants, principal) and community volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitizing lunch tables, scraping and putting dirty tableware into bins, and removing garbage from tables 	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program oversight and staff supervision 	Principal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and maintaining student relationships; creating a caring, respectful and welcoming school environment 	All



Sample Menu

MONDAY

Shepherd's Pie. Served with strawberries, bananas, and vegetable tray.

TUESDAY

Italian Wedding Soup with bun. Served with watermelon and garden salad.

WEDNESDAY

Grilled Cheese Sandwich. Served with Caesar salad and grapes.

THURSDAY

Three-bean chili with sour cream, cheese and a bun. Served with a coleslaw salad and apple slices.

FRIDAY

Chicken curry with rice. Served with a vegetable tray and orange slices.

Menus included a main dish with adjustments for vegetarian and Halal and served with fruit, vegetables, milk and water.



Resources and Costs (2021 - 2022)

Yearly Operating Budget

School A is \$151,172.00 (the larger of the two schools) and School B, \$119,062.¹

Main Sources & Distribution of Funding

Research funds from CIHR held by U of S and an anonymous donor (60%)

The school division (21%) contributes labour costs, and private/community funding (19%) contributes equipment, supplies and food costs.

Facilities and Preparation

In each school there is a cooking kitchen, meals are prepared on-site.

Cost per Student/Meal

\$3.58 For School A

\$5.26 For School B

Meals are served free of charge to students and staff

Features of Food Procurement

Grocery purchases at retail pricing are the majority of food and beverage purchases (61%).

A smaller portion of purchasing goes to bulk purchasing through a community organization (CHEP Good Food Inc) (15%) and bulk purchasing (i.e Sysco) (8%). Both schools receive a regular weekly donation of food from a local grocer (15%).

75% of food procured is an in-kind expense (i.e., school staff pick up food from grocery stores). 25% is delivered.

Number of Staff and Labour model

Paid Staff: School A has two nutrition workers who each work 0.8FTE. School B has two workers with one worker at 1.0 FTE and one worker at 0.6FTE.

Principal and community coordinator contribute approximately 2-5 hours a week per school in program administration and planning.

School staff (teachers, educational assistants) and volunteers contributed approximately 15 hours/week of lunch supervision per school.

¹ Paid labour accounts for over 50% of operating expenses (52% for School A and 61% for School B). Food costs accounted for 43% of the program budget in school A and 35% in school B. The operating budget does not include in-kind expenses from the school (i.e. utilities, equipment and building maintenance, etc), nor does it account for lunch time supervision or volunteer hours.

Unique Program Features

School Cooks are the Foundations of School Food Programs: School cook hours were increased, and additional cooks were hired to support the expanded lunch program. Importantly, as part of participation in this study, the cooks' wages were increased to \$16-19/hour from \$12-15/hour to account for a living wage in Saskatoon and to reflect the increased skill requirement to operate a universal, hot lunch program. Investing in training for school cooks and ensuring competitive wages and sufficient paid hours to meet the demands of the job is important for employee job satisfaction, retaining and attracting staff, and offering high-quality school food programs (for example, providing healthy, tasty, culturally appropriate, and sustainable food choices).

Training for School Cooks: Currently, little standardised and comprehensive training for school cooks exists in Saskatchewan. School cook positions are typically filled by community members or parents; many have little background in commercial food preparation or best practices in food and nutrition. The community-based and cultural knowledge, relationships, and skills these workers bring to the position can be greatly enhanced through additional training in nutrition, food service and special diet management, quantity food production, food literacy education, and a trauma-informed approach to talking about food and nutrition to students (i.e. avoids stigma, shaming and blame).

Connecting School Cooks: School cooks have what can be an isolating job; mentorship programs, job shadowing, online platforms, and bringing workers together to share knowledge and practices are promising training methods moving forward.

Authors and Method

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Partners: Saskatoon Public Schools and CHEP Good Food Inc.

Method: Data for this case study was collected from May 2021 to June 2023 as part of PhD research by Kaylee Michnik and research by Natalia Alaniz-Salinas

Photos: By Kaylee Michnik, 2023



La Cantine dans les écoles

Summary

La Cantine dans les écoles, run by *La Cantine pour tous* (The Canteen For All), is a school food program across the province of Québec that aims to make healthy catered school lunches accessible to all children using a pay-what-you-can, social pricing model without stigma, while also supporting the local social economy.

Profile



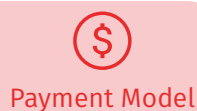
**Urban
& Rural**



Regional



Lunch



**Pay-what-you-can;
minimum payment
of \$1.00 per lunch**



40



**Local non-profit
caterers**



2019

Background

La Cantine pour tous (LCPT) is a non-profit, charitable organization that aims to improve access to healthy and affordable meals for children and seniors via a social catering model. LCPT launched its school food program (La Cantine dans les écoles - LCDÉ) with three pilot schools in the fall of 2019. The program aims to be universal – for all children in public primary schools (kindergarten and grades 1-6) – offering healthy food and removing socio-economic barriers to participation in the program by making parent/guardian financial contributions voluntary. Using an online platform, parents/guardians pay what they can on a sliding scale with a suggested amount of \$6 or a minimum of \$1 per meal, with the option of adjusting this contribution throughout the year. LCPT covers the gap between parent/guardian contributions and the caterers' cost thanks to funding from the Ministry of Education and private donations. Schools considered disadvantaged based on the Quebec Ministry of Education's socio-economic and low-income indexes are prioritized.

In the 2022/23 school year, 12 caterers provided school meals in 6 regions across Quebec, reaching over 14,484 students in 40 schools (a significant increase since the program first started with 3 schools in 2019). This growth has allowed for the program to be tested in different regions and contexts.

LCPT is also known for stimulating the social economy (i.e., non-profit social enterprises emphasizing the importance of people and social utility over capital), and reinvesting in the local community through partnering with local non-profit social caterers (i.e., committed to improving living conditions in their communities) to prepare meals for schools in their local neighborhoods.

In brief, the program LCDÉ has two main objectives:

1. To offer all Quebec public primary students access to healthy and affordable lunches without stigma, and;
2. To allow non-profit social economy organizations offering food services opportunities for growth by partnering with LCPT.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Increase local food purchases
- ✓ Support the regional food service sector
- ✓ Increase students' fruit and vegetable consumption
- ✓ Expose students to new foods
- ✓ Increase program efficiency and stretch tight budgets

How does it work?

LCDÉ operates based on a catering food service model where LCPT is a third-party organization connecting schools with certified non-profit caterers, and coordinating the program by ensuring optimized communications between the various stakeholders (caterers, schools, students, parents/guardians). While LCPT coordinates the program as a whole (i.e., managing the online ordering platform, communications and customer service for schools and parents/guardians, school recruitment and relationships, providing production support and training for caterers, etc.), the catering partners prepare and deliver the meals to the local participating schools. Food is delivered in hot and cold thermal bags. The containers used vary by caterer, with some delivered in individual containers, and others in bulk. LCPT recommends using compostable, recyclable or reusable packaging where possible. The program has a framework outlining the rules, protocols and responsibilities of the caterers and LCPT to ensure a standardized quality food service across Québec. LCPT connects local non-profit caterers with schools and runs an online meal ordering platform where parents/guardians can select meals for their children and make a financial contribution as they are able. There are a minimum of two meal options to choose from each day, one of which is vegetarian.

Impact

Universal Pay-What-You-Can

- LCDÉ program aims to be universally accessible to all children in participating primary schools by implementing a social pricing model.
- 44% of students across 40 schools participated in the 2022-2023 school year.
- Schools considered disadvantaged based on the Quebec Ministry of Education's socio-economic and low-income indices are prioritized for programming.

Turn-Key Model

- LCDÉ is an efficient model with high meal quality and scalability resulting from standardized school and caterer selection processes and protocols in addition to LCPT providing optimal communication with stakeholders.
- While this model was initially developed and tested in urban population centres (i.e., Montreal), it is increasingly being tested in rural and remote locations where caterers are also available (e.g., Gaspésie).

Nutritious Food Procurement Prioritized

- LCPT provides a detailed food guide and a three-hour training to caterers to enable them to develop a diversified seasonal menu that follows the Canadian food guide, the LCPT nutritional guide and other local regulations (if available from school boards), as well as the nutritional requirements and any dietary restrictions (e.g., allergies) of children. Each menu and recipe are verified by LCPT's nutritionist before they are uploaded to the online ordering platform. LCPT encourages purchasing local food products whenever possible.
- LCPT allows its members to use food donations for fruits, vegetables and dry food products such as flour, oil, canned goods, dried legumes or spices. Should a caterer wish to use donations, it must first inform LCPT and follow a strict protocol to minimize food safety and health risks.



Program Evaluation

- LCPT has partnered with external organisations and academic institutions to conduct program evaluations (e.g., statistical analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to study factors influencing parents/guardians' contributions, mealtime observations). These evaluations will continue over time as program data increasingly becomes available.
- Program evaluations are carefully considered, and data collected is used to ensure program improvement over time.

Preference for Paid Staff

- The LCDÉ prioritizes a paid staff model with paid staff at all levels, including program management, meal preparation and distribution. Nonetheless, teachers, school volunteers, and students are sometimes relied upon for meal distribution in the schools.

Sample Menu

Menus vary across caterers and are updated every four to eight week cycles every two months on the online platform. A sample menu for two weeks from one of the catering partners is provided in the table below:

WEEK 1		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	OPTION 1	Chicken sandwich	Cod croquette	Shepherd's pie	Chicken shish taouk	Beef Tortellini with rosée sauce
	SIDES	Raw vegetables, cheese	Mashed potato, Vegetable	Vegetables	Greek pdt, vegetable of the day	Vegetables
	OPTION 2	Egg sandwich	Legume salad	Vegetarian Shepherd's Pie	Tofu shish taouk	Tortellini with cheese and rosée sauce
	SIDES	Raw vegetables, cheese	Pita bread	Vegetables	Greek pdt, vegetable of the day	Vegetables
	OPTION 3	Macaroni with meat sauce	Shepherd's pie	Macaroni with meat sauce	Shepherd's pie	Macaroni with meat sauce
	SIDES	Vegetables	Vegetables	Vegetables	Vegetables	Vegetables
	DESSERT	Diced pineapple	Muffin	Yogurt	Fruit	Carrot cake

WEEK 2		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	OPTION 1	Chili con carne	General Tao Chicken	Macaroni with meat sauce	Swedish meatball	Greek penne with chicken & vegetables
	SIDES	Linguini	Carrot, Pea	Vegetables	Mashed potato, vegetable of the day	
	OPTION 2	Chili con carne veggie	Tao General Tofu	Mac & cheese	Vegetarian Swedish meatball	Greek-style penne with tofu and vegetables
	SIDES	Linguini	Carrot, Pea	Vegetables	Mashed potato, vegetable of the day	
	OPTION 3	Shepherd's pie	Macaroni with meat sauce	Shepherd's pie	Macaroni with meat sauce	Shepherd's pie
	SIDES	Vegetables	Vegetables	Vegetables	Vegetables	Vegetables
	DESSERT	Fruit	Yogurt	Muffin	Zucchini cake with chocolate chips	Fruits salad

Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget	Cost per Student/M meal	Number of Staff and Labour model
\$3.5 M	Sliding scale or “Pay-What-You-Can” payment with a suggested amount of \$6/meal or a minimum of \$1 per meal (\$6 per meal production cost including food, transportation and labour)	Paid LCPT staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 full-time 12 Catering partners (# of full-time paid staff not available but 45% of total costs are estimated)
Main Sources & Distribution of Funding	Features of Food Procurement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Government (46%) Private donors (18%)¹ Parent Contribution (40%)² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of local foods purchased not available however, LCPT encourages purchasing local food products wherever possible Local distributors 	
Facilities and Preparation		
Outside caterer		

¹ Including foundations, parents, school administrators, etc., however, the type of donor is restricted to ensure that agri-food industry organizations that promote calorie-dense nutrient-poor foods are not eligible.

² Parents provide financial contributions based on a social pricing system (i.e., pay-what-you-can).

Unique Program Features

Local Food Procurement Targets: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and food (Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation - MAPAQ) has encouraged setting targets for local food procurement in 85% of public institutions across the province through their Strategy for the purchase of Quebec food (Stratégie nationale d'achat d'aliments québécois - SNAAQ) by 2025. Schools have been noted as an area for action, and \$1.4 million in funding has been allotted by the MAPAQ to help encourage the purchase of healthy, local foods in schools of which at least 90 schools may benefit and receive up to \$15,000 each between 2023-2025. Fifty-two of the 106 schools participating in LCDE (49%), have set targets for local food procurement and LCPT is looking to monitor the percent of local food procured by participating caterers.

Program Expansion: Since this research was conducted in January 2022, the program expanded to 10 regions across Quebec reaching more than 35,000 students in 106 schools in the 2023-24 school year in partnership with 25 local social caterers. A significant increase from 3 schools in 2019. This growth has allowed for the program to be tested in different regions and contexts. LCPT received \$9 million in funding over 5 years from the provincial government in 2024 Provincial Budget.



Authors and Method

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Partners: La Cantine pour tous

Method: Data was collected from January 2023 to April 2024.

Title photo: <https://centdegres.ca>

First Nation-Led School Food Programs

Summary

The Yukon's Indigenous-led school food programs, administered through the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) and funded by Jordan's Principle, includes no-cost, school meals for all Indigenous children across the territory, nutrition supports for families (e.g., food hampers), and cultural food-related activities within and beyond the school (e.g., harvesting, community feasts, etc.).

Profile



**Northern,
urban & rural**



Territorial



Meal Type(s)

**Breakfast, lunch,
and/or snacks;
community-based
food-related activities**



Payment Model

No cost to students



of Schools

30



**Food Production
Model**

**One central kitchen
and independent
school kitchens**



Started

2016

Background

In 2016, a rural school nutrition program, funded through Jordan's Principle, began at J.V. Clark School in Mayo on the traditional territory of the First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk Dun. Then in 2018, a Rural Nutrition Program supporting all Indigenous children in rural Yukon First Nations communities was approved through Jordan's Principle funding. This joint endeavour, originally administered through the Council of Yukon First Nations, was developed to cover the costs of food for breakfast and/or lunch programs, freight and delivery, kitchen equipment and supplies, and wages for cooks and program staff. In 2020, the YFNED was launched, and the rural program was entrusted to them. An urban nutrition program was launched in Winter of 2020, beginning with winter break hampers for families and expanding to include breakfast and lunch programs. In February 2021, the YFNED also launched a school snack program.

Currently, in addition to overseeing meal programs for all Indigenous students in all Yukon schools, the YFNED provides student-centred wrap-around services to support the well-being of all Indigenous children. This includes additional nutrition supports for families (e.g., family feasts, winter break hampers, etc.) and opportunities for traditional food-related activities integrated within educational programming (e.g., fishing, foraging, dressing animals, preserving, etc.). Nutrition programs are one important aspect of a relational and holistic approach to education in the Yukon.

In addition, the Yukon Future of School Food Working Group was formed in 2022 to explore ways to meaningfully collaborate and coordinate work on school food within the territory for all students regardless of ancestry, age, or location. The YFNED, as well as other school food stakeholders and government representatives, participate in this working group.

Goals & Objectives

- ✓ Provide equitable and healthy food to all Indigenous students aged 0-18
- ✓ Connect food, people, and culture through relational lifeways
- ✓ Offer opportunities to participate in traditional harvesting practices
- ✓ Increase local capacities via staff training and professional development
- ✓ Support collaborative efforts between First Nation governments, the YFNED, and schools
- ✓ Provide families and communities holistic nutrition supports

How does it work?

School food programs, funded through the YFNED, vary across Yukon's 30 schools and are managed by individual school administrations in collaboration with First Nations in Yukon. Decisions around school-specific operations are determined by local wants, needs, priorities, and capacities. Therefore, there are diverse approaches to the quantity, type, and composition of daily meals offered.

- Free daily breakfast, lunch, and snacks are offered to all Indigenous children across the Yukon.
- In rural communities, schools and First Nations negotiate the means of purchasing and delivering food. For instance, Nutrition Program staff, employed by the local First Nation, may be paid to travel to pick up and transport food from grocery stores using First Nation-owned vehicles. Food may also be delivered via freight, especially in more isolated communities. Food is often prepared on-site in school kitchens by locally employed cooks.
- In Whitehorse, food is prepared in on-site kitchens in 9 of the 16 urban schools and one rented central kitchen facility; 24 cooks and cook helpers are employed to prepare these meals.

Impact

Universal Free

- All Indigenous children aged 0-18 in the Yukon can access YFNED Nutrition Programs.

Promotes Indigenous food sovereignty

- Reassertion of inherent rights to and control over food systems.
- Addresses the underlying causes of food insecurity and supports holistic health and wellness.

Food Literacy

- Food literacy takes place inside and outside of school infrastructure through experiential, culturally-focused, and land-based learning about traditional food systems.

Support from federal, territorial, and First Nations' governments and local organizations

- New funding as well as sustained investments from the territorial, federal (via Indigenous Services Canada), and First Nations' governments, demonstrate strong commitment to and support of school food programs. Non-governmental organizations and local businesses also work in collaboration with schools to deliver successful school food programs.
- The YFNED nutrition programs also support family feasts, food hampers, and provide resources (funds and supplies) to procure traditional food through hunting, fishing, berry picking, etc.



Sample Menu

There is no standardized menu for in-school meals. The nutrition program staff are autonomous in planning menus based on food availability and the needs of their students, which vary by community and change throughout the year. However, they aim to use whole, fresh ingredients with minimally processed foods.

A complete hot lunch typically consists of a main component (e.g., moose stew, roast chicken, elk stroganoff, etc.), a side dish (e.g., bannock, cooked vegetables, pasta salad, etc.), and a portion of fruit. Alternatively, some schools offer sandwiches with fruit and vegetables. Breakfasts may include bagels, oatmeal, or cereal, and snacks can include granola bars, crackers and cheese, fruits, and vegetables.

School Break Hampers usually include ingredients for a full turkey dinner and pancake breakfast, shelf-stable pantry staples, and holiday items, such as gingerbread house kits. A book with suggested recipes, nutrition information, and activities for children is also provided in these hampers.

School food programs that support cultural activities involve the harvesting, sharing, celebrating, and consuming of traditional foods such as moose, fish, grouse, and berries procured on local lands and waters.



Resources and Costs (2022 - 2023)

Yearly Operating Budget \$ 9.6 million	Cost per Student/M meal \$15/student/day for all meals (funding provided by the government per day; average meal cost unknown)	Number of Staff and Labour model <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 full-time program manager• 3 full-time coordinators• 54 cooks and cook helpers (24 in Whitehorse and 30 rural)
Main Sources & Distribution of Funding Federal Government (Indigenous Services Canada via Jordan’s Principle) (100% of YFNED’s program)	Facilities and Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-school meal preparation or prepared in YFNED rented kitchen facility• Community - and land-based locations	Features of Food Procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on fresh, minimally processed foods• Traditional foods (e.g., moose, fish, berries, etc.)



Students learned to make dry meat at camp (Mike Rudyk/CBC)

Unique Program Features

Over 60% of YFNED staff identify as Indigenous.

YFNED cooks receive 34 days of training, including First Aid, Food Safe Level 1 and 2, Knife Skills, Sauce Making, Building Better Teams, Communication Strategies, and Lateral Kindness.¹ Cooks also received professional development in hands-on cooking with Indigenous ingredients, foraging and edible plants, and cooking for children given their nutrition requirements. Cooks and cook helpers receive competitive wages for the territory. Currently, postings for cook positions note an hourly wage of \$29.12/hour plus benefits.

¹ Lateral Kindness is a response to lateral violence, and focuses on giving power back to people. It takes a strength based perspective, and celebrates the positive rather than focusing on negative behaviours and issues. Positive actions are recognized and lift and support people.

Authors and Method

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Partners: Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon Future of School Food Working Group, and the

Yukon Food For Learning Association

Method: Data was collected from September 2022 to April 2024

Photos: Kitchen Manual, YFNED Nutrition Program, 2024, berry photo by @joshua_j_woroniecki, unsplash.com

Conclusion

This report showcases promising and innovative models of school food programs across the country. As we move toward a National School Food Program in Canada, these models provide practical and visionary approaches and considerations for school food programs as they further develop across the country.

It is clear from the case studies presented in this report that school food innovation has been happening in Canada despite the lack of coherent support from all levels of government. Still, while all the case studies illustrate innovative approaches, they are also all limited by a need for additional funding, including federal funding, and mechanisms to further learn from the experiences and expertise of others. With a more coordinated approach, school food programs could be so much more. These cases underscore the imperative of implementing a comprehensive and coordinated national school food program that also accounts for the needs and unique challenges faced by communities across Canada that are geographically, economically and socially diverse. Further, by integrating food literacy, locally sourced and traditional foods, training programs, and sustainability initiatives, school food programs can create good jobs, drive economic growth, and transform food systems.

What's Next

The descriptive summaries of existing, promising school food models in this report help to identify key characteristics and understand common barriers and opportunities to implementing school food programs; however, there are few resources within the Canadian context to support school food program practitioners, educators and partners to assist in efforts to operate comprehensive and high impact programs. Accordingly, this report forms the first part of a “How-to” or “School Food Program Development Guide” that will be released in parts over the coming year. This Guide can be used to implement best practices to support scaling school food programs across the country. The guide will emphasize flexible, efficient food programs that acknowledge organizational capacity and community autonomy and provide tools to support program operations and further development including:

- Profiles of successful Canadian school food programs (this report)
- Process development for community consultation and school food planning (including a needs assessment framework)
- Resources and templates for: cost analysis/financial planning, infrastructure (staff, facility, equipment, community resources), food literacy learning, cultural support and development, menu planning, food procurement
- Monitoring and evaluation planning and tools

To ensure its practicality and relevance, the guide will be drawn from our team’s research experience and partnerships with practitioners including key school food organizations (Coalition for Healthy School Food members), and guides published in other countries. The guide will help lay the foundation for school food program development, as well as future areas of research. Overall, the guide will assist school food programs with decision-making; establishing community needs/priorities; determining level of funding required; offer guidance on program monitoring; evaluating kitchen infrastructure and facilities requirements; staffing and training needs; determining the scope and availability of meals and snacks offered; additional program enhancements like food literacy for students; and more.



