



Media Release: Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op Begins Community Consultations to Create Regional Food Charter

Northwestern Ontario OR Dryden, Kenora, Sioux Lookout, Rainy River, etc. – May 15th, 2017

– Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op (CLFC) is an online farmer’s market that began in Dryden in 2013. Since then, it has expanded its distribution to the communities of Kenora, Ignace, Upsala, and Sioux Lookout.

In April 2017, CLFC began a new project with the support of the Greenbelt Fund and in partnership with Lakehead University’s Food Security Research Network to collect community input on its region’s food system to then develop a regional food charter for the Kenora and Rainy River districts.

A food charter is a value, vision or principle statement, including a series of goals written by a region to describe what a community wants their food system to look like. Food charters are often used as a reference document for municipalities, business, school board, and organizational decision makers and helps to develop better policies that address food-related issues. Regional charters can help communities to come together and connect local food projects across municipalities, as well as support the unique needs and issues that are commonly faced by our communities in the Kenora and Rainy River Districts.

“The food charter is a first step towards establishing the unified vision around food in the Kenora & Rainy River Districts. We need to better understand the values and goals of our communities, commit to them at municipal levels, then find the best ways to work together to achieve them” says Jen Springett, Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op’s President.

Participants in Kenora’s input sessions addressed some of the diverse needs and issues that relate to its regional food system: accessibility and increased knowledge of traditional Anishinaabe foods, logistical issues of transportation for local food producers, and the affordability of healthy foods. In Sioux Lookout, participants have made it clear that efforts need to be made to make food more affordable and accessible to all members of the community. Dryden participants voiced concern around preserving local agriculture, increasing access to resources for local farmers, and building a thriving and sustainable food production system locally.

Sioux Lookout Community Coordinator Andrea Habinski stated, “In all sessions, it’s been obvious that participants strongly believe in the importance of educating children and the community about growing food, preparing healthy home-cooked meals, and maintaining knowledge on harvesting traditional food sources since these skills are slowly being lost by our community members.”

CLFC will continue to facilitate community input sessions until the end of June to collect as much community input as possible to use to create a representative regional food charter. Any interested organizations, associations, businesses, and schools are encouraged to contact CLFC to host their own input session.

For more information please visit:

<http://cloverbeltlocalfoodcoop.com/>

<http://cloverbeltlocalfoodcoop.com/our-projects/>

The CLFC strives to foster a thriving local food community by:

- *cultivating & facilitating farmer-consumer relationships;*
- *promoting the enjoyment of naturally grown, fairly priced, healthy food;*
- *and providing education & resources regarding environmentally sensitive agriculture.*

Contact Information:

All community coordinators and project leads can be reached by email at nwo@cloverbeltlocalfoodcoop.com

Dryden

Jen Springett, *President of CLFC*

Kenora

Jocelyn Dockerty, *Community Coordinator*

Sioux Lookout

Andrea Habinski, *Community Coordinator*

Thunder Bay

Monika Lucas, *Community Coordinator*

Rainy River District

Anita Marcotte, *Community Coordinator*