

THUNDER BAY + AREA FOOD STRATEGY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



This was a big year for us here at the Thunder Bay + Area Food Strategy. Read below for a short summary of our biggest accomplishments this year – the 2023 Community Food System Report Card, our ongoing local procurement efforts, and the release of the Emergency Food Plan.

A big thanks to Karen Kerk, the previous TBAFS Coordinator, for all of the amazing work she did to set the stage for us going forward – none of this would have been possible without her leadership. We have big plans ahead for 2024, please reach out if you'd like to get involved!



2023 Community Food System Report Card

After many years of hard work and collaboration with our network, we released the 2023 Community Food System Report Card in January! To get here, we conducted extensive quantitative and qualitative research using existing national, provincial, and regional datasets, statistics collected by regional non-profit and charitable organizations, and stakeholder interviews with folks in our food community. The full document is available in an interactive digital format on its own website – foodsystemreportcard.ca

The final document (at a whopping 89 pages!) provides a snapshot of the region's food system challenges and opportunities while highlighting successful local initiatives.

By tracking 119 indicators and comparing them to data from the inaugural 2015 Report Card, we can see how local realities have changed over time, and what steps we need to take next to build a more equitable and sustainable food system.



The official launch of the Report Card at Thunder Bay City Hall. Pictured L-R: Ivan Ho/TBDHU, Charles Levkoe/Lakehead University/TBAFS, Kendal Donahue /OMAFRA/TBAFS, Mayor Ken Boshcoff, Karen Kerk/TBAFS, Railli Roy/Beanstalk Consulting, Gwen O'Reilly /Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre/TBAFS, and Roopa Rakshit/Lakehead University/TBAFS.

This document contains a wealth of information, so the question now is where do we go from here? How can we take all that we learned in the Report Card and mobilize it to create meaningful change? We're looking forward to continuing these conversations with you all, and if you have ideas please let us know!

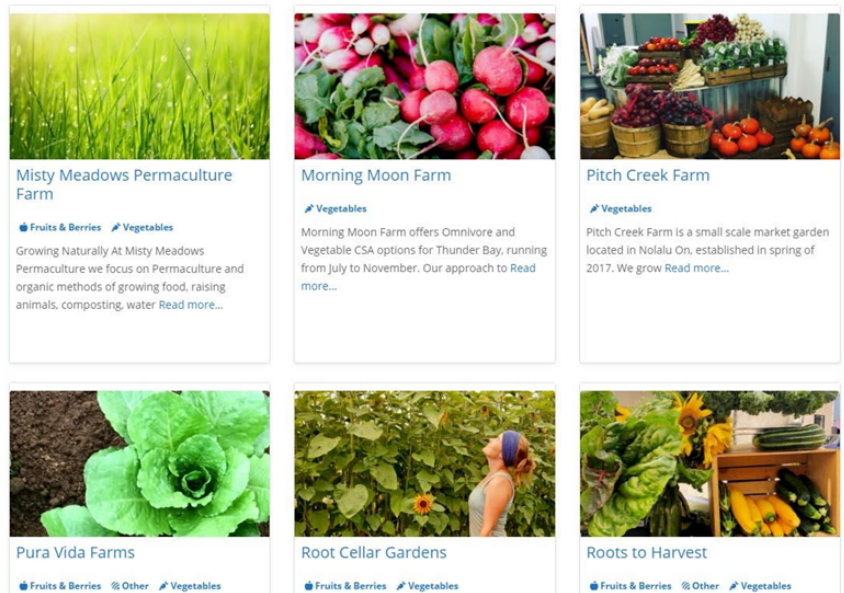
Local Procurement Initiatives

Thunder Bay is considered a leader in local food procurement! The Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) highlighted Thunder Bay as a local food success story in their [2023 Ontario Local Food Report](#), noting the benefits to local producers that come from City procurement initiatives, as well as the importance of resources like the Report Card to building better food systems. Read more about it at the link above.

Going forward, we are part of a 3-year northern-Ontario wide project on local food procurement with four other regional partners: Collège Boréal, the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance (NOFIA), the Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN), and the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council (GSFPC). The goal of this project, titled "*Enhancing Northern Ontario Agri-Food Supply Chains through Place-Based Local Procurement Interventions*," is to support northern Ontario food producers and to help those who want to enter the wholesale market. French speakers can read more in our [Radio-Canada interview here](#).

We're also looking to revamp tbayinseason.ca - an online directory for local foods that we launched a few years ago - to bring in new content and marketing campaigns to continue promoting our amazing regional food scene. Check it out if you haven't already!

Stay tuned for more to come, including some exciting new projects under the food production and procurement pillars in 2024.



Screenshot from tbayinseason.ca showing local food producers.

Emergency Food Plan

In 2020, the TBAFS led a community-based research project on food access in our community during the COVID-19 pandemic, which identified the need for coordinated collaboration in the form of an Emergency Food Plan (EFP), and ongoing connections between the organizations that make up our City's food access infrastructure. Out of this research came the Food Access Coalition, a group of over 40 social service based organizations and institutions addressing food access needs, who gather around a shared table to ensure no one in our community goes hungry.

After three years of collaborative grassroots work coordinated by our EFP Coordinator Courtney Strutt, version-1 of the EFP is now live. The release of this plan makes Thunder Bay the **first** municipality in Canada to bring food systems planning into the realm of municipal emergency response. Instead of waiting around for others to take charge, we came together and used our creativity and self-reliance to get it done. This success is something we should all be proud of!

This plan is just a first step, and we have a lot of work to do to make sure it is ready when we need it. All of our partners have signed 3-year agreements of cooperation, and the TBAFS is committed to stewarding the ongoing maintenance, updating, and training for the plan and its partners over the long term. For more information on the EFP, including the background report and the full v-1 itself, head to [our website](#).



Official ratification of the Emergency Food Plan at Roots Community Food Centre.

Back L-R: Cynthia Olsen/City of Thunder Bay, Lee-Ann Chevette/City of Thunder Bay, Jacob Porter/City of Thunder Bay, Sheena Campbell/TBFC/TBAFS, Brendan Carlin/RFDA, Erin Beagle/RCFC, Chief Greg Hankkio/Thunder Bay MECC, Councillor Dominic Pasqualino/City of Thunder Bay, Crystal Caputo/MPP Vaugeois' Office, Dan Hobbs/Red Cross, Athena Kreiner/Thunder Bay Community Foundation, Vignesh Viswanathan/Red Cross.
Front L-R: Kristin Tomcko/211, Kim McGibbon/TBDHU, Courtney Strutt/TBAFS, Charles Levkoe/Lakehead University/TBAFS, Sarah Siska/TBAFS, Amanda Campigotto/Thunder Bay Community Foundation.

Thunder Bay + Area

Food Strategy
Connecting Food and Community