

Topic Area: Wellness and Public Health

Abstract Title

Beyond healthy food habits: Lessons learned from a community kitchen and community garden developed by and for the Francophone and Francophile minority of St. John's, Newfoundland

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Abstract

Introduction: Literature abounds on the role of community kitchens and community gardens as strategies to foster food security and healthy lifestyles. But what are their unique contributions among Francophone and Francophile minority communities in Canada?

Objectives: This case study aimed to explore the benefits of a community kitchen and garden developed by and for the Francophone and Francophile minority living in St. John's, Newfoundland. It also aimed to identify key facilitators to their success.

Methods: An ethnographic approach from September 2015 to July 2016 including document consultation, participant observation and 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews with coordinators and participants (men n=2, women n=13, Francophones n=12 and Francophiles n=3) was used. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes.

Results: The community kitchen and garden play a key role in the development and vitality of the Francophone and Francophile community of St. John's. In addition to acquiring cooking and gardening knowledge, skills, self-confidence, and pride, these activities enable participants to assert their cultural identity and improve their knowledge of French language and Francophone cultures. They contribute to cultural continuity and foster a sense of community belonging, and cultural and linguistic well-being. Leadership, conviviality, the collective approach, connection to identity, exchanges between Francophones and Francophiles, and the use of French were key facilitators enabling benefits gained.

Conclusion: Findings highlight the importance of considering both language and culture, as vital factors to participation and benefits gained. Results call for an expanded understanding of how community kitchens and gardens can contribute to individual and community well-being among other minority communities in Canada.

Significance to the Field of Dietetics: Few studies have addressed how these health promotion activities can be used to vitalize minority communities in Canada and foster their cultural and linguistic well-being. This study makes recommendations, which can be helpful to both researchers and practitioners working with Francophone and Francophile minorities.