January e-Newsletter: Special Issue

- **Welcome to the first CCEDNet Ontario e-newsletter of 2009!** To get your new year started on the right foot we have put together a special issue that is all about food and health.
- **From Field to Table.** York University PhD candidate Maya Shapiro discusses why the health of the individuals who grow and pick our food is so important.
- **Organization Profile: The Afri-Can Foodbasket.** This Toronto-based organization is working to increase food security for socially and economically vulnerable people through providing culturally-specific and nutritious foods.
- **The Real South Beach Diet.** Written by Megan Kinch, MA candidate at York University. Kinch explores the ways that people in the Pacific eat to live, and gives us a few pointers!
- **Organization Profile: Nova Scotia Elementary School's Flouride Rinse Program.** Written by Nicole Rosenow-Redhead. How a school program is teaching kids in Nova Scotia that oral health is important too!
- **CCEDNet updates:** Letter to Minister Duncan. A call for politicians to support CED.
- **CCEDNet updates:** Regional Coordinator Abraham Tounkara recently took a trip to Northern Ontario to meet and network with Francophone CED organizations.
- **Join Social Enterprise Ontario.**
- **Save the Date! CCEDNet's 2009 National CED Conference.**
  June 3-6, 2009 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- **Upcoming events: SAS2's Introductory Workshop** January 15-17, 2009 in Ottawa, Ontario.

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**Welcome to CCEDNet's 1st E-Newsletter of 2009!**

We at CCEDNet Ontario would like to begin by wishing all of our members, partners, and readers a happy and prosperous new year! As we start 2009 with resolutions and fresh energy, let us also remember that now is the best time to recommit to our health and well-being. A recent UK study called Feeding Minds: the Impact of Food on Mental Health discusses the relationship between mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia and the foods we eat. While food is not the sole reason for these conditions, the study does highlight that people tend to feel healthier and more balanced if they are consuming the right things. This special CCEDNet E-Newsletter, made possible by the contributions of graduate students, CCEDNet interns, and organizations explores the connections between food, health, and community. It is our hope that this issue will help you get on the right foot this year, be this with your health or with the ways that you work in your organizations. So please- read, learn and enjoy!
From field to table, sowing the seeds of justice for migrant farm workers in Canada

By Maya Shapiro shapiro.maya@gmail.com

What does the movement for migrant justice have to do with the relationship between food and health? Answering this question requires rethinking what healthy food is, and how it gets to be that way. I have learned in my work and studies with migrant farm workers and their advocates that the health of our food supply is intimately connected to the health of our food suppliers. If we want to know more about what we are eating, we need to follow the route that food takes; from field to table.

The fair trade movement has given us a window into the working conditions of farm workers in countries around the world. We are increasingly exposed to information about how to support Central American, African and Asian coffee, cocoa and tea producers who we know need better working and living conditions. We spend more money on food and drink that is fairly traded because we understand that the highest quality products come out of labour and business processes that are carefully monitored from start to finish. And although many of the foods we love come from places that are far away, we support having industry standards that let us know how our food is made and under what circumstances it is processed and sold.

But with our gaze turned outward to economic and social justice causes around the world we sometimes forget to ask questions about the farm workers and food producers who are in our own backyards. Who are the labourers who pick, pack and process the fruits and vegetables that Canadians consume all year round? And how closely monitored are their working conditions and quality of life?

A first step in addressing these concerns is getting a handle on the very global nature of our local food production. Importing temporary foreign workers to labour in Canadian fields is a central feature of this country's agricultural industry. While we may think of our farms and food supplies as national operations and resources, in fact they have been supported by international agreements and the recruitment of foreign workers for decades. The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) was established in 1966 by the Canadian government in response to the need to fill seasonal labour shortages on farms. Canadian growers began to employ workers for short term contracts first from Jamaica and, by 1974, from Mexico and various countries in the Caribbean. Because of the perceived success of the SAWP, the Canadian government has recently initiated the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP). While TFWP workers are available to employers in a variety of different labour sectors, the majority of workers contracted through this program are needed for the difficult and dangerous work of agriculture. Men and women from Mexico, Jamaica, Guatemala, Thailand, and several other countries make up over
20,000 people who are contracted to work in fields, orchards, greenhouses and packing plants across Canada. The majority of these workers are placed in the 7,000 farms that span the width of Ontario's Green Belt.

The sad reality of these labour programs, and of the agricultural industries that they maintain, is that they are not very healthy at all. Not for the foreign workers who produce food and not, by extension, for the Canadian citizens who consume it. On a structural level, these programs depend on workers’ vulnerability and lack of freedom. Ultimate power lies in the hands of the employer who may fire or repatriate workers for any reason and with no prior notice. Workers are housed on farms where the maintenance of their living conditions, as well as their flights to and from the home country, is the responsibility of their employers; the farm owners. Without the necessary language skills, transportation options, and social supports, workers become dependent on their employers even for such basic things as grocery shopping, calling home, or seeing a doctor.

Access to healthcare is especially important for workers in an industry that is consistently rated one of the most dangerous in the country. At work in the fields, participants in the SAW and TFW programs may be asked to use pesticides and harsh chemicals (often without proper training or protective gear). They operate heavy machinery, work long hours in extreme hot and cold weather, subject their bodies to repetitive and strenuous movements, and incur the stresses of being far from home in unfamiliar social environments. While migrant farm workers undergo thorough medical screenings in order to become eligible to come to Canada, they do not take any tests before returning home. Many have gone back to their home countries with work-related illnesses and injuries that they cannot diagnose or treat.

Cesar Chavez, Mexican-American farm worker, labour leader, civil rights activist and co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America, has famously noted that "it's ironic those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables, and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves." Chavez was not just speaking about the tragedy of farm workers going hungry in the fields, but about the injustice of these workers being left without dignity, respect, and the general good health and happiness that all people strive to achieve.

Here in Canada, there are a number of community associations, labour organizations, activist collectives, and faith groups that are working locally to make this injustice history. These groups go beyond helping migrant workers endure the hardships that they encounter in Canada, towards building a movement that calls for real structural change and the end of hardships for migrant farm workers now and in the future.

To find out more about agricultural workers in Canada, their community allies, and initiatives being taken to improve the health of this industry and the food it produces please go online, inform yourself, and get involved. Si se puede!
The Afri-Can FoodBasket is a non-profit community food security (CFS) movement that is committed to meeting the nutrition, health and employment needs of members of the African Canadian community, in particular, those who are economically and socially vulnerable. Through community food security, leadership development and collaborative partnerships, the Afri-Can FoodBasket will endeavor to advance the interests of the community in these areas.

4 principles Guide this Toronto-based organization:
Food is life - Life is food
1. Basic requirement for existence, a must for all
2. Provides the body with nutrients and material to heal the ever degrading body
3. Provides the body with energy to experience not to just merely exist
4. Many social and cultural activities and celebration have been determined by food

Through employment of youth in Toronto, the Afri-Can FoodBasket engages young people who will learn how to grow and cultivate nutritious food in their urban environments.

www.africanfoodbasket.com

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The Real South Beach Diet: What can we learn from Nutritional Change in the Pacific?

By Megan Kinch

If you try and eat according to the dictates of modern nutrition, one can be terribly confused: is red wine good or bad? What about Chocolate? Dairy? Should I be focusing on blueberries or pomegranate or açaí this month? Breast feeding was supposed to be unhealthy in the 1950s but now mothers feel pressured that it is absolutely essential for the well-being of their baby. Going back to a 'natural' diet seems like a good antidote to the problems of modern food. Many diets claim to take us back to a natural way of eating, the way our ancestors would have eaten before genetically modified food, industrial farming and modified corn syrup.

One lifestyle that gets idealized as more natural is that of Pacific Islanders. Pacific people living traditional lifestyles have lower rates of diabetes, cancer and heart disease. In 1984, less than 4% of rural isolated children in Samoa had dental cavities, a number unheard of in the west. Traditional foods include pineapple, coconut, fish, pork, taro, as well as less-appetizing (to westerners) fermented fruits. Not only is the food different, but it's eaten differently.

Anthropologist Nancy Pollock argues that the entire idea of a "daily intake" is alien to an island context based on cycles of feasting, a common cultural thread throughout the Pacific. And apparently the concept of a meal simply does not exist in traditional Pacific cultures, and that much of their fruit intake is casually eaten as snacks and hence not counted in many nutritional studies.

Despite the fact that it produces healthy people, western nutritional science is critical of traditional pacific diets, saying that it doesn't have enough protein and energy, especially for babies. But this compares these diets to the 'gold standard' of western recommended daily requirements, even though the data suggest that these traditional diets are healthier than the western diet of industrialized countries. Why should Polynesian diets be judged by western standards, shouldn't it be the other way around?

The Samoans have a word that refers to pop and processed snacks, and translates roughly as junk food. The same word is also used for western people! (We are what we eat?) But today, many Pacific islands people are adapting western food and lifestyle. Moving away from a traditional
lifestyle leads to large increases in blood pressure, dental cavities and heart disease and is also associated with smaller increases in alcoholism and cancer. Urbanized islanders also have vastly higher rates of diabetes, up to 30%, and obesity rates are also extremely high, the same applies to islanders who immigrate to western countries.

Why are they changing their diet? Most data collected shows us that Pacific islanders would prefer to eat their own traditional foods. But imported foods are cheaper: people who want to drink coconut juice find that tins shipped across the Ocean from California are cheaper than biodegradable coconuts grown right on the island! It is only the relative cheapness of imported food that forces them to save their cultural foods for special occasions like Sunday dinners. Samoans living in New Zealand often select Taro as their favourite food. The government of Fiji's has been promoting locally produced foods with the advertising slogan "Things go better with coconuts". But this can't do much against an economic system, developed through colonialism, that allows food imported from thousands of miles away to be cheaper than food grown on the next beach.

In the Pacific islands, people with more access to modern medical care actually have worse health than very isolated people. This is because these people are also closer to western food, which causes more health problems than science can solve. This parallels what is happening in western society, where obesity and heart disease are increasing faster than medicine can counteract it. Yes, people make individual choices about what foods to eat, but those choices are made within an economic system where corn syrup is subsidized but organic vegetables are not. When healthy food is expensive and bad food is cheap, is it any wonder that obesity is correlated with poverty?

The rapid nutritional and health changes going on in the Pacific are an extreme version of the same trends in western society over the past few hundred years. The biggest killers used to be infections disease, but now heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are the big killers. This generation of children can expect to live shorter lives than their parents because of unhealthy food and lifestyle. The Pacific diet is completely different from the Mediterranean diet, from Okinawa, from , but all are healthy. There is no one 'natural' healthy diet: there are many. But the North-American diet that is replacing these older ways of eating is unhealthy for almost everyone.

Despite efforts to make it appeal to ethnic minorities, the Canada food guide is still culturally insensitive: a majority of non-white people can't even digest milk, which makes up an entire food-group. We need to encourage immigrants to continue eating their cultural foods, which are almost always healthier, instead of imposing western nutrition Especially in Canada where healthcare is a human right, it makes more sense to focus on prevention instead of intensive (and expensive) treatment after a person is already ill. The Pacific example shows us that we need to encourage people with healthy eating patterns to retain them, as well as make it economically viable for everyone to make the right food decisions. Otherwise developments in medical technology will simply be cancelled out by the toxic food environment society has created.

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**Organization Profile:** Elementary School's Fluoride Rinse Program (Halifax, NS)
By Nicole Rosenow-Redhead, MA

Thanks to both the NS Capital Health District Authority and sisters Frances Bundy and Cathy Bosch, countless elementary school students are benefitting from a fluoride rinse program offered in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Halifax's North End.

Once a week for the last decade, Frances and Cathy could be found at their local school administering the rinses to every consenting student up to grade 6.

Capital Health approached a couple of North End elementary schools 10 years ago to assess if there were community members willing in participating in a training session and volunteering to administer the weekly rinses to students. Others expressed interest, but only Cathy and Frances, who had already served as longtime volunteers with the school, continued through the initial stages, and helped shape the program as it runs today.

The Program

The rinse, particularly if administered frequently, can significantly reduce the incidence of tooth decay, which can lead to cavities. This can contribute to healthy gums and improved overall oral health. By helping the children to become continuously mindful of the welfare of their teeth by encouraging them to participate regularly in the program, and providing toothbrushes, toothpaste, along with nutritious snacks, they tend to take more ownership of their well-being and are informed and, subsequently, empowered with the ability to choose healthier options. Frances and Cathy have been trained to teach the students how to rinse and spit, and with both first-time and primary students, they help them practice first with water.

The woeful lack of coverage of oral healthcare for those older than 10 years old is appalling. This program strives to reach as many children as possible before they are no longer covered. Oral health is vitally important in numerous ways; many illnesses can surface initially in the mouth and so could be quickly recognized and treated, thereby saving much potential pain, permanent impairment, cost and time. A person's self-confidence, ability to consume sufficient nutritious food, and capability to obtain and maintain employment, can all relate to the health and appearance of one's mouth.

'Someone's gotta do it'

When asked why they've continued faithfully with this program for so long, Cathy and Frances both reply that they enjoy the interaction with the children, and having a hand in encouraging healthy living in this way - a program they most definitely would've appreciated when they were young. They take pleasure in awarding prizes as a way to encourage as many students as possible to take part. They don't encounter many behavioural issues with the children, but if they do and they personally know the child's family (as it's a small and close-knit community) a simple 'I just might let your mum know!' will normally work!

Frances' youngest child participated in the program, and has since had no significant oral health issue. They enjoy coming across former students who had participated in the program. Without fail, they have thanked the sisters and have credited them and the CH hygienists for continually emphasizing the importance of, and, most importantly, sincerely caring for, their health.
Hopefully, concurrently, the vast gaps in oral healthcare coverage will soon be addressed and eliminated, and the sisters’ inspiring dedication will attract others to donate their time so that this program can continue to expand and reach increasingly more children.

Submission to the Ontario 2009 Pre-Budget Consultations

Toronto, November 21, 2008

Good afternoon Minister Duncan and thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. My Name is Paul Chamberlain and I am Program Director with the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) and am based in our Ontario Region office here in Toronto. The Ontario Region of CCEDNet is a bilingual network which represents over 400 Community Economic Development (CED) organizations and practitioners from every part of the province.

CED is an increasingly useful solution to the economic, social, and environmental challenges facing Ontarians today. CED is an effective alternative economic development model that creates fairer, stronger, and more sustainable communities through comprehensive, integrated, participatory development. It is proven to build wealth, create jobs, foster innovation and productivity, and improve social well-being. It also offers tremendous potential to increase local energy and food production and improve community sustainability.

CCEDNet's members call for public policies that create an enabling environment for communities to create their own futures, building on the innovation and commitment of thousands of active citizens and their community organizations. Our written submission outlines specific recommendations for the Ministry of Finance's 2009 Budget related to significant policy issues but today I will highlight only a few.

Premier McGuinty has been consistent in his message that "(Ontario's) poverty reduction strategy is not only the right thing to do, it is critical for our future economic success” and that "Ontario needs all of its citizens to be strong if we want to compete in the global economy. We cannot afford to let anyone fall behind." (Reducing poverty Contributes to the Economic Health of Ontario: "-- Letter to 25 in 5, Oct. 1, 2008. http://povertywatchontario.ca/downloads/Blueprint-for-Poverty-Reduction-DRAFT.pdf) This is even more true today. This is not a strategy to be delayed, phased in more slowly or eliminated.

Noted economists have described how poverty reduction will stimulate demand in local economies across Ontario and have said that, "The best and cheapest poverty reduction strategy is to move swiftly with investments on affordable housing, education and training, early learning and child care, public transit, income supports and jobs that pay living wages. (Arthur Donner, Mike McCracken, Armine Yalnizyan Oct 21 Star) As part of the 25 in 5 Network, CCEDNet urges the Ontario government to strengthen the provincial economy by investing in a poverty reduction strategy now.

To promote economic growth and job creation Ontario needs to invest in local communities. Economic stimulus spending on infrastructure must respond to locally identified priorities,
promote local employment and training - particularly for those most marginalized - and promote small business development, including co-operatives and social enterprises.

Co-operatives and social enterprises provide returns on investment that are financial, social and, increasingly, environmental. Social enterprise has proven itself as an important tool in poverty reduction, training, employment and the integration and settlement of new immigrants. Former prime minister, Paul Martin, has said that,

"Financial experts ought to be developing cutting-edge instruments to make funding available to social entrepreneurs. Tax experts ought to be thinking about mechanisms that can support social enterprise in a meaningful way. Legislators should encourage an environment that allows foundations to become more imaginative in support of social enterprise... The business entrepreneur improves our quality of life by creating wealth and economic growth. The social entrepreneur improves our quality of life by confronting the inequality that can often be the collateral occurrence of free markets. Both kinds of entrepreneurs are necessary. Let us give them both the chance to succeed."

In Quebec, investment funds supporting social enterprise are currently providing better returns than most other market investments. Ontario needs to support such financial instruments and, like Nova Scotia, needs to provide tax incentives to promote investment in social enterprise.

To work more effectively with other levels of government and other key partners, the Ontario government needs to move beyond silo-ed thinking and funding. It must use integrated and comprehensive approaches across ministries and levels of government and must facilitate and support integrated and comprehensive approaches that are inclusive of all sectors in communities.

Investing in local communities to stimulate the economy and protect priority programs and services may well require deficit budgets in the short term. Not making this investment will lead to far larger financial and social deficits in the future. Your government should continue to press its case for "fairness for Ontario"

All of our recommendations stem from the collective voice of hundreds of community-based CED organizations, practitioners, researchers and academics from every region of Ontario. We urge you to work with us to enhance the social and economic conditions of Ontario's communities by building fairer and stronger local economies, tackling poverty, and investing in sustainable local communities.

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**CCEDNet in Northern Ontario**

At the end of November, Abraham also went to Hearst and Kapuskasing in northern Ontario to meet with Francophone CED organizations. There he discussed what opportunities and challenges the city of Hearst is facing, and how CCEDNet can assist. He also met with the mayor of Hearst and and many representatives from local organizationS. In Kapuskasing Abraham met
with the Economic Development officer and discussed how CCEDNet can become involved with helping to resolve some issues relating to youth and CED engagement.

Are you interested in building social enterprise in Ontario?

Join...

Social enterprise blends market and mission to serve our communities. Here in Ontario, there is a growing amount of activity in and attention on social enterprise, and a need for those working in the field to connect, share knowledge, and build an enabling environment for the success of our enterprises and the sector as a whole.

We invite you to join Social Enterprise Ontario (SEO) - a burgeoning network to connect social entrepreneurs, social enterprise staff, business leaders and social enterprise advocates and enthusiasts, so that we can:

· Share and learn from each other and improve our likelihoods of success

· Stay abreast of what is happening in the social enterprise space in Ontario

· Work to create an enabling environment for social enterprise in Ontario

SEO is primarily a mailing list (we promise not to bombard you!) to enable practitioners and their supporters to connect and share information. We will also host occasional meetings to network, share ideas and take action. If you would like to be on this list, visit www.socialenterpriseontario.ca.

We look forward to staying in touch!

This message is from the Centre for Social Innovation

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Tonya Surman

Centre for Social Innovation

215 Spadina Ave, Suite 400
Save the Date! CCEDNet's 2009 National CED Conference

Full Circle: Sharing a Vision for the 7th Generation
June 3-6, 2009
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Mark your calendars for Canada's premier community economic development event. Join over 400 participants for three days of learning and celebration in downtown Winnipeg!

For more details visit: www.ccednet-rcdec.ca

Highlights:
* Over 40 engaging CED workshop sessions
* Site visits to showcase Winnipeg's vibrant culture and innovation in the CED sector
* Exciting keynote speakers, plenary sessions, and social events
* Collaborative action-planning and networking

Organized by The Canadian Community Economic Development Network, in partnership with Ka Ni Kanichihk and SEED Winnipeg.

Upcoming Events

SAS 2: Introductory Workshop
Concepts and Tools for Collaborative Inquiry and Social Engagement
January 15-17, 2009.
Ottawa, Ontario

This three day workshop focuses on the practice of collaborative inquiry and social engagement, drawing on the tools and concepts of SAS2 (www.sas2.net). The workshop is designed to strengthen skills in problem solving, stakeholder analysis, and assessing options for future actions, using innovative tools that are both rigorous and adaptable to a variety of contexts.
Participants will learn by doing, applying the tools to questions grounded in their own individual or team projects and workplans.

Contact: Jacques Chevalier, Carleton University, (819) 778-3244, jacques_chevalier@carleton.ca

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Click here to join our Facebook group to stay connected!

Visit our website for updates on what's happening in the CED movement: www.ccednet-rcdec.ca