

FROM THE GROUND UP-2015



**FROM THE
GROUND UP**
Yukon Healthy
Choice Fundraiser

**DU CHAMP
À LA TABLE**
Collecte de fonds
— Choix santé

Growing Forward 2 | Cultivons l'avenir 2 

yukonfromthegroundup.ca

Yukon
Government
Gouvernement

Executive Summary

“Eating vegetables provides health benefits – people who eat more vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Vegetables provide nutrients vital for health and maintenance of your body”¹.

From The Ground Up (FTGU) is a healthy eating program initiated in 2012 by Yukon Government, Health Promotion Unit as a way to get Yukoners to eat more vegetables.



Recent studies^{2 3} indicate that most Yukoners, adults and children, are not eating as many vegetables as recommended by Canada’s Food Guide.

To date, FTGU has put more than 160,000 lbs. of fresh, local vegetables on Yukoners’ plates (68,320 lbs. in 2015 alone). Additionally, boxes purchased by the community have been donated to the Whitehorse Food bank, Salvation Army, Kaushee’s Place, school food programs and individual families in need as a way of addressing food security issues faced by vulnerable families in Yukon communities.

The Health Promotion Unit coordinates this program, working closely with local farmers and Yukon schools, providing information sessions for teachers, recipes for families and resources and activities for classrooms to reinforce learning around healthy eating, and agriculture in Yukon. The FTGU program, with its multiple activities and messaging, engages whole communities; students, teachers, families, farmers and others to eat healthier and provides learning opportunities to improve long term health.

“Wonderful way to support Yukon agriculture and bring healthy food into Yukon homes!”

Survey respondent, FTGU evaluation report 2014.

¹ <http://fnsw01.edc.usda.gov/food-groups/vegetables-why.html>

² Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009/2010

³ Health and health-related behaviors among young people in Yukon, 2015

Introduction

FROM THE GROUND UP (FTGU), is a healthy eating program in Yukon that takes the form of a school fundraiser.



Background

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide recommends that children and teens eat 4-8 servings of vegetables and fruits daily, and 7-10 servings daily for adults.

However;

In 2009/2010, the Canadian Community Health Survey found that less than half (49%) of Yukon residents reported eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

The 2015 Health and Health-Related Behaviours among Young People in Yukon report (HBSC), found that only 37% of Yukon males (grade 6-8) reported eating vegetables once or more per day and just over half, (52%) of Yukon females (grade 6-8) reported eating vegetables once or more per day.

In addition to increasing Yukoners consumption of vegetables, the FTGU program objectives are:

- To increase awareness of the role of good nutrition in the development and well-being for all of us
- To promote healthy food choices to Yukoners
- To support local Yukon farmers
- To promote healthy school food environments
- To support a healthy choice for school fundraising

FTGU objectives supports the:

- Yukon Nutrition Framework (2010);
- Department of Health and Social Services strategic plan (2009-2014);
- Four Pillars of Comprehensive School Health.

From The Ground Up is much more than a fundraiser; it is a comprehensive program with multiple activities and messages that engages whole communities; students, teachers, families, farmers and others to eat healthier, and provides learning opportunities to improve long term health.

The FTGU program includes:

- The opportunity to address food security issues faced by vulnerable families in Yukon by donating a box of fresh FTGU vegetables.
- A website that provides information on the fundraiser, the farmer, videos, recipes, jokes, information for PARENTS and for TEACHERS.
- A class trip to the farm where students participate in harvesting carrots, beets, cabbage and potatoes; labelling FTGU boxes, helping with washing and bagging veggies and seeing the huge storage facility. The class trip provides students with a farm-to-table hands-on experience.
- Recipes books offering different ways to prepare the FTGU vegetables.
- A **New** teacher resource (grades K-7) including lesson plans and classroom activities, books, and supporting materials such as healthy eating plates and food guides.
- A poster contest to gauge student feedback.

FUNDING THE FTGU PROGRAM

The Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Social Services coordinates FTGU. Funding for costs associated with running FTGU have come from several sources;

Year 1- Health Promotion Unit operating budget

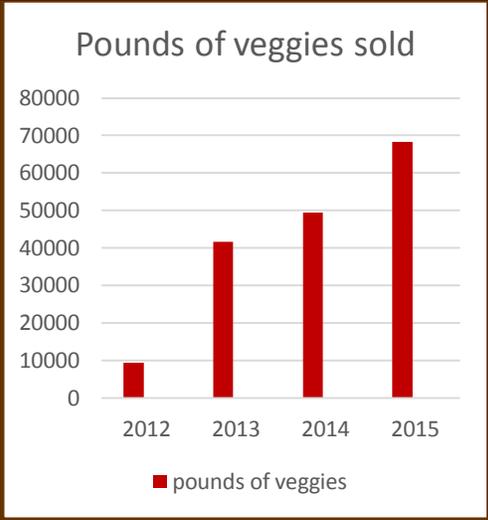
Year 2- Health Canada as part of a Pan-territorial healthy eating initiative (~\$30,000).

Year 3- Cost-shared between Health Promotion Unit (\$12,000) and Department of Energy, Mines and Resources' Agriculture Branch Growing Forward program (\$6000).

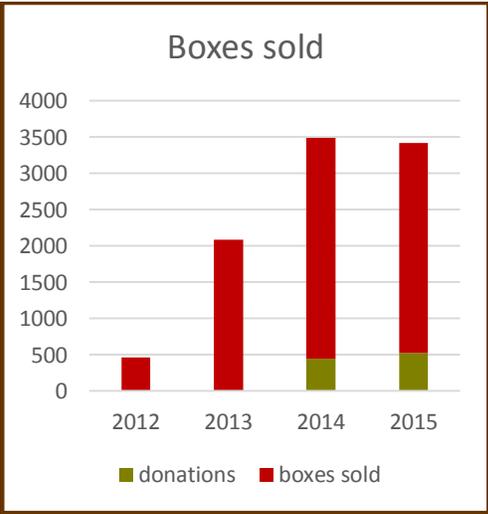
Year 4- Department of Energy, Mines and Resources' Agriculture Branch Growing Forward 2 program (\$21,000).

FROM THE GROUND UP 2012-2015

Working with two Whitehorse schools and one local farmer, FTGU began as a pilot program in 2012. In just four years, FTGU has grown to include almost all Whitehorse schools and three community schools. In each year, suggestions and recommendations from evaluations were incorporated and resulted in modifications to the program. In Year three a second farmer joined FTGU and customers were offered two sizes of vegetable boxes; small (10 lbs.) and large (20lbs.). Year three also included the opportunity for customers to purchase a box to be donated to a family or organization. For Year four, with one participating farmer, FTGU offered the one large box option. A summary of the pounds of vegetables and number of boxes sold, the number of participating schools and the funds raised follows.



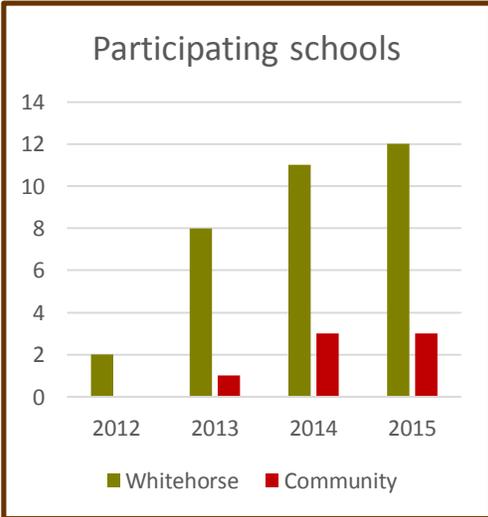
The volume of vegetables sold has increased each year from 9,340 pounds in the pilot year to 68,320 pounds in 2015.



Each year, vegetables have been sold in 20 lbs. boxes with the exception of 2013 when a second farm joined the program and offered a smaller box (10 lbs.) option.

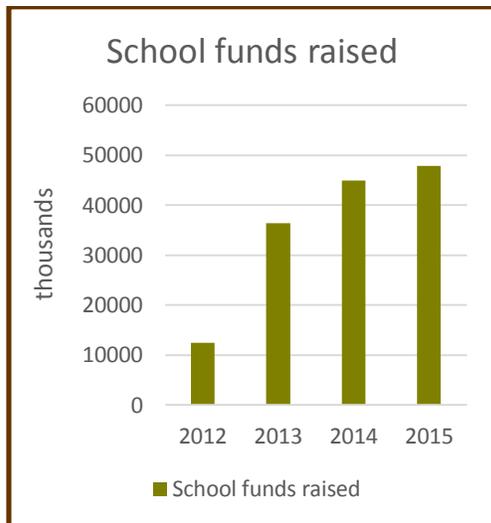
In 2015, a return to the large box option resulted in a minimal decrease in the *number* of boxes sold (3489 to 3416), but a large *increase* in the pounds of vegetables sold.

The option to donate was offered in both 2014 and 2015 and increased from 442 boxes to 528.



Following the pilot in 2012, all Whitehorse schools were invited to participate. In Year two, eight Whitehorse schools and one community school participated in the program

School participation increased in both Years three and four; 14 schools in 2014 and 15 in 2015.



FTGU is a very profitable fundraiser for schools. Since 2012, schools have earned \$142,479 and have used the funds in a variety of ways:

- School lunch and healthy snack programs;
- Support Food for Learning;
- Playground equipment;
- Classroom books for home reading program, and;
- Technology (iPads, Promethean Boards), for classrooms.

PROGRAM FEEDBACK 2015

From The Ground Up is evaluated each year. Reports for 2012, 2013 and 2014 are available on the FTGU website (www.yukonfromthegroundup.ca)

In 2015, feedback was provided by the school coordinators and the participating farmer.

School Coordinators

School coordinators were asked to comment on, FTGU overall, the new teaching resource, student participation and the impact of FTGU on the school nutrition environment. Twelve of 15 possible questionnaires were completed. A summary of the major points is as follows:

All school coordinators made positive comments about the FTGU program; they liked that it is a healthy fundraiser, is focused on healthy eating, involves all of the community, students participate, it is educational, and it gives the community the opportunity to donate to others.

“We were very impressed with the level of organization and the focus on healthy eating and the promotion of local farmers and farming.”

“The parents have expressed that they love having a healthy fundraiser when compared to candy as well they love getting fresh local veggies. The kids are starting to connect that the veggies are grown here in the Yukon.”



In 2015 schools were provided with a NEW Teacher Resource complete with healthy eating lesson plans for grades K-7. The resource was well received by the rural and elementary school coordinators.

"It was definitely an asset. Having lesson plans was very convenient."

"I loved the fact that there were books and resources that aligned with the PLOs and it was readily available."

Some school coordinators said that due to September being such a busy time of the year, they hadn't had a chance to use the resource yet. Two schools requested that the resource be made available in French.

In 11 of 12 responses school coordinators reported that students were very involved with the FTGU program by selling vegetables, unloading boxes, assisting customers with orders, participating in HACE (Health and Career Education) lessons and making posters for the art contest.

In response to what impact the FTGU program is having on the school nutrition environment, school coordinators wrote that FTGU is bringing more awareness to healthy choices and is replacing other "less healthy" fundraisers. They also noticed that more vegetables were being provided for healthy snacks in the classrooms.

"I have noticed in my own class as well as other classes that healthier snacks (usually carrots) during this time were eaten. The grade 7 teacher as part of our school service learning decided to have the grade 7 class make soup using the vegetables for the soup kitchen at Our Lady of Victory. Part of this lesson includes a small lesson on the fact that not everyone in Whitehorse has enough to eat as well as what makes a healthy meal. In the grade 3 class, we decided to use the carrots to make muffins, and then we wrote out the steps (ties perfectly into our writing unit)."

The Farm

Invitations for farmers to participate in FTGU 2015 were distributed in April 2015 and one farm, Yukon Grain Farm, responded. Delivery dates (between Sept 15 and Oct 6th) were pre-assigned to schools in June. Following the deliveries, the farmer reported that everything went smoothly, due to the scheduling of deliveries and the decision to offer the one-sized box. The farmers also reported that changing from a 50-50 split to a 40-60 split made the program more equitable.

Yukon Grain Farm continues to be a strong supporter of FTGU.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback from the school coordinators, the farmers and Health Promotion staff recommendations for FTGU are as follows:

- Confirm partnerships with Agriculture Branch and Yukon Education to secure program funding;
- Consider an expansion of the program to include more rural communities who are without local farming (Old Crow);
- Consider offering to assist rural communities that have a sustainable agriculture base (Dawson City area) with development of their own FTGU programs;
- Invite schools to participate in early April; sign up by end of April; schedule coordinators meetings in late May and again in late August.

SUMMARY

According to the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation,

“A diet rich in vegetables and fruit can reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer. Insufficient consumption of vegetables and fruit is one of the major causes of chronic or non-communicable diseases (diseases that are not contagious) including heart disease, stroke, cancers, respiratory diseases, diabetes and obesity”.

FTGU, with its multiple components raises the awareness of the importance of filling half your plate with vegetables and benefits all involved;

- √ Yukoners eat more vegetables;
- √ Yukon farmers have an increased market for locally-grown vegetables;

- √ Students have an increased awareness of healthy eating and where food comes from;
- √ Schools incorporate healthy eating and healthy living opportunities for students, and;
- √ School communities are engaged in a healthy choice fundraisers.

Recent interest from other jurisdictions in Yukon's *FTGU* program indicates that other provinces are also working on creating more supportive, healthy eating environments. Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba (*Fresh from the Farm* and *Fresh to You* and *Farm to School* respectively) are working on similar programs, to replace unhealthy fundraising efforts in schools (chocolate covered almonds, cookie dough sales) with fresh fruit and vegetables.

From The Ground Up has the potential to be a key program in transforming nutritional environments for families in Yukon.