



# HEAL

*Planting the seeds of HEAL<sup>th</sup>  
in Northern BC*

## Healthy Eating & Active Living in Northern British Columbia Issue #3: August 2002

### HEAL News

#### Connecting the Family

The HEAL gathering in Prince George, April 21-24, 2002 lived up to its name, "Connecting the Family". Advisory Committee members and demonstration project representatives from around northern BC gathered to learn, share resources and ideas, and have a great time.

The conference report is also a how-to manual on policy development, participatory research and evaluation, and non-profit communications and marketing. You'll find news from around the north, resources, stories, and people in it.

The report will be available on the Northern Health Authority's revamped Web site. Follow the link from <http://grassrootsgroup.com/heal.htm>.

#### The good news is...

Good things are happening around the north, and HEAL wants to celebrate them. This is your chance to show off your community and honour the people and organizations making a difference.

We're going to start awarding HEAL Seals for people and organizations who are Planting the Seeds of HEAL<sup>th</sup>. Anyone can make a nomination.

Who's eligible? Individuals, neighbourhoods, businesses, non-profits, even whole communities who are providing good role models of healthy eating and/or active living. Nominees must be in northern

British Columbia. (HEAL's region stretches from 100 Mile House to the Yukon border.)

Criteria will be posted on the HEAL Web site and circulated to the e-list, but here are some examples to start you thinking about noteworthy HEALers in your community.:

- Community trails and parks that make exercising a natural and inviting activity
- An organization (*e.g.*, school, hospital, business) that serves healthy food at meetings, stocks vending machines with healthy choices, or offersemployees incentives for healthy eating and active living
- A restaurant that features locally grown, organic produce in season and healthy alternatives year round
- A meeting organizer who plans exercise breaks in every gathering
- A neighbour who walks or bikes to work

Although franchises are adding healthier items to their menus, HEAL Seals will focus on local efforts. Some examples might be:

#### Strut your stuff

Go ahead. Brag about your community. Let's spread the word that northern B.C. is Planting the Seeds of HEAL<sup>th</sup>.

Send nominations for HEAL Seals to:

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### Contributors:

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# Growing your own...community

by Helene Fleury

**H**arvest time at Northern Root Community and the voices of young and old joined together in gratitude for the bounty of the season. Using their hands, they picked purple potatoes, carrots, and turnips, the fruit of a summer of work at Poplar Place.

By the time the sun set below the mountains, small groups of people were scattered across the community kitchen, cleaning the heaps of colourful veggies for the last farmer's market. Proud comments could be heard about a 'perfect purple potato' or the 'biggest turnip ever picked'. Fresh soup and other garden goodies were soon to be consumed after a good day's work.

Events like this harvest day are not just a fun autumn activity or a quaint recreational pastime. Indeed, they may prove to be the hope for restoring local food systems, physical health and cultural vitality to northern communities in BC.

## *Developing a healthy food system*

Northern Root Community Garden Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating awareness and initiating action around sustainable agriculture, food, and health in the Bulkley Valley. The Smithers organization is geared towards education and strengthening individual and community health through hands-on projects that work towards creating better local food security. In an effort to increase self-reliance in the North, they want to help create a viable alternative to relying on the "megafood" network as well as re-connecting people with local food sources. Using the community garden and kitchen, they are concentrating on



providing the community with skills and tools to grow, harvest and preserve their own food.

In addition to community

capacity building, Northern Root wants to create its own chutneys and pâtés made with veggies from the garden on Poplar Road, demonstrating a complete local food system.



## *What is unhealthy about the existing food system?*

In recent years, our food system has become very industrial. It emphasizes mechanical over small-scale and capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive production, processing and distribution methods. Unfortunately, it is oriented toward global trade rather than the satisfaction of local needs, and is controlled by a handful of large transnational corporations.

The high level of corporate and external control of our food system, coupled with "free trade" agreements, is undermining local agriculture and food production. It also leaves us highly vulnerable to an emergency since we do not have control of our own food resources. Sadly, we are losing the essential arts of farming, gardening, foraging, identifying edible and medicinal plants, cooking, preserving and storing foods, and the cultures and community sharing that have accompanied them.

## *Healthy people, healthy communities*

Public as well as personal health depends on access to good food. Unfortunately, right now, we cannot say that all people from our communities, at all times, have access to nutritious and safe foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just.<sup>1</sup>

Since we can only have real control of the quality, integrity and safety of food produced here, community gardens are an integral part of a healthy community. Community gardens empower individuals, knit together a stronger community, beautify local areas, produce fresh and nutritious food, and provide valuable recreational, spiritual and therapeutic opportunities. By growing food together, we can restore ourselves to our ancestral, historical and spiritual roots in agriculture.

Community gardens build social capital not only by preserving space, but also by fostering collaboration among community residents across racial and generational lines. With the different activities included in growing food, community gardens draw upon individual talents, knowledge, and efforts, without such bars to participation as high cost, language barriers, or educational achievement, which may otherwise divide residents.

All residents and families are invited to be part of the diverse group of people who have a common commitment to access healthy food in the Bulkley Valley. Our goal is to increase local food production while improving daily nutrition and health.



We planted purple potatoes again this season. Come see for yourself how purple they can be...

*This summer at Northern Root Community Gardens*

June-October: *Farmers Market*: fresh, locally made, veggie pâté available, fresh veggies when available

10 August, 9 September: *Stone Soup Days*: share time in the dirt and enjoy a fresh free meal...

12 September (salty), 19 September (sweet): *Canning Bees*: come and enjoy the company of your neighbours in the community kitchen adjacent the garden for some sweet and salty canning. Bring back your own cannings for winter goodness.

21 September: *Harvest Dance*: Come to our second annual harvest dance and enjoy great music and animation.

3 October (gentlemen), 4 October (ladies): *Bachelors Workshops*: Learn how to prepare a succulent meal with fresh local produce for a friend of the opposite sex. Workshops given by renowned local chefs.

<sup>1</sup> Definition of Food Security according to the BC Food Systems Network

## Hazelton's Junior Garden

by Cyra Frisk, 18 years, Youth Coordinator

Behind the Wrinch Memorial Hospital in Hazelton lies a place of abundance, of sharing and a sense of community. This place is a community garden. And within it are the plots held by people of all ages from the experienced elderly to the bounding children who, though a lacking attention span, are enthusiastic. Sharing resources, advice and space provides a wonderful and convenient place to develop gardening skills while growing your own food.

This is exactly what a group of young children are doing. As part of the Junior Garden Plot (run out of the Learning Shop) children are learning about gardening and healthy eating. Twice a week, they embark on a new lesson in



healthy food, food security, the importance of nutritious eating, and many related topics. Along with this, the children develop skills and knowledge by dealing with issues such as culture, knowledge, and global perspectives in relation to the garden.

The garden is a great way to teach children about healthy eating and living, and how they can create their own foods.

The hands-on approach allows them to experience the garden directly. It encourages children (and hopefully their parents) to grow some of their own food, free of pesticides and insecticides.

This increases food security in the area, and access to a cheap source of good, wholesome food. The children receive tangible products from their garden at the end of the summer.

The fact that they grew their own food is a memorable accomplishment and learning experience. It is for anyone and more of us may need to take a few minutes out of our busy lives to do the same. It makes a world of difference. And it's actually quite relaxing.



# News Around the North

## “Little Green Pills”

by Rose Soneff

I worked at the Williams Lake Pregnancy Outreach Program as the Nutritionist, but I also volunteered my time with the Community Garden, located at the Pregnancy Outreach house’s backyard.

One day, one of our client’s children came to me and asked if he could have more little green pills. I was initially horrified thinking that someone was giving the children illicit drugs, or that a bottle of iron pills had been discarded and this child had swallowed them.

When I asked him to show me where the little green pills were, he led me into the Community Garden and pointed to the pea pods. He said someone had opened them and that is where the little green pills were.

Much to my relief, I collected several pods and gave him a handful of peas and explained that they were “peas”. I asked if he had ever had “peas” and he said no.

Maybe this positive experience has led him to try peas and other wonderful veggies but also to realize that the store isn’t the only source for food. Later in the summer he tried baby carrots too, but I had to stop him from pulling up the carrots to see how big they had grown. Unfortunately, I never saw the little tyke again after that summer.

The Community Garden in Williams Lake must relocate after this summer as the property’s lease is up. Plans are underway to find and relocate the garden.

## Corporate Wealth and Public Health

Prince George’s Food Firsters hosted an evening at UNBC called “Corporate Wealth and Public Health”, with an informed and provocative panel.

Lorna Medd, NHA’s Chief Medical Health Officer, pointed out the strong correlation between fast food & sedentary lifestyle and the rise of obesity and chronic diseases, stressing that Type 2 diabetes is almost entirely avoidable.

Stephen Von Sychowski, a graduating senior at PGSS, was one of a group of students whose efforts to protest Pepsi’s contract with the school ran afoul

of administrative objections and student council apathy. [See “Students Challenge Corporate Influence in School”, p. 7.]

Debora Unterhofer, Harwin Elementary School Meal Coordinator, spoke of wrestling with the realities of hunger, limited school meal budgets (being slashed), and trying to provide nutritious alternatives that don’t require cooking.

Marg Wilson, Heritage Elementary teacher, talked about her use of corporate sponsorship (*e.g.*, Campbell Soup and Dairyland) to involve the Kids Council in support for needy children.

Marilyn Rummel, parent and volunteer school meals coordinator in Wells, urged a no-compromise (*i.e.*, no junk food allowed), you-can-do-it attitude that involves children in planning and preparing school meals based on high quality ingredients.

Hats off to Food Firsters for raising important issues about school food policies.

## Farmers Markets: A Feast for the Senses

Wander among the stands at any of our northern farmers markets and feast on bright colors and heady fragrance of fresh fruits and vegetables. Bakers, bee keepers, local chefs and artisans, and musicians add to the colour.

Fresh, high quality, local food pleases the palate and adds dollars to the local economy. And farmers markets make a grand weekly outing for the whole family. You’ll find them in many northern communities, including 100 Mile House, Prince George, Quesnel, Williams Lake, and Smithers.

## PG’s Good Food Box a huge success

Prince George’s Good Food Box got off to such a good start that sign-ups tripled in one month, from 50 to 150.

GBF Coordinator Jovanka Djordevich oversees purchase of the produce, which is “local when available and organic when affordable”. Volunteers fill boxes with fruits and vegetables at a central packing place. Filled boxes are taken to depots for pickup, and consumers take home 30 to 50% more for their money than they would at their local grocery. At \$15 a month, that’s a bargain.

This is Prince George's third food box program, joining two organic box programs, one private and the other at UNBC.

If you are interested in purchasing a monthly produce box or are a farmer interested in growing for the program, please contact Jovanka at 564-3859.

### **Baby's Best Chance**

by **Patricia Emery**

Come to Baby's Best Chance in Fort St. John, Dawson Creek and Chetwynd; weekly sessions for information, fun and lunch. Learn about healthy nutrition, making healthy food choices within your budget, and breast-feeding.

Milk, juice and vitamin supplements are also available to help meet the nutritional needs of pregnancy. Please contact Patricia Emery at Community Resources in Fort St. John, 785-6021, for information on times and locations.

### **Burns Lake Community Garden**

The new Burns Lake community garden is blooming with volunteers. Coordinator Joan Roming reports a long list that includes committee members; garden members; students from the college's Focus Program, Mentor Program, and carpentry classes; the Village of Burns Lake (which donated a backhoe and post hole auger and a full day's labour to run them), community businesses (donated gravel, bobcat with operator, time, assistance); First Nations community members; and other Burns Lake residents. Of course, Joan's husband was pressed into service as well.

The project already has 11 beds, each 5' x 20', a perimeter fence, a tool shed, and even a porta-potty. This group thinks of everything.

### **Chetwynd Meals to Wheels**

by **Linda Boyd**

A Wheels to Meals supper program is offered twice a month in Chetwynd with the meals being prepared by Society for Community Living Volunteers. The volunteers gain experience in food preparation and serving, are guaranteed two meals plus preparation lunches, build a higher positive profile in the community and get a social outing.

The program runs completely independently of outside funding now after non-profit service groups

donated start-up funds. Pine Valley Seniors offer free use of their hall, but meals are open to all age groups. This is to encourage families and friends to bring people who are otherwise socially isolated, and to provide for an inter-generational gathering.

The meals cost \$4 including beverages and desserts, and entertainment is provided by volunteers following the meals.

### **Williams Lake Terry Fox Run**

by **Deb Radolla**

The Terry Fox Foundation has helped to raise almost \$300 million for cancer research. Last year's run raised more than \$13 million nationwide, \$1.7 million in B.C./Yukon alone. Terry Fox said during his Marathon of Hope in 1980, "I just wish people would realize that anything's possible if they try; dreams are made if people try."

While fundraising is a part of this run, there is no pressure and if people just want to make a small donation that is terrific!

Join us for either a 5 km or 10 km run complete with a warm-up at 10:00 a.m. and show our community that you "Lead by Example."

Sunday, September 15, registration begins at 9 a.m. Group start 10:00 from the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex. For more information, contact, Deborah Radolla at 392-1788

### **Bulkley Valley Regional Trail**

Telkwa and Smithers have used HEAL funds to inch closer to the dream of linking the two communities with a multi-purpose, year-round trail. Strong response to a recent survey gave a boost to the Working Group. Community members are so



keen they didn't just fill in the blanks. They offered contributions and volunteer labour and services.

People took time to add comments such as, "Excellent plan; I have been dreaming of this for years and would love to be involved." And, "Some of our guests would also be interested; they are driving on the highway for most of the day and would love to get out and walk in the evenings."

Bicycling and general recreation were top choices for trail use, followed closely by commuting and walking. Running came in fifth, with winter recreation (biking, walking, cross-country skiing) next, horseback riding last.

### **Acwsalcta School Garden and Greenhouse, Bella Coola**

Two Bella Coola garden plots will soon be brimming with vegetables, thanks to some community visionaries, volunteer help, and a little boost from HEAL grant. Two students have been employed to tend the plots.

The photo shows Andrea Lacerte in the foreground, Kim Mack next to her, and project coordinator Paul Renaud in the back. The potato garden they are planting here is 1,625 lineal feet with

f o u r varieties of spuds. Paul reports, "I am trying to organize a carpenter to work with another two students to build a prototype greenhouse



which will be at Acwsalcta School and used for demonstration purposes.

"I would like to make greenhouses available to the community to purchase and after building one we will know what we have to sell them for. Hopefully we can encourage people to help employ students for the remainder of the summer while establishing a direct link between their backyard greenhouse and their kitchen table."

### **Hazelton Youth Cooperative Kitchen**

A \$5,000 grant from the Northern Health Authority, and matching donations for space, materials and part-time staff from Storytellers' Foundation has allowed the Youth Cooperative Kitchen Project to take off this summer.

This project advocates for the eradication of hunger in children and youth by coordinating a junior garden [see "Hazelton's Junior Garden", p. 3], kitchen and networking with food services in the area to create access and educational opportunities for young people to become more food secure.

### **Masset HEAL project**

Masset's store front project is off to a good start. HEAL is one of the supporters of a project aimed at bringing awareness to the prevention and challenges of living with diabetes.

A recent luncheon (light and well balanced, of course) drew 50 participants to hear endocrinologist Dr. Tom Elliott talk about prevention of diabetes with healthy lifestyle choices and Barbara Williams Freeman discuss successful community development practice with chronic disease on the Blood Reserve in Alberta.

Learning from those with first-hand experience will help prevent new cases of diabetes so the project invites people willing to share their stories to leave a message at 626-3627.

The store front information center and resource library located at the new Graham Island Market facility is accepting donations of materials that speak to the issues of healthy eating and active living (cookbooks, traditional and contemporary medical information, exercise programs, etc.).

### **Community Gardens**

The north has many community gardens, including Dawson Creek, Smithers, Hazelton, Terrace, Canim Lake, Prince George, Williams Lake, Burns Lake and Quesnel. If you want to exchange ideas or learn more, contact HEAL (see box, back page). We'll put you in touch with the experts nearest you.

Cathleen Kneen has developed the "Community Garden Game", designed to encourage people to get involved in community gardening and to garden organically. Available for \$10 plus \$3 shipping from <http://www.ramshorn.bc.ca/CGGame.html>

# Students Challenge Corporate Influence in School

Schools are strapped for cash. Pepsi is eager for new markets. The marriage seemed a natural. Pepsi wooed and won Prince George Senior Secondary, and the school accepted the company's proposal for "pouring rights" (*i.e.*, no Coke allowed here). Visions of being able to fund student activities probably began dancing in people's heads.

What some saw as a worthy goal raised red flags for a group of students. As Pepsi ads began appearing in hall TV monitors, they took action, creating posters with a counter message.

The administration took exception to the students' campaign but ultimately promised them space on a bulletin board. The school year ended, and the students' concerns faded into the excitement around graduation.

That is not, however, the end of the story. Most of the protesters were seniors, but they are vowing to continue their fight by running for school board and launching an e-zine, "Contrary to Popular Belief", and a newsletter, "The People's Will".

*Community Nutritionist Joanne Houghton wrote the following letter in response to an article that appeared in Prince George Citizen, Friday, May 4, entitled "Hallway TV Ads Concern Students". In the article, PGSS student Jason Mann spoke out against corporations in his school. He said nutrition education sessions were simply "an academic exercise" when TV monitors in the halls carried ads to purchase pop at the vending machines. **The letter was first published in Food for Thought.***

I applaud Jason Mann and fellow students at PGSS for speaking out against corporations in the classroom!!! As a Community Nutritionist I am alarmed at the following statistics:

- Children watch an average of 29 hours of television per week. This means that by the time they reach 65, they will have been spent 10 years on the couch.

- The fast food industry spent 9 billion dollars last year on advertising - and you can bet most of the ads were aired during children's prime time television viewing hours.
- Television is a powerful influence on beliefs and behaviors - it affects what we eat, when we eat, how we eat and even *if* we eat.
- Over half the calories consumed by Canadian children are from the *other* food group - that's pop, candy, chips and fries - mega-size!
- Obesity rates have doubled over the last 15 years - today 30% of our young boys and 28% of our young girls are at unhealthy weights.
- The alarming paradox is that eating disorders rank as the third chronic health issue amongst adolescent women.

The evidence is in! There is absolutely no doubt that corporate wealth and public health do not mix! Yet a quick literature search reveals that out of every 100 articles on the subject of obesity, only one points to the root cause - corporate greed. The other 99 point fingers at parents and students!

With shrinking budgets, school boards may feel they have no choice but to seek corporate sponsorship. But the fact is that there are many best practices out there. For example, in the Chetwynd High School, money from fast food machines was used to buy healthy food machines and then a pizza oven. Students are now cooking fresh, home made pizza with nutritious wholesome ingredients! Hey, perhaps a complete cafeteria operation is next! The revenue generated from long-term thinking and strategic planning around this issue is not small potatoes— the dollars fund most of the school's extra curricular activities!

The question for students, school boards, parents, teachers, principals and communities is where do we draw the line? What is non-negotiable? The task for us all is to take a long hard look at the evidence, to examine best practices, and to develop a long-term strategic plan based on informed decisions. Staying connected with our values - reminding ourselves that our children's health must come before wealth' - will serve us well as we move through this process.

Joanne Houghton, Community Nutritionist  
Coordinator, Food First of Northern BC

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## To learn more about:

### Funding for HEAL Demonstration Projects

In the 2002-2003 fiscal year, HEAL has \$25,000 to award for demonstration projects that lead to prevention of Type 2 diabetes. The next request for proposals will be distributed by August 30, with an October 1st deadline.

Focus this fiscal year will be on projects that are sustainable and that move toward influencing policy. What does that mean? Watch for full details on the HEAL Web site, <http://grassrootsgroup.com/heal.htm>.

### HEAL Advisory Committee Member reports from Rome

Cathleen Kneen, a long-time leader in the food security movement, was recently invited to participate in the World Food Summit in Rome. She describes the experience as "an exercise in balancing contradictions." An example was, "documents circulated in preparation for the Summit managed to endorse both organic agriculture and genetic engineering."

She writes, "Peasant farmers from the Philippines and India explained the devastating effects of Green Revolution and GMO rice and cotton on their members and told us how, caught in the debt trap, farmers commit suicide by drinking the pesticides that were supposed to have lifted them out of poverty. They also described how peasant leaders are jailed and killed for leading protests."

The experience galvanized Cathleen, who says, "What is needed, all over the world, is a policy of Food Sovereignty, a concept that goes beyond the human right to food to include the ability of communities, peoples and nations to feed themselves as a first priority."

A version of the article she wrote for the Summer 2002 issue of *BC Organic Grower* can be found at <http://www.ramshorn.bc.ca/current.html>.

### Why fast food is fat food

Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* hit the *New York Times* bestseller list and soared to the top of Canadian non-fiction charts. Subtitled *The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, the book reads like an adventure story.

Schlosser pokes so many holes in fast food's underbelly that "burger and fries to go" quickly lose their appeal. Important reading.

### Corporate influence in schools

The BC Teachers Federation has an extensive list of links at <http://www.bctf.ca/isdept/research/advertising.html>.

### Diabetes conferences

The Canadian Diabetes Association meets in Vancouver this year, October 2-5. For a schedule and online registration, go to [http://www.diabetes.ca/section\\_professionals/Conf2001conf.asp](http://www.diabetes.ca/section_professionals/Conf2001conf.asp)

People with Diabetes Taking Control for Balance and Harmony is the theme of the 2nd BC Aboriginal Diabetes Conference, November 4-6 at the Penticton Lakeside Resort Convention Centre. For more info visit the conference website: <http://bcadc.netfirms.com>

### Multi-language health site

Documents on this site are available in English, French, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi, Korean, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Darshan and Italian. <http://www.multilingual-health-education.net>

### New organization for Small-Scale Food Processors

A membership drive is underway for a new organization open to growers, small-scale food processors,retailers, organizational and developmental support organizations, and other people interested in regional food security and opportunities for regional economic development. To join or learn more, contact Frank Moreland, (250) 370-5167, [frankness@pacificcoast.net](mailto:frankness@pacificcoast.net).

**Write, call, e-mail, fax - let us know how you are Planting the seeds of HEAL<sup>th</sup>**



**To join the growing network, contact HEAL:**

Check out the Web site: <http://grassrootsgroup.com/heal.htm> & find contact info. for your regional reps  
Call (250) 296-4432; fax (250) 296-4429  
E-mail Project Coordinator Cathryn Wellner: [cwellner@grassrootsgroup.com](mailto:cwellner@grassrootsgroup.com)  
Or write: HEAL, Box 15 Miocene, Williams Lake, BC V2G 2P3