

## THE POTATO PROJECT: A STORY WITH ROOTS



Photos: (above) Alexis Edghill-Whalen; (p. 2) Mary Delaney

The seed was planted in April last year when Claremont's Peter Byberg said to Jim Miller something like: "Y'know, the schools are doing a great job of teaching kids about the environment. Now we need the same kind of program to teach them about food."

And so the seed of an idea was sown. All that was needed was a school with vision. When our Chair was invited to make a presentation at Vimy Ridge P.S. in Ajax, we knew we'd found our gal – Alison Ellwood, one of those wonderful teachers who make things happen. The Potato Project took root.

Add a supportive principal, an enthusiastic Earth Keepers environmental club, stalwart Land Over Landings farmers Ron and Keith Tapscott and Jim Miller, and North Pickering's fertile soil – and the Potato Project sprouted.

The students came by bus one sunny day in June and had a lesson in history and farming before digging the ground and planting their tubers at Thistle Ha', the Millers' federally-designated historic farm just north of Brougham.

Mother Nature took care of the sun and rain (so much rain!), while Jim and family picked off the potato bugs until September finally arrived and the Earth Keepers came back for the harvest. The potatoes were divvied up amongst the students for their family Thanksgiving dinners and to be served at the school's Breakfast Club.

### OPEN MEETING, NOVEMBER 12

Plan to attend our next open meeting, on Wednesday, Nov. 12, at 7:30 in the Brougham Hall (3545 Brock Road, Brougham). See you there!

### NICOLE NORRIS TO FOOD SECURE CANADA "WAVES OF CHANGE"

Supporter Nicole Norris, a Toronto food activist in the Nutrition Communication Graduate School Program at Ryerson, is heading to Halifax this month for Food Secure Canada's 8th annual assembly, "Waves of Change", thanks to the Sierra Youth Coalition, FSC, and Land Over Landings sponsorship. She will be taking our message with her. For more info, see <http://foodsecurecanada.org/> <http://www.syc-cjs.org/>

### STOUFFVILLE ELECTS A FARMER MAYOR!

Toronto wasn't the only place that got a new mayor. In Stouffville, right across the York-Durham border from the Federal Lands, 32-year-old local farmer Justin Altmann was elected. With a degree from Guelph, a barn for his biggest campaign sign, and the slogan "it takes a town to raise a mayor," Justin is our kind of politician! We first met him when he took time out from the family farm and his campaign to attend our June open meeting. We congratulate him and look forward to working with him on our shared cause: protecting our vital farmland.



The students will be back next year, they say. In fact, according to Jim, “One young fellow says he’s coming back even when he’s in high school!”

For more on The Potato Project and Thistle Ha’, visit: [www.thistleha.com](http://www.thistleha.com) and <http://www.durhamregion.com/community-story/4943273-pickering-farmer-teaches-children-about-harvesting/>

## LOCAL-FOOD SUCCESS AT PORT PERRY SCHOOL

This month, students at Immaculate Conception Catholic School partnered with Durham Sustain Ability and local farmers in a novel activity: instead of selling chocolate bars to raise money for school events, the students prepared and sold bags of farm-fresh produce for \$10 and \$20 each. Onions, potatoes, squash, beets, and carrots were donated at cost or free of charge. The students had been studying the importance of local food, so the activity was a great fit.

How did it go? The kids connected with local farmers, sold over 220 bags of produce, and raised more money than they could have done by selling chocolate bars. A success story all round. Get the details at: <http://www.durhamregion.com/news-story/4903912-scugog-students-learn-all-about-local-produce-through-fundraising-initiative/>

## PASSING THE DIGITAL HAT

You may wonder why we need money. Our team is made up entirely of volunteers, many of whom contribute far more than just their time and skills. Even so, there are costs: registration for workshops and events, printing costs, legal fees, etc.

Others may wonder why we aren’t a charity. Well, we can’t seek charitable status because we’re deemed too political. Mind you, pretty well anything seems to be deemed too political these days. If you doubt this, imagine a government audit of a group of bird-watchers who made a statement against chemicals that are killing bees! Check out <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/revenue-canada-targets-birdwatchers-for-political-activity-1.2799546>. So “flying under the radar” seems a wiser bet and leaves us to concentrate our efforts on our mission: preserving these irreplaceable agricultural lands.

A literal passing of the hat is difficult in an age that’s increasingly digital, when many people rarely carry cash. If you want us to be able to keep fighting for foodland, water, and habitat – for the birds and the bees too! – we urge you to donate to the cause. And we thank you.

## NEW VIDEO URL

We’ve had to repost our video after deciding to use its extended title – **The Land That We Love**. It’s now at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HY0jpb8q&z0&feature=youtu.be>

## TAKING OUR MESSAGE TO SCHOOLS

Alexis Edghill-Whalen, our Volunteer Coordinator, has launched a new PowerPoint for high schools, all about the Lands. She introduced it for the first time to students outside Durham Region at a presentation to Grade 9 classes at Pierre Elliot Trudeau High School in Markham, and will be following up in January with a presentation to Markville Secondary School.

## Food for Thought

**According to statistics gathered by Food Secure Canada, farms are growing bigger but less numerous. Food policy analysts such as Wayne Roberts and growers such as Dan Jason cite data on the way the federal government boosts big agribusinesses, thereby encouraging monocrops, in a way that favours trade and economic goals over biodiversity and better food better distributed in Canada.**

– Susan Walker, *Toronto Star*, Oct. 12, 2014

## Land Over Landings Because food is a GROWING concern!

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