

A photograph of several people wearing hats and work clothes, bent over in a field of leafy green plants, likely harvesting. The background is a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

KPU FARM SCHOOLS ALUMNI: *Stories from the Farms*

August 2022



Institute for Sustainable Food Systems

The KPU Farm Schools Program has been integral to the community by preparing more than 200 students, and counting, with hands-on education and training to be the next generation of farmers. The demand for this type of education opportunity is evident and increasing as only a handful of these programs exist throughout Canada.

The applied research and hands-on programming aims to create informed, engaged and inspired graduates who can enter the agriculture sector with skills for employment, community building, entrepreneurship and a thorough understanding of sustainable food systems. The legacy lies in building a workforce for the future embodying sustainable practices.

This document features 4 alumni stories from the incubator fields and beyond, and spotlights 3 other alumni in their various contributions to regional food systems work.





KPU Farm Schools Program

The KPU Farm Schools Program is based on the core value of collaboration. The Richmond Farm School (est. 2010) has met the test of time with a collaborative relationship lasting more than a decade. The City of Richmond has continuously committed time, staff, resources and perpetual enthusiasm for our program and relationship. To support the program, the city provides a secure lease of approximately 7 acres for the Richmond Farm School (RFS), located on Agricultural Land Reserve land.

The Tsawwassen First Nation Farm School (est. 2015) is an ongoing partnership between KPU and the Tsawwassen First Nation. The program incorporates a diversity of topics centered around regenerative agriculture including an Indigenous food sovereignty perspective. The program gives priority access to members of the Tsawwassen First Nation as a means for capacity building through the transformative nature of land based education and hands-on learning. It incorporates the insight of knowledge keepers and elders from BC First Nations - a foundational and meaningful element of the program that grounds the farming experience in the context of reconciliation and a deeper understanding of how food systems are intrinsically connected to culture and place.

The KPU Farm Schools Program engages with other community organizations and builds a wide network of local food system stakeholders. The program sources equipment and supplies from local businesses. Local farms take students as interns or employees. The program engages in direct to consumer marketing as well as donates whole nutritious farm products to vulnerable populations through a number of charitable community organizations.





"I think everybody should be growing their own food. And it's fun. When you're out there you feel grounded and it connects you back to the land"

Joy's journey to the farm started with an interest to learn about traditional medicines; beginning with research and into growing. Another path leading to the farm was through her work with the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Treaty Association (SXTA) Outreach team. In workshops with Chief and Council leadership there was discussion about what departments the nation was going to begin running on their own, and someone mentioned agriculture, and the nation growing their own food.

Through more research Joy found her way to the Tsawwassen First Nation Farm School program and especially enjoyed learning about: sowing seeds, driving a tractor, working the soil, compost, pest management, and livestock raising. "I loved farm school....I wish I could go back. You learn a lot!"

Joy has brought the farm to her nation, and is growing on family land. Her farm project has been in partnership with ISFS through: Stó:lō Nation Farm to Healthy Communities project. She has accessed funding to support the farm providing free organic vegetable boxes to community members every week throughout the growing season. The farms first season provided 10 boxes, and has grown to 40! Joy is not stopping there: she wants to include chickens and a pig to continue to support regenerative food growing on her farm.

"I do this to feed my community members, to help them. There's a high rate of disease related to food within my nation, so I wanted to grow food to help our people with their health and connect them back to the land."



Joy Hall

FARM

Joy Farms

LOCATION

Skowkale First Nation in Stó:lō Nation Territory (Chilliwack, BC)

FARM PRODUCTS

Organic vegetables and medicines, community events and education workshops

SALES CHANNELS

Weekly vegetable boxes for food insecure community members

COMMUNICATION

joyhallfarms@gmail.com



photos by Natalie Jimmie



"I learned a great deal from the program that applies to my life now and in the future as I grow in my life of farming."



Elizabeth Wise

FARM

Tanglewind Farm

LOCATION

Merrickville, Ontario

FARM PRODUCTS



Value-added canned goods from their own farm and other local farms, garlic, teas

SALES CHANNELS

- Weekly Ottawa Farmers Market
- Stocking local farm store

COMMUNICATION

www.tanglewind.com

  tanglewindfarms

photos by Tanglewind Farm

Elizabeth found a deep love for all things food in her early twenties working professionally in the food industry in Vancouver, BC. This led to growing her own food and feeding her family and friends fresh food. A good friend introduced her to the Richmond Farm School program and they both became students in 2015.

The farm school cohort was a tight-knit group who were gifted a canning company by previous farm school alumni. This cohort ran 'Three Feet Below' as a canning cooperative, using farmer's fruit and vegetable seconds and 'uglies' to make delicious canned goods for sale at local markets.

Elizabeth and her husband moved to her 30-acre family's farm in Merrickville, Ontario in 2020. They have been shifting the farm from an animal hobby farm to annual and perennial crop production, with a neighboring haying part of the property. The farm produce is made into value-added canned goods and sold at a weekly Ottawa Farmers Market and a local farm store. They are currently expanding production and building their own farm store on site, stocked with fresh veggies, eggs, flowers, and their canning.

"Farm school provided a network of people with a wealth of experience that I feel I can turn to with questions, for support and celebration....a truly invaluable asset for me."





"On a larger level, I see small-scale regenerative farming as an important part of the solution to global warming and ensuring the survival of species on this planet."

Nancy grew up in the city and worked as a psychologist before getting interested in farming. She was always interested in growing, and realized a shift was needed in her life to develop connection to nature. Volunteering on farms and receiving permaculture training led her to pursuing more farm skills in regenerative growing practices.

Nancy completed KPU's Tsawwassen First Nation Farm School program in 2017, and co-managed a farm in the school's incubator program with several farm classmates. 'First Generation Organics' was an organic vegetable and flower farm in operation for 3 years, selling through Langley's Farmers Market and a 30-person Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Each farmer has moved onto their own projects, and Nancy is focusing her efforts on medicinal herbs. She pursued training in herbalism through the Pacific Rim College herbalist certificate training, which she received in March 2022.

In 2022 Nancy started a 1/8th acre plot at Tsawwassen First Nation Farm School incubator program growing medicinal herbs for her new farm business, *Fly Away Herbs*. This includes over 20 different herbs marketed through online and in-person market sales.

Nancy Prober

FARM

Fly Away Herbs

LOCATION

Tsawwassen First Nation land in Delta, BC

FARM PRODUCTS

Organic medicinal herbs



SALES CHANNELS

In-person: Farmer friends stand in Maple Ridge: Mindful Harvest Farm

Online

flyaway-herbals.square.site

COMMUNICATION

  [flyawayherbals](https://www.instagram.com/flyawayherbals)

photos by First Generation Organics



"The most beneficial things I learned (in farm school) included classes in soil health, integrated pest management, and crop planning/management...I continue to use this knowledge and build on it in my daily farming practice"



"I find it important to tune into the rhythms of nature - it feels so much more....Human?"



Justine Gabias

FARM

Fawn's Road Stand

LOCATION

Unceded territory of the shíshálh Nation in xwilkway Halfmoon Bay, BC

FARM PRODUCTS

Vegetables, fruit, baked goods, and cut flowers

SALES CHANNELS

Farm stand on property

COMMUNICATION



fawnsroadstand

photos by Fawn's Road Stand

Justine grew up spending countless hours in her family's flower shop and farm centre in Quebec, although her passion and dream to farm began later on. She studied Fine Arts, began a desk job, and felt a pull to farming, a wild instinct that she would find a better version of herself in the fields.

Justine enrolled in KPU's Tsawwassen Farm School program in 2018 and soaked up every minute of it. She was especially inspired by the instructors practical knowledge shared, visiting other farms, and the teachings about medicinal plants, affecting how she looks at and interacts with plants to this day.

After farm school Justine spent a year learning and growing cut flowers and vegetables on her family's property in Quebec. Returning to Vancouver for the next season's planning and dreaming, she was ultimately delayed because of COVID. Now she is farming on the Sunshine Coast of BC with an ethos of being in relationship with the land: "*cultivating the land is an exercise in reciprocity - a beautiful give-and-take rooted in care and respect.*" She grows a diverse amount of crops using organic methods and no-till regenerative practices. There is always bounty on her farm, especially for the community of pollinators and birds.



"It amazed me how generous other farmers were with their knowledge and experience. One farmer said "community over competition" and that really stayed with me."



Farm Schools Alumni Spotlights



Ashala Daniels

Owner/Operator

FARM

Solstedt Organics

LOCATION

Off grid in the Fraser Canyon, BC

FARM PRODUCTS



Organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs

MARKET

Vancouver Farmers Markets and Restaurants

COMMUNICATION

solstedtorganics.ca

  [soltstedtorganics](https://www.instagram.com/solstedtorganics)



Jenn Cline

FARM

Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture -
Manager of Farm Operations and Farm Mentor

LOCATION


North Saanich, BC

OTHER ROLE

Research Associate for KPU ISFS

COMMUNICATION

jennifer.cline1@kpu.ca

 [notfarfromfresh](https://www.instagram.com/notfarfromfresh)



Anna Westhaver

Farm Staff

FARM

KPU Farm Schools

LOCATION

Tsawwassen First Nations Land in Tsawwassen, BC

FARM PRODUCTS

Organic fruits, vegetables, herbs, chickens, eggs, and
pork

MARKET

CSA and Farm Markets

COMMUNICATION

anna.westhaver@kpu.ca