

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

THE ISSUES WE FACE

SHAME AND STIGMA

People with lived experience of poverty often feel an acute **sense of shame** as a result of the pervasive social stigma surrounding poverty, which in turn creates a **sense of powerlessness** and lack of agency.¹

POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Poverty is a known risk factor for developing mental illness. Food insecurity is **linked to increased incidence of mood and anxiety disorders.**²

DISENGAGEMENT

People living on low incomes often lack the time, resources, and networks to take effective action on the wider issues impacting them and their communities. **Voter turn-out in Canada tends to be lower among those in lower income brackets.**³

OUR RECIPE FOR CHANGE

- 1. Support people with lived experience of poverty and marginalization to build skills and confidence, and create opportunities for them** to become peer advocates and help community members access the supports they need.
- 2. Encourage volunteerism among program participants** and prioritize leadership opportunities.
- 3. Create ways for people to take action and have a voice on the issues that affect them.** Never lose sight of the role of government in addressing food insecurity and poverty, diet-related illness, and our unsustainable food system at scale.

KEY INGREDIENTS

- Recognize the challenges facing people who live on low incomes; create ways for everyone to participate at a level where they feel comfortable
- Peer support
- Referrals to other Community Food Centre programs and local services
- Links between personal and local challenges and wider systemic issues
- Multiple levels of involvement (e.g. volunteer positions, leadership roles)
- Material and social supports to remove barriers to participation
- Fun and rewarding process

PROGRAMS ON THE MENU

- + Peer advocacy support
- + Social justice clubs
- + Community action training
- + Public awareness and education
- + Volunteer program



THE CHANGE WE'RE COOKING UP



THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

“I voted during the municipal election for the first time.”

–Community member at The Local Community Food Centre (Stratford, ON)

92%

of social justice club members had increased knowledge of poverty, social justice, and food system issues.⁴

“After losing my full-time job... I was feeling useless to make change and depressed. Joining this social justice group gave me a place to have my views appreciated and heard.”

–Community member at The Table Community Food Centre (Perth, ON)

¹ Landmane & Viesturs (2010). Attributions of poverty. (abbrev.)

² PROOF (2018). Food insecurity and mental health.

³ Uppal & LaRochelle-Côté (2012). Factors associated with voting.

⁴ CFCC (2015). 2014 annual program survey.





SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

A snapshot of education and engagement programs offered by Community Food Centres across Canada. These programs aim to increase knowledge of poverty and food system issues, create inclusive opportunities for community action, and increase volunteerism and leadership for people living on low incomes.

The programs listed below reflect the work happening at the following Community Food Centres (CFCs):
The Alex CFC (Calgary, AB) - Dartmouth North CFC (Dartmouth, NS) - Hamilton CFC (Hamilton, ON)
The Local CFC (Stratford, ON) - NorWest Co-op CFC (Winnipeg, MB) - Regent Park CFC (Toronto, ON)
The Stop (Toronto, ON) - The Table CFC (Perth, ON)

COMMUNITY ACTION TRAINING

This 12-week program trains community members on the root causes of poverty and inequality and on ways to take individual and collective action. Graduates of Community Action Training (CAT) can apply to become peer advocates and often get involved in CFC social justice activities.

FROM STORYTELLING TO 'ZINES

At the end of The Stop CFC's Community Action Training, participants put theory into practice by working as a group to plan and lead an action together.

Past grads have used creative and compelling approaches to address issues that matter to them, like making a 'zine to share firsthand stories about homelessness, and an interactive campaign to raise awareness about social isolation and how to address it. This practical add-on helps participants build confidence in their own power to take action and contribute to social change.



PEER ADVOCACY

Community members with lived experience of poverty are trained as "peer advocates." Through an advocacy office, they offer information, referrals, and general assistance to fellow community members on a wide range of topics such as housing, income supports, mental health, and legal issues. Peer advocates also take on other leadership roles at the CFC to promote community action, engagement and inclusion.

YOU'RE SPEAKING MY LANGUAGE

The peer advocacy office at Regent Park CFC has a diverse group of peer advocates who speak multiple languages, which helps the CFC reach and support people from different groups within the community.

SOCIAL JUSTICE CLUBS

Community members collaborate to take action on poverty, equity, and food system issues that impact their lives and their communities. Members take the lead to organize a range of activities — from speaking at town hall meetings to hosting community events to marching in rallies.

WHAT FEEDS US

The Alex CFC's What Feeds Us program gets youth engaged in social justice issues and gives them a platform to make change in their community. In the last year alone, the What Feeds Us crew organized several events and actions that fused food, art, and social justice, like their food-focused Hungry for Change mayoral debate and their youth-led Plant the Seed music video project.



PUBLIC AWARENESS & EDUCATION

CFCs run a wide range of public education activities and campaigns throughout the year, from food-focused film screenings to campaigns to fight violence against women and Islamophobia to community forums and workshops on housing and disability rights.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

CFCs offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities, creating space for community members to build skills, make friends, and get more engaged. Priority is given to people living on low incomes.

EQUITY & INCLUSION TRAINING

All volunteers at Hamilton CFC take part in equity and inclusion training, helping volunteers develop skills and tools for working with diverse groups of people, both at the CFC and beyond.



community food centres
CANADA good food is just the beginning