



Food Lens
Consulting
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Healthy Food, Healthy Minds: Increasing Access to Healthy & Sustainable Food



OVERVIEW

Healthy Food, Healthy Minds was a pilot project that incorporated surplus food from grocery stores on the North Shore to prepare delicious breakfasts that were served to children at Sherwood Park Elementary School. The project brought together more than 10 organizations. The initiative shows how we can produce healthy, accessible meals on the North Shore, while reducing food waste and decreasing the environmental footprint of the food system.



BACKGROUND

It all began in August 2015 when representatives from the community gathered to find a solution for children who were coming to school hungry. The Table Matters Network saw an opportunity to build on the existing breakfast program at the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN) by leveraging surplus food available on the North Shore. Drawing on expertise from Food Lens Consulting, the collective resources of the TWN, the school and member organizations of the Table Matters Network were used to prepare breakfasts for children at school.

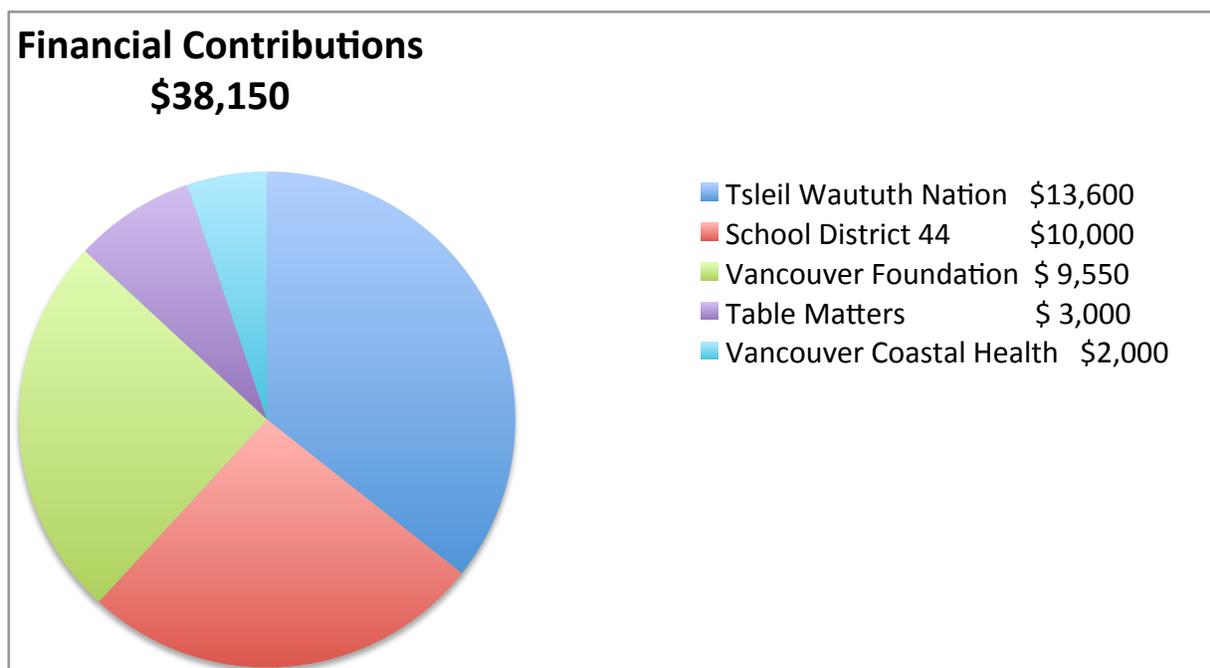
PARTNERS

Initial partners were the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, Sherwood Park Elementary School, Vancouver Coastal Health, the District of North Vancouver and Food Lens Consulting. As planning began for a pilot to prepare healthy and delicious breakfasts for students using both surplus and purchased food, these partners were joined by the Harvest Project, the Vancouver Foundation, School District 44, Metro Vancouver and the Real Canadian Superstore. The table below highlights the multi-layered approach of this project as well as partner contributions.

OPERATING PARTNERS	PARTNER CONTRIBUTION
Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN)	In addition to their financial contribution, the TWN provided a commercial kitchen, staff and food purchases to help with food preparation.
Harvest Project	The Harvest Project leveraged their relationships with grocery stores to provide surplus food which they delivered in refrigerated trucks.
Sherwood Park Elementary School	With approximately 400 students enrolled, Sherwood Park hosted breakfast for an average of 50 students each day, by providing a warm and inviting place for students to gather. They also provided transportation of the meals from TWN's kitchen to the school.
Food Lens Consulting	Food Lens designed the food rescue system and developed protocols for it. They helped to build and support the collaborative, supervised breakfast production and provided food-skills training. In conjunction with Metro Vancouver, they helped customize the data collection system (Lean Path), collected data for the project and provided updates and reports to partners.
SUPPORTING PARTNERS	PARTNER CONTRIBUTION
Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	VCH organized and chaired the steering committee meeting and provided funding for a video. The North Shore Medical Health Officer wrote a letter of support and Environmental Health Officers provided operational guidance and approval.
North Shore Table Matters Network	Table Matters convened the initial group of partners, provided financial contributions and supported the group throughout the project.
School District 44	School District 44 provided financial and communications support.
District of North Vancouver	North Vancouver applied for and provided administration of the Vancouver Foundation grant.
Metro Vancouver	Metro Vancouver's solid waste department provided Lean Path data collection equipment, platform access and a consultant.
OTHER PARTNERS (not on steering committee)	
Vancouver Foundation	Vancouver Foundation provided funding through the Health and Social Development granting program.
Real Canadian Superstore	Superstore provided a 20 per cent discount on purchased food (from October to December, 2016).
Sherwood Park teachers/parents	Teachers and the school's Parent Advisory Committee provided feedback and helped to spread the word about the program.

TAPPING INTO RESOURCES

With in-kind and financial contributions from the partners, breakfasts were served twice a week starting in April 2016, increasing to three times a week in September 2016. A total of 2,500 meals were delivered by the time the project wrapped up in December 2016.



Tapping into existing infrastructure and resources were integral in moving the project forward. Possibilities moved from ideas to reality thanks to an available kitchen at the TWN Community Centre, the enthusiasm of school children at Sherwood Park, the expertise of a professional chef from Food Lens Consulting, transport arrangements with the Harvest Project and a discount from the Real Canadian Superstore.

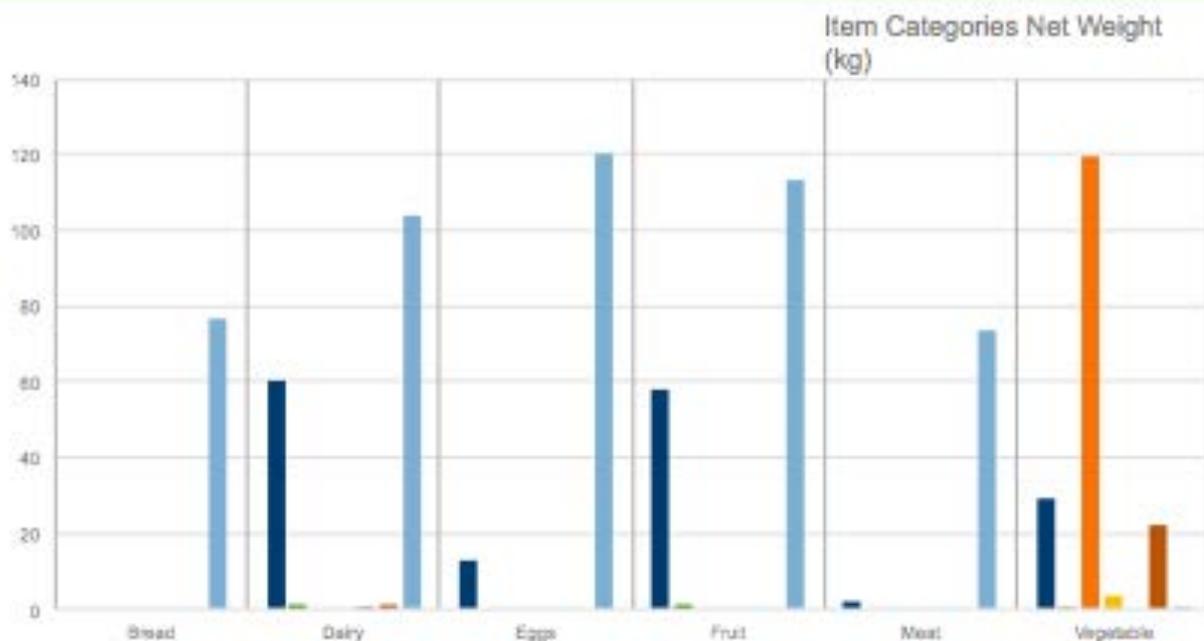
The level of reciprocal commitment and energy was motivating and paved the way toward building connections and trust: TWN provided leadership and an awareness of the need to value and protect our food system; Sherwood Park provided the space and supervision for children to eat and enjoy their time together; Harvest Project shared surplus food and in return received packaged, prepared produce for their clients; and TWN youth were offered hands-on food preparation training.

New partnerships were created. Survey results showed that over more than 60 per cent of the participants worked with more than three new organizations during the pilot.

DATA

Data collected (using the Lean Path platform provided by Metro Vancouver) showed that 30 per cent of all dairy and fruit used for the breakfasts was surplus food. More than 90 per cent of the surplus vegetables received were sent back to Harvest Project for their clients.

Bar chart showing Food Received for Breakfast and Food processed for Harvest



Data: September to December 2016

■ Purchased food

■ Donated surplus food

■ Food redistributed to Tsleil-Waututh Nation at different stages of the pilot

■ Food redistributed to Harvest Project at different stages of the pilot

The 140 kilograms of vegetables that were processed and redistributed to Harvest Project represents a 93 per cent recovery rate.

OUTCOMES AND SUCCESSES

Barriers were broken between TWN children and other children at the school, and new friendships were fostered among mainstream and French immersion children. Children who enjoyed breakfast learned more about the foods they were eating, helped clean up afterward, were better prepared to learn, and a more positive school environment was established.

The Healthy Foods Healthy Minds pilot has helped shift perceptions in a positive light, demonstrating that surplus rescued food is an acceptable source for creating nutritious meals on the North Shore. CBC television interviewed Scott Rowe and Rubina Jamal of Food Lens Consulting on the evening news about the breakfast program, showcasing a solution for food that would otherwise be wasted. A video report of the project has also been created.

NEXT STEPS

The food system is complex and peoples' connection to it has many shapes and forms. This pilot's success was due to a welcoming community and their openness to a shared experience – eating together leads to strengthened relationships. Breakfast at Sherwood Park was not just about feeding children – it was also about creating a nurturing environment. In the future, food programs in schools can focus not only on providing needed calories, but also providing space for all students to sit together to share a meal and learn more about our food system.

Food rescue has a lot of room to grow on Vancouver's North Shore and could easily be scaled up to accommodate similar projects such as school meal programs across the district, take-home meals for seniors and families, and meal components for community meal programs. To do this optimally, processing capacity on the North Shore will need to be enhanced.

In future, more detailed data collection and analysis would help not only in real time, but also in planning future food-rescue-related projects. Having a longer run-time and tracking more data would bring great insight into how to fine-tune components and help the entire project run more smoothly.

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