

Youth Engagement in Food Sustainability: A Review of Programs offered in Ontario



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
1.0 What is Food Sustainability?	5
2.0 Youth Health Statistics in Ontario and Sudbury	5
3.0 The Value of Experiential Learning	6
4.0 Food Sustainability Programs in Ontario.....	8
Figure 8.0 Youth-based food sustainability programs in Ontario.....	8
4.1 Community Gardens and Kitchens	9
4.2 Youth Internships:.....	10
4.3 Community Workshops:	11
4.4 School Gardens:	12
4.5 School Workshops:	12
4.6 School Fieldtrips	14
4.7 School Salad Bars:	14
5.0 Removing the Barriers to Experiential Food-based Programming for Youth.....	14
6.0 Conclusions.....	15
Appendix A.....	16
Figure 1.0 Obesity Statistics	
Figure 2.0 Canada Food Guide Statistics	
Figure 3.0 Distribution of Estimating Correct Portion Size by Age Group	
Figure 4.0 Obesity by Gender	
Figure 5.0 Fruit and Vegetable Intake (by age and province)	
Figure 6.0 Percentage of the population aged 2-6 surveyed in Sudbury for each BMI group	
Figure 7.0 BMI by urban/rural area of residence	
Appendix B.....	21
References	
Contacts	
Funding and Partnerships	



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Executive Summary

The Youth Engagement in Food Sustainability: A Review of Programs offered in Ontario, is a look into the nature of youth-based food sustainability programs in Ontario. The objective of this report is also demonstrate the need, and the benefits, and from that stimulate networking and foster communication links to Sudbury youth organizations to see how those programs can be adapted to Sudbury's youth population.

Our youth are disconnected from food in many ways, such as the knowledge of where food comes from, and the health and environmental impacts of their food choices. Some statistics to back up these findings include the fact that youth obesity rates are up 10%, and that 33% of youth in Ontario are overweight. Over 50% of youth do not know the Canada Food Guide, and in Sudbury 75% of youth eat less than 5 fruits and vegetables per day.

This disconnection with food is in part due to a lack of health and nutritional knowledge, but it is also because of the systemic changes in our food system, our food cultures and our lifestyles. The disconnection with food in our society has also revealed itself in the lack of young people taking over the family farm. The food system in Canada is controlled by four or five major corporations - all are vertically integrated and own the food system from the production all the way up to the distribution system and ownership of the grocery stores.

Research has shown that reconnecting youth through a variety of hands-on food-based programs is successful in facilitating life-long healthy eating habits, developing social and organizing skills, and improving interactions with adults. Reconnecting to a more local food system will require youth to be involved in the "total food experience" so that they can relearn how to grow food, eat a healthy diet, and contribute to the local economy by purchasing from local farmers.

Many youth organizations throughout Ontario are addressing these issues through hands-on programs, from gardening to cooking to hands-on farm internship opportunities. This report includes an overview of these experiential food-based programs throughout Ontario. They offer various models for Sudbury organizations to implement into their youth outreach programs in the effort to rebuild a more local, and sustainable food system.

1.0 What is Food Sustainability?

The Foodshed Project has a mandate to implement the Greater Sudbury Food Charter, which encapsulates a vision of a local self-reliant, ecologically based, and biodiverse food system. We move this agenda through our partnerships, our funders, and through the public that we educate in our outreach events, publications, and more recently, hands-on programs that involve youth.

One obvious question one could ask is “Why should we teach kids about food sustainability? Couldn’t we just engage them by educating them about nutrition and health?” Learning new food skills, such as food growing or cooking, goes hand in hand with changing behaviors. It is difficult to expect a young person to choose healthy, local foods when they don’t know how to cook or they don’t know what makes a food nutritious or they lack a sense of appreciation for what goes into growing food. Food sustainability is the perfect vehicle for giving youth the “total food experience” that creates continuity between the issue of personal responsibility and health, and ultimately our economy and environmental sustainability.

2.0 Youth Health Statistics in Ontario and Sudbury

Studies have been published within the last five years show that the youth of Northern Ontario and Greater Sudbury are unhealthier and less food-knowledgeable than the rest of Ontario’s youth. The health statistics show the rising rate of obesity in youth can be linked to lack of knowledge of the proper foods to consume (based on the portion sizes suggested in Canada’s Food Guide) and how early behaviors lead to life-long eating patterns. Other socio-economic factors, such as the cost of food and proximity to grocery stores, also play a role in accessing healthy food.

Statistics Canada research shows that the youth of today are significantly more overweight than they were roughly 25 years ago (Figure 1, Appendix A). Some of the reasons for this trend include lack of knowledge of the right foods to eat, their portions sizes, and overcoming learned eating habits from childhood.

The youth of Northern Ontario and The Greater Sudbury Area are subjected to different conditions and environments, and accordingly they have unique needs and issues. Research published in the Northern Ontario Child and Youth Health Report (Northern Health Information Partnership, 2003) has shown that Northern Ontario, including Sudbury specifically have higher rates of childhood obesity than the rest of Ontario (Figure 4, Appendix A).

The Sudbury and District Health Unit (SDHU) along with the Public Health Research Education and Development Program (PHRED) published a study (Knowledge of Canada’s Food Guide and Food Portion Size, 2004) which assessed the public’s knowledge of the Canada Food Guide and food servings. The results indicate that a large portion of the Sudbury youth are unaware of the Canada Food Guide (76% of youth aged 18-24 vs. 86% of all Canadians) (Figure 2, Appendix A) and are also unaware of what appropriate servings are (Figure 3, Appendix A).

Research published by the Sudbury and District Health Unit and PHRED (Healthy Weights report, 2004) has shown that the young adults (ages 20-34) in Sudbury consume less fruits and vegetables than older adults in Sudbury, and less than that of the Ontario average as well (Figure 5, Appendix A). Although it may appear that the youth of Northern Ontario and Sudbury are purposefully making poor food choices, a part of the explanation may also be that

they are simply not aware of what healthy food choices are, which is illustrated in the data that shows a lack of Canada Food Guide awareness and appropriate serving size (Figure 2 and Figure 3, Appendix A).

The Nutrition in Northern Ontario report (2003), published by the Sudbury and District Health Unit and PHRED, indicated that only 76% of children in Northern Ontario aged 2-6 enjoy a variety of foods, which means that roughly 1 in 4 children lack a variety in their diet (18% have variety sometimes and 6% rarely have variety) (page viii). This report also revealed that almost one third (30%) of children in Northern Ontario aged 2-6 are overweight, and less than half (43%) could be considered as having a normal BMI for their age (Figure 6), with rural families having a higher proportion of “at-risk of being overweight” children (Figure 7, Appendix A), which is of particular concern for Northern Ontario because many families live in rural areas. This is important because the number of fruits and vegetables consumed in childhood is an important predictor of higher fruit and vegetable consumption in adulthood (Heimendinger and Van Duyn, 1995).

It is difficult to compare these statistics to national averages because the last national survey (the Nutrition Canada National Survey) was completed 30 years ago! Income is also undoubtedly a contributing factor with 33,120 kids in The City of Greater Sudbury being in the low income bracket (Statistics Canada, 2006).

It is also noteworthy to mention that Sudbury as a whole has health issues. Our obesity rate is 3% higher than the provincial and national average (based on 2007 data), our life expectancy is 2.2 years lower than the national average and 2.4 years lower than the provincial average, we smoke more (27% of Sudburians, vs. 21% of Ontarians and 22% of Canadians) (Vital Signs, 2008). Given these statistics it seems reasonable to suggest that Sudbury needs to make healthy living initiatives more of a priority.

3.0 The Value of Experiential Learning

There is a growing consensus that behaviors cannot be changed with just simple information dissemination. If we want to see some behavior changes in our future society it is important that we develop leadership skills and actively involve youth in the behaviors we are advocating. Within the last ten years or so there has been a good deal of peer-reviewed research that has demonstrated the ability of hands-on programming to educate youth about food and the food system and the behavior changes that accompany that newly acquired knowledge.

The Journal of Environmental Education recently published a review paper that surveyed the research that has been done on the effects of school gardening in the United States, Blair (2009) found that 9 out of 12 studies reported a positive difference in test scores between gardening and non-gardening students (using a criteria of $p < .05$). In this review Blair also found that all studies reported that the gardening student groups had higher scores on science tests. On the qualitative side of things, Blair found that all studies reported improved school attitudes, pride in the garden and its produce and all studies reported that the gardens had a strong community-building component that promoted teamwork, student bonding and more interaction with adults and the community.

School gardens also have curriculum applications outside of plant science and environmental science. In a survey of 322 elementary schools with school gardens in the United States, DeMarco, Relf, and McDaniel (1999) found that the subject areas the teachers taught in conjunction with the garden were science (92%), environmental education (83%), mathematics (69%), language arts (68%), health and nutrition (59%), ethics (58%), and social studies and history (51%).

The benefits of experiential learning may not be unique to gardening experiences. Lieberman and Hoody (2000) conducted a study in the United States where they surveyed 40 schools, in 12 different states, comparing classrooms that integrated the outside environment with classrooms that did not and found that the environment-integrated classes had more enthusiasm for learning, and higher standardized test scores (including GPA scores). It also appears as though experiential learning may give students analytical skills that can transfer to other areas. A study performed by Mabie and Baker (1996) in Los Angeles compared the effectiveness of (a) a school gardening project, (b) an in-class food/gardening workshop and (c) regular programming. The researchers subjected the three different groups to a series of unrelated (ie., not related to food or gardening) hands-on cognitive tests and the results showed that the students in both the hands-on food workshop program and the garden program performed better on the cognition tests than the regular class students. Also noteworthy, both hands-on students performed similarly, so the situation might be that experiential hands-on learning that engages the student improves learning, more so than gardening specifically.

It is also evident that hands-on engagement of youth in food-related activities can change food-related behaviors. A study performed in Texas by Devine and colleagues (1999) found that people who have gardens are more likely to eat more fruits and vegetables and similar studies have also shown that kids who participate in school garden program have better attitudes towards healthy foods (Cavaliere, 1987). Similarly, in a study of a pilot program in California a nutrition education program combined with school garden increased the students (1st graders) willingness to try new fruits and vegetables (Morris, Neustadter, Zidenberg-Cherr, 2001). Morris and fellow University of California-Davis colleagues also performed studies of gardening and nutrition education programs. They compared 4th grade students in a school with a nutrition education and garden program, to a school with just a nutrition education program, to a school with neither programs (Morris, Briggs and Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002). The results were that the garden and nutrition education group and the nutrition education group improved their nutrition knowledge following the program but only the garden and nutrition education group showed an improvement in attitudes towards fruit and vegetable consumption, such as willingness to eat the fruit or vegetable as a snack. Improving the willingness to try new foods is important because it is thought to be one of the first steps in developing healthier food choices.

Similar results were also found by McAleese and Rankin (2007) in Idaho. Using a 24hr food-recall workbook before and after the intervention, this study, which also used three focus groups (nutrition education, nutrition education plus school garden and regular programming), found that the students who participated in the nutrition education AND gardening activities had increased their fruit and vegetable intake. Moreover, after analyzing the 24hr recall notebooks, significant increases in vitamin A, vitamin C and fiber intake were found in the nutrition education and gardening group. As previously mentioned, these school-gardening programs are not unique to the southerly states. Similar gardening-education programs have also been shown to be effective by researchers in Detroit (Pothukichi, 2004) and Vermont (Canaris, 1995).

Hands-on activities that engage youth, such as gardening, also have implications outside of health and classroom-learning. A study by Hudkins (1995) found that horticulture therapy was successful with increasing self-confidence, pride, and self-esteem among troubled youths in Ohio. Similar sentiments were also echoed by Judy Olacke in regards to the effects the indoor greenhouse program has on the developmentally challenged individuals at Manitoulin Island Secondary School (personal communication, December 2008).

If we are expecting today's youth to be environmental responsible tomorrow it is important that we expose them to the environment and strengthens those ties, which is another reason why *engagement* is important. Researchers from the Texas A&M University have performed studies with school gardening programs showing that the gardening group have more positive environmental attitude scores, then the similarly-aged control group (Skelly and Zajicek, 1998 and Aguilar, Waliczek and Zajicek, 2008). This research also found ties between positive environmental attitudes and the number of outdoor related activities the students had experienced. The results of these studies suggest that gardening and other environmental activities increase the likelihood of environmental stewardship.

Outside of gardening and other hands-on activities for youth, the Salad Bar appears to be an effective model for changing behaviors. It has been suggested that its positive effects derive from the fact that students actually see their peers performing the act of choosing and eating fruits and vegetables. Research has shown that one of the determinants of food selection is the composition of foods chosen by others (Shattuck et al., 1992, via Mela, 1999).

4.0 Food Sustainability Programs in Ontario

Throughout Ontario there are a wide variety of experiential youth-based programs. These range from community gardens, to youth internships, to school salad bar programs. All of these programs educate on health, environment, and social skills, and are offered by the not-for-profit sector, the school system, or municipalities. For more information on how these programs are funded, please refer to Appendix B. See Figure 8.0, below.

Figure 8.0 Youth-based food sustainability programs in Ontario

Organization	Location	Programs and Initiatives							
		Community Gardens	Community Kitchens	Youth Internships	Community Workshops	School Gardens	School Workshops	School Field Trips	School Salad Bars
Green Venture	Hamilton	X	X		X			X	
Eco-source	Mississauga	X			X	X	X	X	X
The Ottawa Community Garden Network	Ottawa	X							
Growing Up Organic	Ottawa	X			X	X			X
Roots to Harvest	Thunder Bay	X				X	X	X	
Just Food	Ottawa		X	X	X			X	
Everdale	Hillsburgh			X	X		X	X	
Green Thumbs Growing Kids	Toronto				X	X		X	
Foodshare	Toronto		X	X	X		X	X	X
The Greenest City	Toronto	X		X	X				
The STOP Community Food Centre	Toronto	X	X		X		X	X	

4.1 Community Gardens and Kitchens

In Hamilton, the **Green-Venture** Eco-house maintains a community garden which is maintained mainly by mothers and children in the neighborhood. Green-Venture is a non-profit organization that is heavily supported by the City of Hamilton to engage the public in environmental issues. The organization conducts a variety of environmental stewardship programs in Hamilton, most notably of which is “The Eco-House.” The Eco-House is a gorgeous heritage home that was donated to the City of Hamilton in 1934 and was retrofitted in 2003 to be an environmental education house that uses energy efficient methods and generates some of its own energy. The Eco-House also has a large community garden on its property. The city support that Green Venture receives is not uncommon. **Eco-Source** receives funding for its 39 plot Garden of the Valley community garden from The City of Mississauga and The Region of Peel (along with Evergreen Wal-Mart and The Ontario Trillium Foundation).

The City of Toronto reports a multitude of community gardens, which are coordinated by the Toronto Community Garden Network (approximately 20) and the City of Toronto staff (approximately 9). One of the more interesting community gardening projects that are being developed in Toronto is the indoor community garden at the STOP Green Barn. **The STOP Community Food Centre**, Foodshare and many other partners, have recently finished the construction of a huge (8,000sq ft) community food centre called The Green Barn. The space used to be an old unused TTC streetcar repair bay and has since been retrofitted to a gorgeous multipurpose space which will eventually be used for an indoor community garden, cooking classes, workshops and a local farmers market.

Toronto is not alone in the trend towards community gardening. Ottawa has over 22 community gardens which are managed by **The Ottawa Community Garden Network**. One of the most note-worthy of these is the Glebe Organic Vegetable Garden (the “GO-VEG” garden) where kids that are part of the Glebe community group can get involved with the garden and learn about food and gardening through the various workshops put on by **Growing Up Organic in Ottawa**.

It is also not only the big Ontario urban cities that have community gardens. The **Roots to Harvest** organization in Thunder Bay manages a community garden called the Urban Market Garden. Six weeks in the summer the garden involves Thunder Bay youth to work in the garden, alongside a lead gardener, project leaders, community partners and guest farmers. Five days a week the youth perform the regular gardening duties and chores, they learn about different aspects of the food system and growing food, they are given leadership workshops, and they do public outreach and education. The garden is given the name the Urban *Market* Garden because at the end of the season the youth harvest the vegetables for a local market and a food bank.

Another interesting community gardening project that revolves around engaging youth is the HOPE (Healthy Organic Parkdale Edible) community garden in Toronto, which is managed by the **Greenest City** nonprofit group. The HOPE community garden employ’s youth through the Greenest City’s “From the Ground Up” program. From the Ground Up is a summer program that employs 9 marginalized and/or environmental-minded youth. The program encourages environmental and community stewardship by hiring the youth to animate and lead different vegetable and plant gardens.

Many community gardening groups also embrace the inter-relationship of food, gardening, diet and health by managing community kitchens alongside community gardens. The STOP community food centre offers many cooking classes at the Green Barn facility as well as cooking classes for kids, such as pizza workshops. There are four different community/collective kitchens in the Ottawa area according to the Ottawa Food Link guide, published by **Just Food** Ottawa and Ottawa Public Health. Just Food also provides assistance and advice to groups interested in starting community kitchens.

The Ottawa Community Garden Network publishes an excellent guide on how to start and maintain a community garden and is available for free off their website at www.flora.org/cgn-rjc/. Similarly, The Sudbury Food Connections Network has published a DVD of a presentation given by Suzanne Hanna on the topic of community gardening. The DVD is freely available from The Foodshed Project in Sudbury, and the audio from the DVD is freely available off The Foodshed Project website (<http://www.foodshedproject.ca>).

4.2 Youth Internships:

One of the most impressive internship programs in Ontario is that maintained by the **Everdale** organization at the Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre in Hillsburgh, Ontario, which is about 80km Northwest of Toronto and about 100km southwest of Barrie. The farm itself is a 150 acre certified-organic farm with 15 acres of vegetables, 20 acres of grain, and plenty of poultry, pigs, sheep and other farm animals. Everdale manages an innovative initiative called Farmers Growing Farmers (FGF) that matches eager individuals who are looking to start a career in organic, sustainable agriculture, with farmers who have well-established operations. Through this program Everdale provides business planning courses, support with finding quality farmland and support with finding funding for establishing a farming business. Although there are costs associated with taking this program an FGF “Placement Gift” is available. The gift is available to individuals with household incomes below \$45,000 and they provide the recipient with a subsidized course cost, up to 30 hours of one-on-one mentoring and a grant of up to \$4000 for start up costs, such as seeds, livestock, compost, etc. The gift is made possible by funding from Heifer International.

Outside of the FGF program Everdale also has an internship program called the “Future Farmers Internship,” which takes place at the Everdale farm in Hillsburgh. The interns are heavily involved with the daily operations at the farm over several months so they get a lot of hands-on farming experience and they also make over 30 field trips/seminars. The interns are given a small stipend and given free room and board while at the farm. Although these internship programs are not offered exclusively to youth-aged individuals, the participants are often younger individuals starting farming careers.

Similar to the Everdale FGF program, **Just Food** in Ottawa also hosts a Summer Farm Internship program. The internship is offered by 8 different Ottawa-area farms, each with several paid positions. In addition to this internship program the Just Food organization also maintains a directory of farms that are looking for volunteers and farmland owners who are looking for farmers to rent the land. Just Food has many other interesting programs that will be addressed in other areas of this report.

Outside of farming internships, Foodshare Toronto maintains an internship program called “Focus on Food,” that brings in marginalized youth to work in their facility where they get a variety of experience (ie. clerical,

warehouse, cooking, etc.) and also life-skills counseling outside of their jobs. The program has been in existence for over 13 years which is testament its effectiveness with helping young people get their feet on the ground.

Many youth-focused community gardens could also be considered “internships” because they often provide paid positions to youth interested in developing gardening experience, leadership skills and business training. This includes the HOPE community garden managed by The Greenest City in Toronto and The Urban Market Garden managed by Roots to Harvest in Thunder Bay. Similarly, In Port de Rimouski Quebec, **the Action Travail Rimouski-Neigette** project received \$70,000 in funding from Service Canada, through its Skills Link program, to hire 10 young people to create a community garden and then grow produce for local food banks (newswire, August 2008).

4.3 Community Workshops:

Many community gardens provide workshops for its participants that aim to tie in cooking, healthy eating and food-sustainability issues with the experience of growing your own food. Both the Green Venture garden at the Eco-house in Hamilton and the STOP community garden in Toronto provide workshops on cooking and gardening.

Many organizations are also providing food/gardening-related workshops directed towards youth and/or young families in the community. Outside of its internship programs and farm tours, the Everdale organization conducts many workshops throughout the year, such as the New Farmers Conference in March that deals with how an individual with no or little experience can begin a career in farming, and the Farmer for a Day program. The Farmer for a Day program is directed towards day camps and urban youth groups and provides the kids with the opportunity to come out to the farm and see what sustainable agriculture is all about. Just Food Ottawa also provides workshops in the winter for new farmers (many of which are younger individuals) such as value-added canning, setting up community shared agriculture (CSAs), farm management and organic certification. Eco-Source in Mississauga provides many community-based youth workshops. Throughout the year they provide free gardening workshops such as how to start seedlings, composting and organic gardening. They also host a very unique Harvest Meal at the end of the year. At the Harvest Meal event youth from the Peel region work with local farmers and chefs to harvest, prepare and serve a delicious gourmet meal with local ingredients. The dinner is provided to representatives from schools and school boards to learn about how they can increase the amount of local food products offered in their schools.

Another GTA-based organization that is providing excellent youth-based programming to the community is **Green Thumbs Growing Kids (GTGK)**. GTGK organizes programs for camps and agencies, as well as weekly evening garden drop-in programs at three different school community gardens. The workshops are offered to families and people in their respective school neighborhoods. GTGK has also partnered with a community arts group (Upwards Art) to provide arts activities for children in the school gardens and in the summer of 2008 GTGK was successful with hiring three youth-aged individuals to help out with programming, help out with garden maintenance and also helped design a rainwater harvesting device for one of the gardens. In addition to all these activities, GTGK also manages the “K Club.” The K Club was hosted at the Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club and provided kids with weekly workshops on a variety of food-related workshops, such as worm composting, soil mixing, planting and growing seeds indoors, as well as cooking and food preparation workshops.

In Ottawa the **Growing Up Organic** organization provides very unique programming to youth through a week-long “Youth Farm Apprenticeship Program.” The program is designed for kids aged 11-14 and in 2008 the program had 112 participants. The kids have an urban component where they travel around the city learning about

urban issues and then they have a farm component where they travel out to a 320 acre organic farm for 2 nights of camping. While on the farm the kids learn about hands-on farming techniques such as how to milk goats, how to make cheese and how to care for cattle and goats.

4.4 School Gardens:

Many schools are also adopting the community gardening model by placing gardens on school property. The gardens provide the students with an excellent hands-on opportunity to learn about the science of plants, as well as curriculum-linked food and health related issues. Green Thumbs Growing Kids maintains a school garden at Winchester Public School in Toronto and boasts a garden bed area of over 500sq feet. Produce from the garden is provided to the students through the Hot Lunch program, which includes a salad bar two days a week. Green Thumbs also oversees a school garden at Winchester Public School and in 2006 they harvested 300lbs of fresh food! Green thumbs has also established a composting program at Rose Ave. Public School where the kids now collect their organic waste in each classroom and then use it in the school garden. Green Thumbs also oversees many other school gardens and receives support from organizations such as the Toronto District School Board, the Ministry of Health Promotion, Foodshare and the Toronto Foundation for Student Success.

There are also many indoor school gardens that have been successful. Growing up Organic in Ottawa maintains indoor vegetable tray shelves at Lady Evelyn Public School. Roots to Harvest maintains indoor hydroponic gardens in the Thunder Bay area and Manitoulin Secondary School maintains an impressive indoor greenhouse program on Manitoulin Island. The Manitoulin Secondary School program is primarily used by developmental challenged youth in their life skills class. The students get a chance to learn some valuable hands-on gardening skills, they get some business exposure when they sell their produce at the Manitoulin Farmers Market and they also get to prepare recipes with the food they have grown, which garden coordinator and life skills class teacher Judy Olacke maintains “gives them a sense of self-confidence.”

An excellent guide for anyone contemplating starting a school garden is published by **Lifecycles and Evergreen**. The guide is called Patterns Through the Seasons and contains a great deal of useful information such as how to plan out the garden, how to manage it, how to meet curriculum goals and then a ton of useful hands-on curriculum-based activities that can be run in the fall, winter, spring and summer. The guide is based on the British Columbia education curriculum, but could easily be adapted to Ontario’s curriculum. The guide can be found online, for free, via the evergreen website at: <http://www.evergreen.ca/en/lg/patterns.pdf>

It is worthwhile to mention that school gardens are much more common in the United States and in some states receive government support. In Texas and California the state education departments encourage school gardening by providing curriculum-linked program and evaluative research for school gardening (Dirks and Orvis, 2005). This is also not just unique to the Southern states. New York state has over 200 school gardens, with more than 100 teachers and 11,000 students involved (Faddegon, 2005).

4.5 School Workshops:

The STOP Community Food Centre provides excellent curriculum-linked workshops for grade 5 students in the classroom. They offer four different 2.5hr long workshops, one of which is a “game-of-life” type workshops where the kids receive fake money, based on what career they are assigned, then there are pressed with making decisions regarding how and where to buy food. In addition to this, the kids discuss possible solutions to food

security issues in the workshop. According to Kamla Ross, youth coordinator at STOP, the program is successful with younger kids in grade 5 and also older kids in high school, because they are complex issues that can be addressed on many levels.

The Everdale organization runs an in-school workshop program called Farmers in the Classroom. The program delivers workshops on soil, plants and animals in the classroom and a fourth workshop on humans and community on the Everdale farm.

Eco-Source in Mississauga runs a program called Youth and Local Food, which goes into the classroom to teach kids of all grade levels about where their food comes from and the environmental price tag associated with that food transportation.

Roots to Harvest in Thunder Bay also runs a similar “food miles” workshop, as well as workshops on pollination and food, vermicomposting (composting with worms) and a workshop where kids build a calorimeter to figure out the calorie content of different foods. In addition to these workshops Roots to Harvest also brings speakers into the classroom such as local bee keepers, food inspectors, farmers and chefs.

Foodshare’s Field to Table program has also been providing very excellent and innovative programming to Toronto-area schools. They have a Foodprint workshop that teaches kids about where their food comes from, an “Ultra Local” workshop where kids learn about urban agriculture and how they can reduce their ecological footprint, and a food preservation workshop where the kids learn about how you can make your local food last well beyond the growing season. The Field to Table program also has workshops geared towards teachers, such as the Learning From the Local workshop and the Great Big Crunch workshop. The Learning from the Local workshop helps teachers bring local food education into the classroom by providing the teachers with curriculum-linked resources and suggestions. The Great Big Crunch workshop is an annual event that occurs across the country with over 26,000 students participating in 2008. The workshop invites students and teachers to learn about eating healthy in relation to the local and global food system. The workshop uses the journey an apple makes from seed, to harvest, to the market, to the core, as a way to explore the topics, and then at a coordinated time the classroom participants all take a bite out of an apple at the same time, making a “Great Big Crunch.” Another excellent in-class program Foodshare has developed is the Guardian of the Greenbelt program. Through this initiative a classroom signs up to be a “Guardian of the Greenbelt,” then they receive workshops about what foods are available in Ontario, how they’re grown, harvested, preserved and how they taste. They also get a chance to communicate with local farmers and producers, visit Foodshare’s facilities and prepare a meal using local ingredients.

Foodshare’s approach of “teaching the teacher,” has been shown to be a useful model elsewhere. In Gloucestershire, England, under a government-funded program called **Growing Schools**, teachers are trained to harness the potential of the outdoor classroom, as it relates to food and health (Lakin, and others 2008). The program raises awareness about the benefits of hands-on activities of animals and crops and how it relates to the education curriculum and it also helps teachers with using farms and other growing resources as teaching resources. The overall aim is to encourage, support and inspire all schools (at all levels).

Although not a “workshop” per se, Roots to Harvest organizes a World Food Day event on campus at Lakehead University where different groups and organizations in Thunder Bay showcase how they are contributing to increasing local and world food security. Keynote speakers also make presentations on related topics. This event is unique in that it is engaging university-aged youth that are often neglected in the efforts to expose youth to food-related issues.

4.6 School Fieldtrips

Just Food in Ottawa runs a unique program called Students for Farming, where they bring urban school kids (Grade 5's and 10's) to a rural farm where they receive curriculum-linked programming, do some farm gleaning (harvesting the produce that has been left behind but is still fresh and edible) and other service projects on the farm. The students then take the produce back to city food banks and some back to the classroom where they use the food to prepare recipes and discuss food-related issues.

Eco-source runs a similar program in Mississauga where kids get the unique opportunity of exploring Ontario's Greenbelt. The students take part in hands-on, interactive workshops while at the farms and learn about sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, the Greenbelt and the daily operations of farming.

Green Thumbs Growing Kids also runs interesting field trip programs in Toronto. From March break until the end of May kids make the trip out to the Allan Gardens Children's Conservatory where they plant seeds and cuttings for their school garden. While there they learn about vermicomposting and the importance of soil conservation. Green Thumbs also operates an afterschool program where kids travel out to the Riverdale Farm and construct an annual straw-bale retaining wall. They also grow a variety of crops, learn about composting, soil, and also take part in arts and crafts, games and nature hikes.

4.7 School Salad Bars:

Many schools are now making fresh fruits and vegetables available to students at nominal costs in effort to provide an alternative to the mostly processed foods available at the cafeteria. Toronto has over 20 schools with salad bar programs, and Foodshare has now published a book about how to start a salad bar program in your school. The book is available for purchase from the Foodshare website. Through the Growing up Organic organization, Lady Evelyn Public School in Ottawa now has a salad bar program that it offers to students in grades 1-6 for \$1 and provides local, organic produce whenever available. While not a salad bar, Eco-Source is increasing the amount of local foods in Mississauga schools by loaning out a commercial sized popcorn maker and local popcorn for schools to use as a fundraising tool.

5.0 Removing the Barriers to Experiential Food-based Programming for Youth

Studies have been conducted to reveal what the biggest barriers to school gardens are. Graham and Zidenberg-Cherr (2005) surveyed 592 teachers that taught in schools with community gardens (68% of which used the school garden as a teaching tool) and found that lack of time (67%), lack of teacher interest (63%), lack of experience (61%) and lack of knowledge (60%) were the most prevalent barriers to using the garden as an instructional tool. That being said it is clear that support is needed for these hands-on programs. Support in the way of educating the teachers, developing the interest in teachers and providing the school with outside support to manage the garden, and such support has been shown to be effective. In California, a three-school pilot program called Farm to School Connections that combines school gardens, cafeterias and classroom initiatives to improve healthy eating hires an outside garden coordinator (a retired teacher and experienced gardener who is paid by the state). Using this state supported model the gardening program is much better received and utilized by the teachers (Graham et al., 2004). A similar hired community-based instructor was also used in Las Vegas school gardens to provide training, coordinate

the program and organize volunteer master gardeners in order to overcome the challenges teachers face when setting up a community garden (O'Callaghan, 2005).

A study by Dobbs, Relf and McDaniel (1998) that surveyed 205 Virginia kindergartens to grade 6 teachers found that 98% of them wanted to participate in additional gardening training. That being said, it might be useful to have a school gardening workshop and guidebook that is tied to the Ontario Education curriculum and endorsed by the provincial government. This workshop could be provided to in-service teachers as well as pre-service teachers.

Another way that the youth of Sudbury could be engaged in food sustainability issues is to encourage students to conduct research and write reports on food sustainability issues. The Ontario Association of Food Banks recently began publishing a peer-reviewed academic journal called *Esurio: Journal of Hunger and Poverty* that hosts articles written by Students on subjects of hunger and poverty, including food security issues. This journal would be the ideal venue for a University student to publish an undergraduate and graduate thesis paper on food-related issues in Sudbury and/or Northern Ontario.

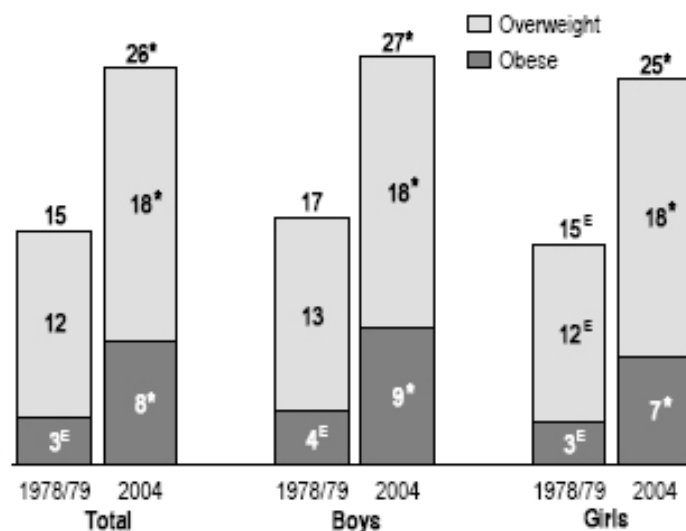
6.0 Conclusions

As this report reveals, there are many problems related to our food system and they are having a life long impact on our youth. There are solutions, and many not-for-profits organizations, schools and municipalities are finding solutions - ranging from engaging youth in cooking classes to actually growing the food that they are eating.

These programs are also supported by a variety of funders, organizations, and partners. The majority of these programs are found in Southern Ontario, but that is changing and can change even more. By following the lead of the organizations outlined in this report, Sudbury can make better use of the potential to create positive changes for youth by engaging them in hands-on experiential learning. The benefits for youth and to society are life long. We need to do more to address the systemic issues that have lead us to this point, and it can start with getting young people involved directly in creating those changes.

Appendix A

Figure 1.
 Percentage overweight or obese, by sex, household population aged 2 to 17, Canada excluding territories, 1978/79 and 2004



Data sources: 1978/79 Canada Health Survey; 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey: Nutrition

Note: Because of rounding, detail may not add to totals.

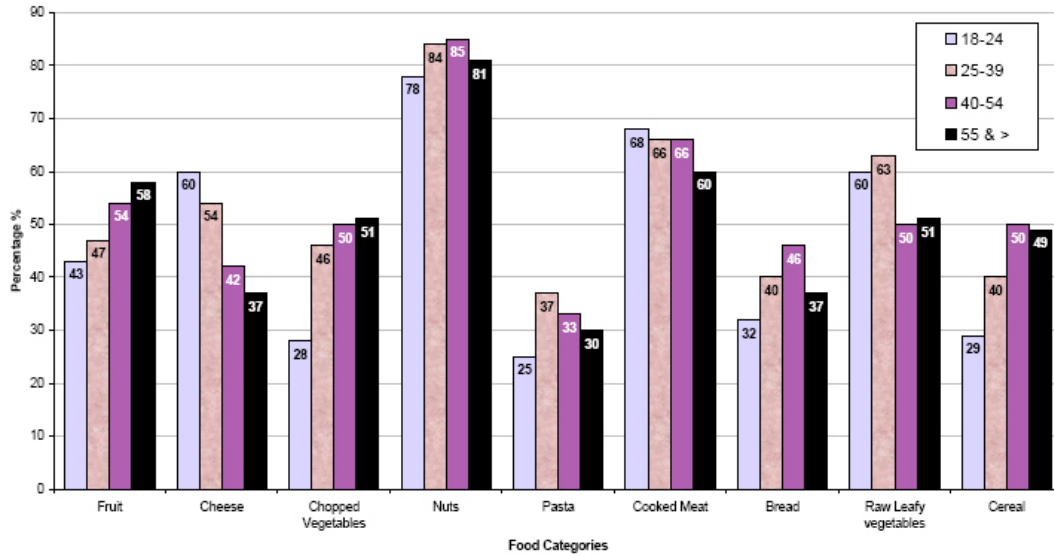
* Significantly different from estimate for 1978/79 ($p < 0.05$)

^E Coefficient of variation 16.6% to 33.3% (interpret with caution)

Figure 2.

		CFG Awareness		Number of People Correctly Identifying	
				Number of Food Groups	Correct # of Servings of Fruits and Vegetables
Income	Less than \$40,000	75	49	52	
	\$40,000-\$60,000	81	46	50	
	More than \$60,000	91	49	61	
Age	18-24	79	57	49	
	25-39	86	66	58	
	40-54	89	42	57	
	55 or older	75	38	45	
Children living in home	With children under 18 living at home	88	61	52	
	Without children living at home	80	43	52	

Figure 3. Distribution of Estimating Correct Portion Size by Age Groups



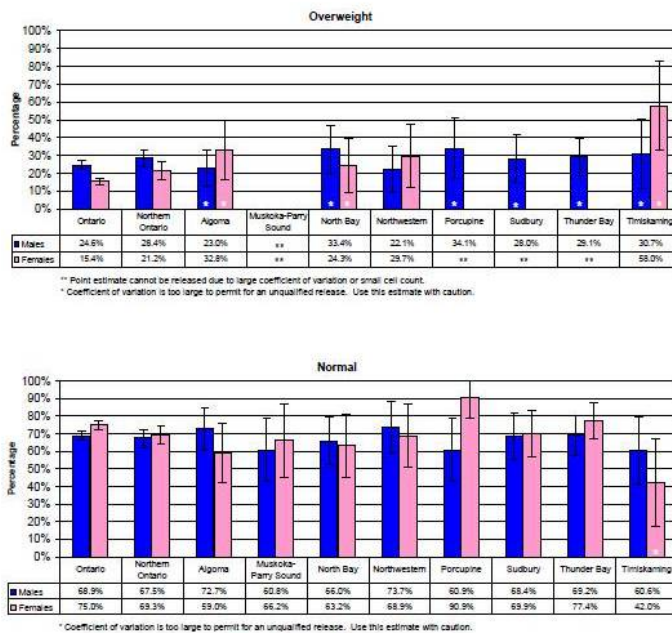
A. Definitions:
 The percentage of individuals aged 12 to 19 whose weight to height squared ratio exceeds the 85th percentile or falls between the 10th to 85th percentile in relation to others of their gender and age as defined by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) growth charts. (proxy reports used).
 Obesity: In the 12 to 19 year olds is a function of height to weight but not to the constant ratio as with adults. It varies with age and sex. (Variables: HWTADHTM, HWTADWTG)

B. Significance/Uses:
 - CDC Growth Charts are the recommended measure of weight status in children.
 - The Growth Charts vary weight and height between males and females.
 - The Growth Charts provide a continuum wherein shifts away from the generally accepted range results in an increased chance of developing health problems. Above average weight has been found to be related to increased risk of Type II diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia and coronary artery disease.
 -> 10th to < 85th percentile = normal weight
 -> 85th percentile = overweight

C. Limitations:
 - This measure is weakened as a predictor of morbidity and mortality in that it does not take into consideration bodily distribution of fat or body musculature.
 - This measure is typically underestimated due to tendencies to overestimate height and underestimate weight.
 - Self-administered questionnaires are susceptible to social desirability, therefore estimates of prevalence may be biased.
 - The survey does not include homeless people, people living on reserves or people living in institutions.
 - Breast feeding women could not be excluded from the analysis. This may cause a slight elevation of female BMI.
 - Comparison of the figure should not be done without referral to the accompanying confidence intervals.

D. Source:
 Canadian Community Health Survey, Cycle 1.1, 2000/01.
 References: 118, 119

Figure 4. Obesity, by Gender, Age 12 to 19 by Public Health Unit Area, 2000/01



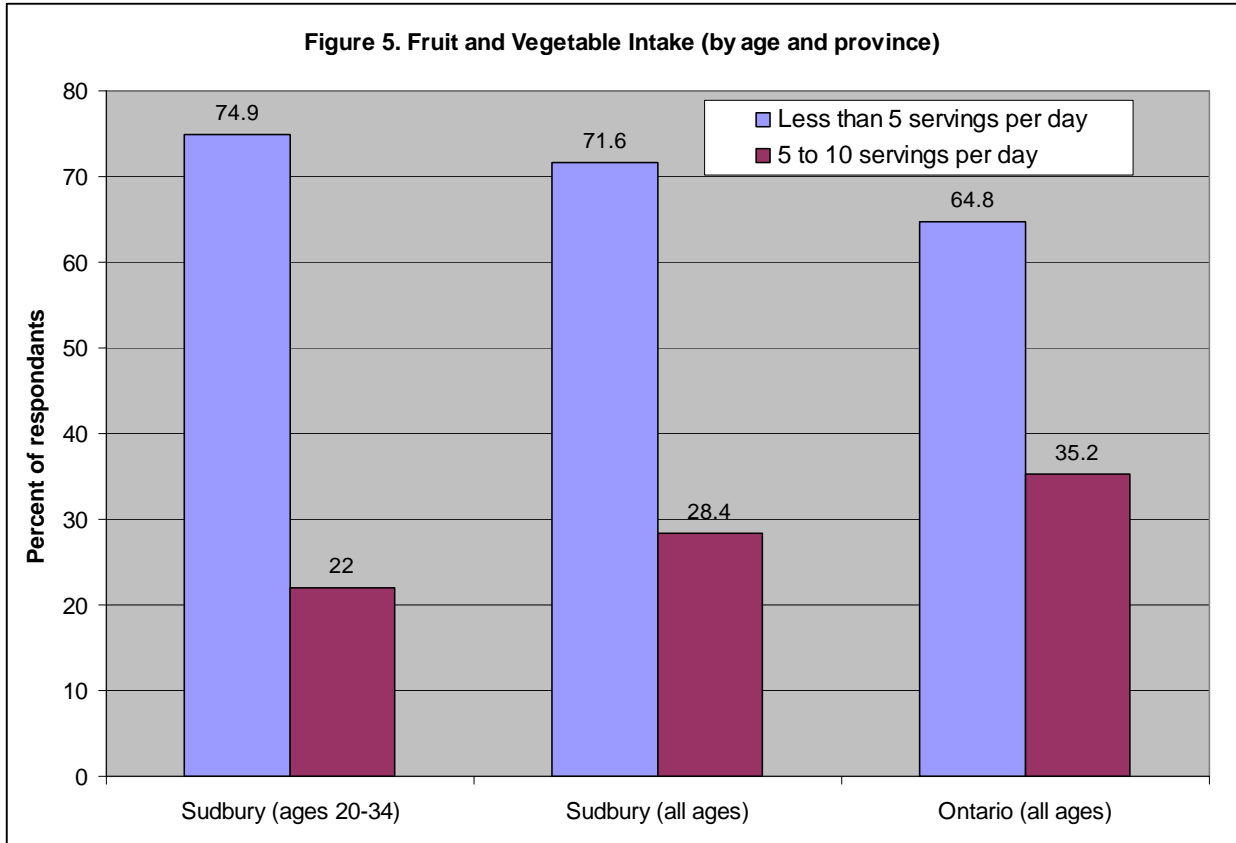
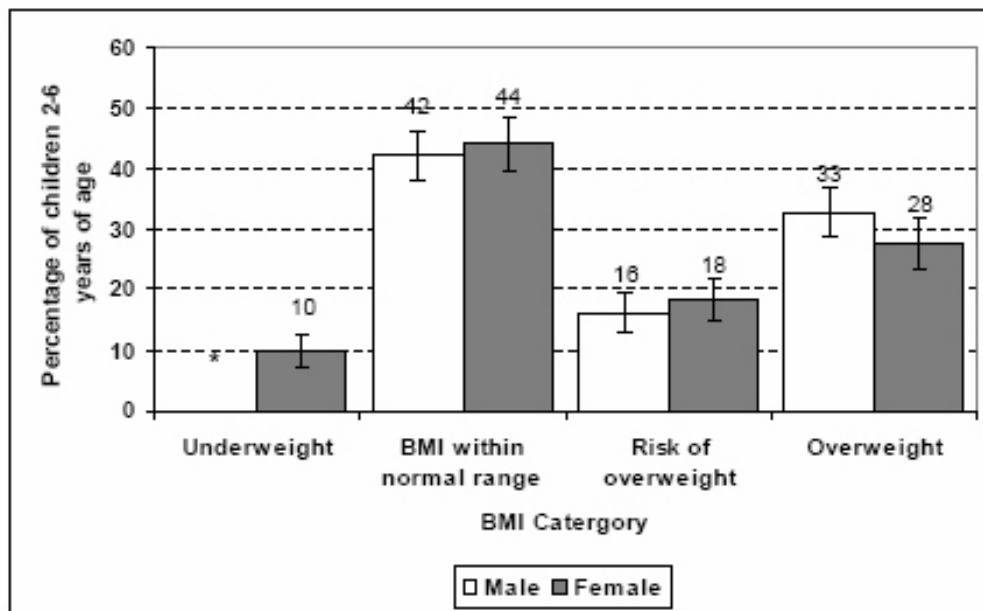
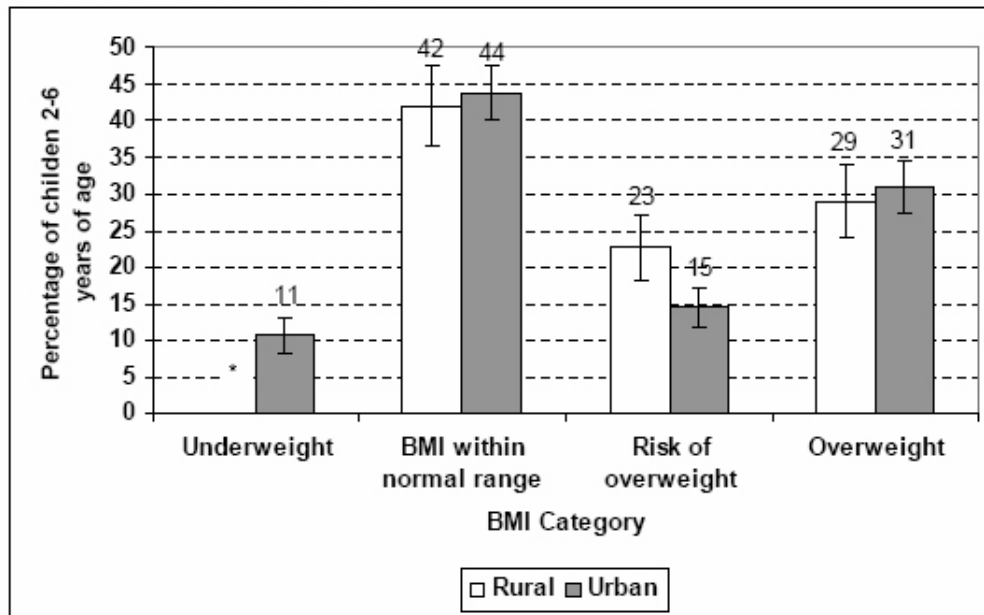


Figure 6. Percentage of the population aged 2-6 surveyed in Sudbury in each BMI group



* Sample size too small to report

Figure 7. BMI by rural/urban area of residence



*** Sample size too small to report

Appendix B

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Esurio: Journal of Poverty and Hunger
<http://www.esurio.ca/ojs-2.2/index.php/esurio>

Organization websites

Green Venture - www.greenventure.ca
Eco-Source - www.ecosource.ca
The STOP Community Food Centre - www.thestop.org
Foodshare - www.foodshare.net
The Ottawa Community Garden Network - www.flora.org/cgn-rjc
Canadian Organic Growers, Ottawa Chapter - www.cog.ca/ottawa
Roots to Harvest - www.rootstoharvest.org
Greenest City - www.greenestcity.org
Just Food - www.spcottawa.on.ca/ofsc
Everdale - www.everdale.org
Green Thumbs Growing Kids - www.kidsgrowing.ca

Partners and Supporters of Not for Profits referenced in this document

Everdale

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Hamilton Eat Local Project
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Horizon Utilities
Hotz Environmental

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Ministry of the Environment
Natural Resources Canada
Ontario Ministry of the Environment
YMCA – Youth in Transition Program

Eco-Source

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
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Ministry of the Environment
Natural Resources Canada
Ontario Ministry of the Environment
YMCA – Youth in Transition Program
General Electric - Ecoimagination
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Shell Environment Fund
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Ontario Trillium Fund
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
The EJLB Foundation
Nature Clean
The Welcome Wagon
Pratt and Whitney

The Ottawa Community Garden Network

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Growing up Organic

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The City of Ottawa

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St. John's Church West Toronto
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Foundations

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