

Minutes for Community Meeting
February 2nd
Toronto Youth Food Policy Council

Kyla was the moderator for this meeting and graciously welcomed all in attendance. The meeting was opened with stating the TYFPC goals for the year, outlaying what issues we focus on and a reading of our equity statement.

A brief introduction of all those in attendance was next, and a wonderful group of community and TYFPC committee members were able to attend this meeting.

Each committee within the TYFPC gave a brief introduction and update of projects they are currently working on:

Committee Update:

Education – searching for articles for two journals

- 1) Gathering (submission deadline May 31st)
- 2) a more creative journal (submission deadline before February 28th)

Networking: Attending Events

Compiling lists of farms that would be open to have internships – more flexible hours and timeline

Advocacy:

- Working on a policy brief,
- Has organization and will continue to organization discussion groups after community meeting. The discussion following tonight's meeting will be Thursday Feb 12th, at 2412 Bloor St West – Coffee Tree Roastery.

Executive:

- Meeting with students, and faculty of University of Toronto, as they are in the process of developing the first campus food policy council
- attended the TFPC retreat
- and collection articles for out bimonthly newsletter

Present at this community meeting are three panelists who have been asked to come and talk about their experience with food in Toronto, and the projects that they have instigated or are a part of

The first speaker was **Vanessa** from Cater Toronto

Vanessa began by highlighting the different prices for “donut” like products, and connecting these different prices to racial differences and how different types of food are perceived. Cater Toronto began as a project that connected food operators that were

working in isolation from the broader network of resources. There were many barriers that these individuals faced, such as access to kitchens, lack of transportation and a difficult accessing capital to grow their business. Cater Toronto developed a strategy to overcome these barriers and creates opportunities for these individuals to work in support of each other. Continuing to increase the economic growth and sustainability of members is now the focus.

The second speaker was **Arlene**, who works at Ryerson University as the urban agriculture coordinator, where she manages a ¼ acre roof top garden. In 2011 she began the process of working in collaboration with professors and faculty at Ryerson to identify and begin using underutilized space on campus. On the roof top garden, she employed a technique known as “sheet mulching” to increase the organic matter in the already existing 12 inches of soil. The garden was organized in a way that optimized the ability to access all part of the garden, and used a five crop rotation strategy. This past growing season was able to produce two tons of food, and this was party the result of matter growing and decaying into the soil for the last ten years. Techniques such as growing cover crops, utilizing green manures and companion planting are also employed. Individual involved with the garden were able to attend seminars about different planting techniques. The garden has various ways to become involved and help, such as joining as a CSA (community supported agriculture) member, and receive five dollars worth of food for five hours of work.

The third speaker was **Jacob** who has been an organizer of the Occupy Gardens Movement, Toronto Seed Library, and is running in next federal election. In 2009 he attended a Seedy Saturday event and was very inspired by the people he met and the event itself, and this encouraged him to connect with the Toronto Community Garden Network. Jacob was able to connect with other, to network, to share and to grow. Jacob articulated that the privatization and commodification of many aspects of our lives is possible due to current economic system. There is a challenge in communicating big ideas that offer possibilities to the current economic system in “sound bites”, but if we begin to create garden we can create a visual alternative, a space where people can come to share and we can be more resilient to shocks of our current system. Currently the Toronto Seed Library has expanded to 15 permanent branches and is part of a global movement that attempts to achieve seed freedom.

Question to the Panelists:

When you are met with a big challenge how do you manage it? Do you see these challenges as a personal journey?

Response:

Key ingredient to any challenge is love and the recognition of interconnection. Love creates life and the garden also plays a role in creation (creation of food that is required to support life). This feeling of love and connection can be used to inspire and fight for change.

A commonly faced problem is having to fundraising for your own salary, and full budget. Over the course of fulfilling your goals, a lot can go wrong, so it is important to “start at ground zero” and take care of yourself first. It is crucial to understand and know the mission of your project really well and being able to articulate it clearly and concisely.

When these get stressful and challenges arise it is really important to come back to the key mission and your core set of goals. Challenges can be mitigate when you engage in a conversation with other and begin work together.

Question to Panelist:

How do you approach media and advertising?

Response:

- Media is influenced not to cover certain events and organizations that are offering an alternative
- Social media and alternative news media is used
- Interviews are conducted with journalists within conventional news media, but these interviews typically are not aired (reflective of a conflict with a broader mandate of media)
- Many of the people who are “micro-entrepreneurs” still need resources to expand and need to support, therefore mass advertising can hinder and not help these businesses
- We are cautious of how we approach media, as there are possibly negative consequences of certain types of exposure

This concluded the question and answer portion of the evening. The next part of the meeting was a seed-planting seminar, led by Jacob and other members of Toronto’s Seed Library. Everyone present was able to take home the seeds they planted, as well as had the opportunity to gather other seeds that they could begin themselves. The incredible power of these living seeds to grow food, as well as produce more seeds highlights the wonderful capabilities of seeds.

The TYFPC would like to thank everyone who attended this meeting and seminar!
We had an incredible time and cannot wait for our next community meeting in April!