

Young Roots Farm Report 2019

Prepared December 2019



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Introduction

In 2019, Camp Amy Molson and Young Roots Farm hosted over 550 participants throughout summer camp, Farm and Wilderness Camp, family retreats, and our harvest celebration. Over 900 kg of produce came out of the garden, and 2000 kg of kitchen waste and brown paper was diverted from landfills into our compost. Together, we harvested, cooked, played, explored and grew not only food but a connection with nature.

Our three-year vision (2017-2019) had the following goals:

- 1)** Establish a new farm site that is productive and encourages youth to engage with nature
- 2)** Provide a reasonable salary to the farm team
- 3)** Firmly establish the Farm and Wilderness Camp for youth 11-17 years old

A beautiful new farm site has been established with a mosaic of ecosystems, infrastructure and vegetable and fruit production. The site provides nourishment to the 500+ human visitors that pass through it every year, as well as to the myriad wild turkeys, laying chickens, groundhogs, snakes, moles, bats and other inhabitants. Adequate funding (in particular from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Programme d'assistance financière à l'accessibilité aux camps de vacances – MEES PAFACV 2017-2020) has allowed us to properly remunerate the farm team for their work over this period. The Farm and Wilderness Camp has gained momentum and stability and is now an established program that will continue to thrive and evolve with the rest of the farm.

Camp Amy Molson is a second home to many of our campers, staff and their families. The community's relationship to the land has gained a new dimension through Young Roots Farm, which has become a place where people can feel safe, fed and happy, but also develop a sense of reciprocal care with the land. The bodies we have fed have also lent their hands, minds and hearts to the stewardship of the farm. With the foundation laid, the direction of the farm project now turns to fulfilling our environmental responsibility with regards to consumption, carbon footprint and waste. As an organisation that cares about the health and well-being of our campers and tries to offer them the brightest future, we must also offer examples of leadership and action for the complex environmental challenges that lie ahead.

Project Description

In 2019, Young Roots Farm was an exciting place to be. We saw mushrooms sprout, tasted the first of our perennial fruit harvest, explored new themes in our environmental education, refined our compost system, invited chickens to range through the garden and made investments to simplify management of farm operations and increase productivity.

On the educational side, our ever-popular cooking workshops and exciting new products from the youth entrepreneur program continued to bring joy and enthusiasm. Furthermore, we explored different ways to care for the world through sharing of indigenous culture and incorporating themes of social justice into our lessons.

In progression with the planning and preparation in 2017 and the infrastructure building and groundworks of 2018, the smooth sailing of 2019 highlighted the beauty and potential of a partnership between a farm and a summer camp.

The workload completed by this year's farm team consisted of 5 people working the following number of full-time weeks:

- 8 weeks of spring season - farm prep (April 29- June 21)
- 9 weeks of summer camp season (June 22-August 24)
- 4 weeks of fall season - community groups, markets, closing of the farm (August 25 - Sept 21)

As well as:

- 120 hours of off-season administration for the farm and Farm and Wilderness Camp



Completed Farm Projects in 2019

1. Built a new Static-Aerated Pile (SAP) compost system to reduce smell and decomposition time
2. Increased diversity of fruit trees and shrubs with 10 more varieties (courtesy of Hawkesbury Rotary Club)
3. Added 200 feet of garden and fruit beds to round out the farm and maximise available sun exposure from the clearing of trees
4. Invested in materials and modifications to improve productivity (row covers, trellis system for greenhouse, concrete paving in the wash station)
5. Built a mobile chicken coop system and integrated rotational grazing of chickens (project funding from Fondation Tremplin Santé – Programme Accessibilité Volet Projet)
6. Milled lumber from our site and began construction for a composting toilet



Figure 1. *Composting: one of our biggest accomplishments in pollution reduction. Campers emptying our new compost system showed varying levels of enthusiasm towards the various stages of decomposition.*



Figure 2. *An early spring picture of the farm shows maximization of the clearing and the use of row covers to keep pests off. The row cover purchase added labour to watering and gardening tasks but was one of the purchases that paid off by greatly increasing yields.*



Figure 3. *Some plant rows of cherry trees on lower compound while others wait patiently for the harvest.*



Figure 4. *Beds are prepared in early spring for our three sisters garden featuring indigenous varieties of corn, beans and squash. In the wheelbarrow, new fruit trees and shrubs are ready to be added to the growing diversity of plants. 2019 additions (courtesy of the Hawkesbury Rotary Club) include jostaberry, seaberry, sour cherry, gooseberry, raspberry, black and red currants, hazelnut trees.*



Figure 5. *Everyone benefitted from the newly laid down paving stones in the wash station, reducing dust, moisture and clean-up time.*



Figure 6. *In the background, laying hens graze weeds in the garden within their safe enclosure while others stay in their newly built mobile chicken coop (project funding from Fondation Tremplin Santé). The coop was built on a dolly and can be wheeled around to give the chickens fresh pasture when they have finished their work.*

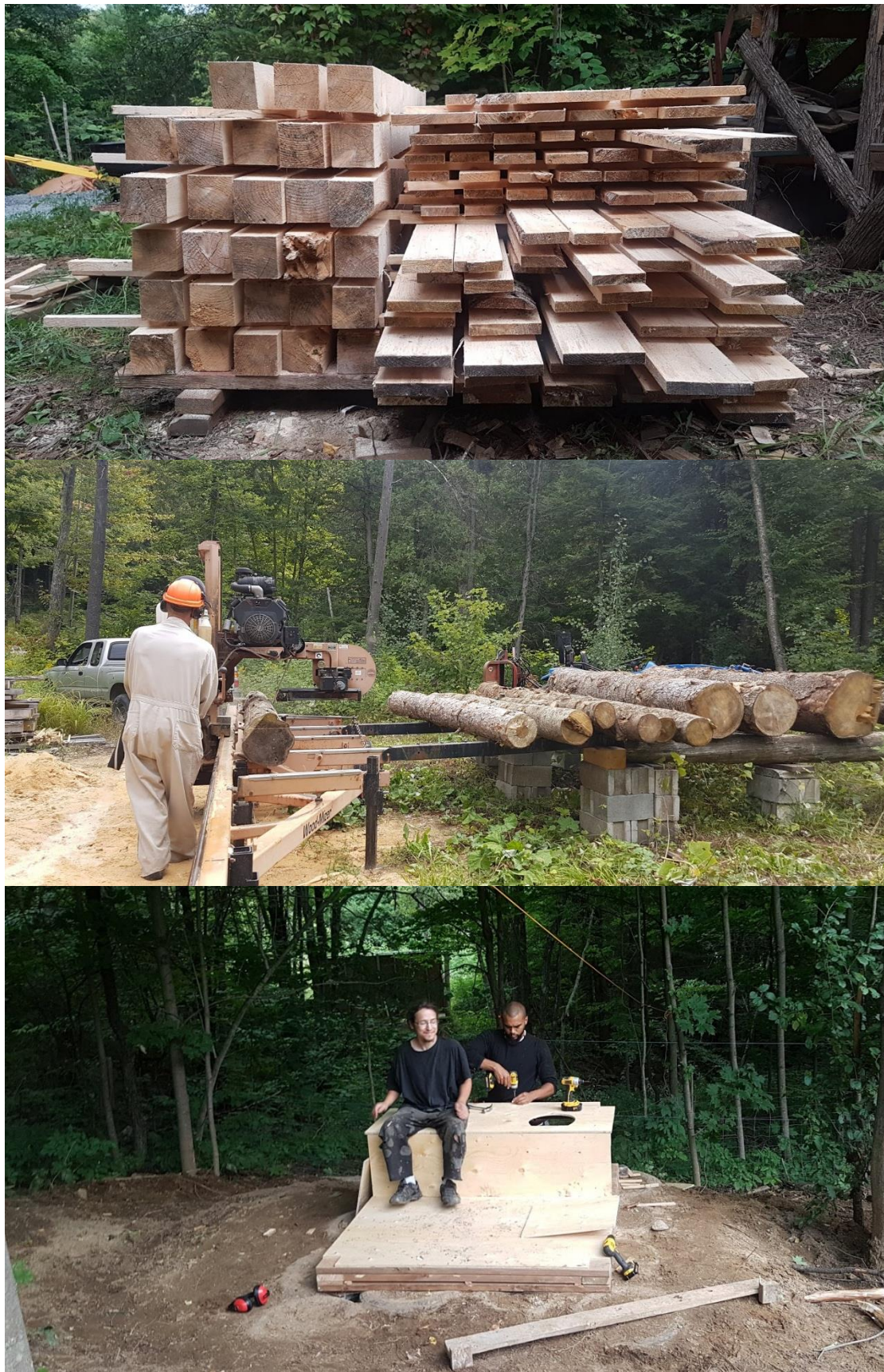


Figure 7. Red pine and white spruce trees from the clearing of our site milled into usable lumber and on the way to becoming part of the new composting toilet.

Completed Programming Initiatives in 2019

1. Delivered farm and environmental themed programming to 400+ youth participants from 5-13 years old from inner city Montreal with a focus towards cooking, raising chickens for eggs, indigenous culture, social justice, environmental footprint, and the importance of composting.
2. Took steps to honour the original Anishinaabe and Kanienke'ha inhabitants of our area and continued building relationships with surrounding indigenous communities. All staff took part in the Kairos Blanket Exercise, and the names of the senior girls' cabins, which were previously based on inaccurate indigenous tribe names, were changed with consultation from the Kanehsatake and Akwesasne community. Additionally, many cultural activities were shared with the campers throughout the summer by Ionawiienhawi Smoke, the indigenous member of our farm team and by the Akwesasne Women's Singing Group who joined us during Farm and Wilderness Camp (FWC).
3. Had a record year with our youth entrepreneurship program, introducing new products and expanding sales.
4. Continued our Farm and Wilderness Camp (FWC) with a group of 14 youths (11-17 years old) who spent five days absorbed in farming, cooking, survival and personal projects. The same group came together for two workshop days in the fall in order to make products for fundraising and continue involvement with the youth group.
5. Hosted 170+ people through family and community groups at our Harvest Event and Tyndale Community Center Weekend Retreat.



Figure 8. Farm team member Ionawiienhawi getting kids excited about preparing and eating corn mush, a traditional Kanien'keha food.



Figure 9. *A make-your-own chopsticks lesson culminates with stir fried beans, raspberry leaf tea and satisfied smiles.*



Figure 10. *Kids and staff get a hands-on experience of our food waste. Memorable quotes include: “who would throw out a perfectly good muffin!” “I am never wasting food again!”, “you do this every day?!” and “this is gross but fun!”*



Figure 11. Campers engage in all stages of composting, learning unforgettable lessons about food waste and the importance of composting. Some dig their hands into their pockets while many others dig deep into the magic of composting!



Figure 12. *Rotating the chickens on fresh pasture gives campers a chance to get a close-up view of a healthy chicken's diet and behaviour.*



Figure 13. *The Akwesasne Women's Singers Group share their impactful songs and stories with our Farm and Wilderness youth.*



Figure 14. Youth from the entrepreneurship program attend the Lachute Farmer's Market (top) Vankleek Hill Farmer's Markets (bottom) during summer camp to raise funds and awareness for the program, as well as gain some valuable customer service experience.

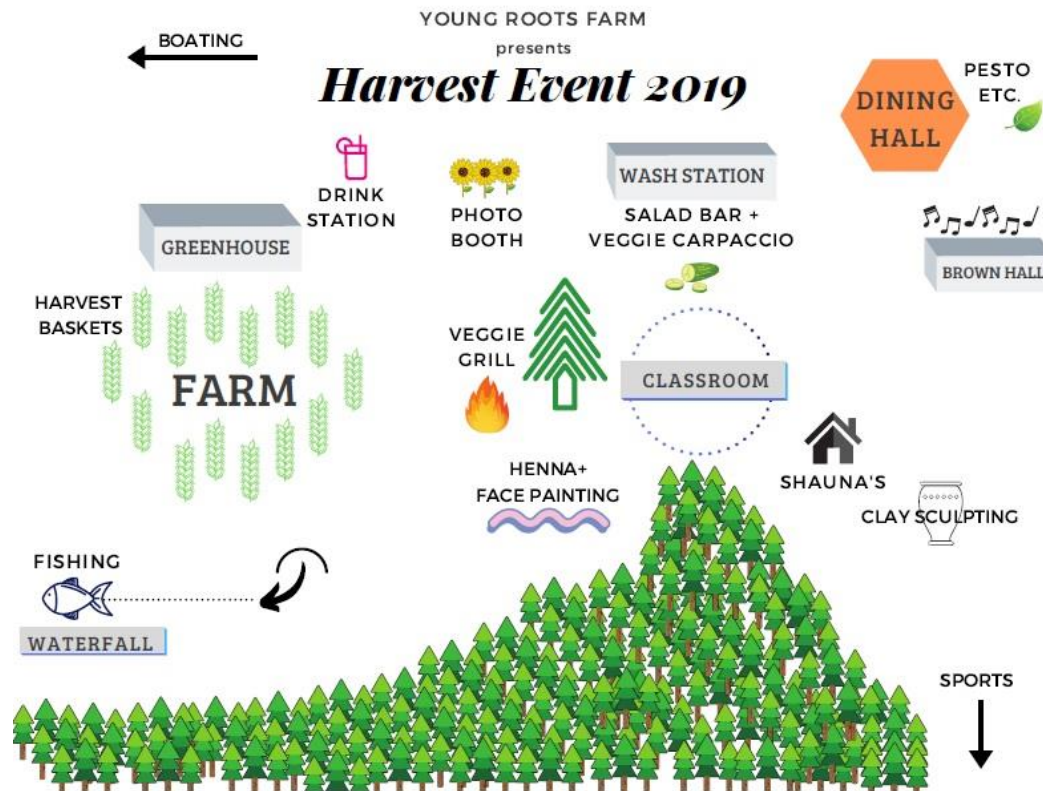


Figure 15. Campers and their families and friends come out to share a meal made from farm ingredients, explore the farm and celebrate Camp Amy Molson's 75th anniversary!



Figure 16. From top clockwise: Grill-Your-Own-Veggies, Clay Sculpting and Veggie Carpaccio. A colourful assortment of activities brought fun, a taste of gourmet and a lot of healthy eating to over 100 people at the harvest event.



Figure 18. Teenagers from Farm and Wilderness Camp take part in our fall work days, making hot sauce, braiding corn, screen printing t-shirts, and making cutting boards as part of our fund-raising efforts.

Budget 2019

2019 Expenses

Salary	Per Unit	Quantity	
Farm team salary (\$4000 per staff)	4000	5	20000
Fall work (\$250/week)	250	16	4000
Farm admin salary (\$15/hour)	15	60	900
FWC camp (\$500 per staff)	500	8	4000
FWC admin salary (\$15/hour)	15	60	900
Salary Sum			29800

Projects and Purchases

Fruit trees and shrubs	500
Compost station	1250
Mushroom inoculation	103
Chickens project	800
Compost toilet	600
Misc farm tools budget	250
Greenhouse trellis and clips	218
Concrete paving stones	330
Compost delivery	287.44
Food	1125
Transport costs	3111.34
Purchases Sum	8574.78

FWC Expenses

Honorarium for Akwesasne singers	1000
Honorarium for graphic design	171
Fundraiser, workshop costs	782

Camp overhead costs	4400
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Expenses Total	42774.78
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2019 Revenues

Sales

Summer market vegetable sales	319.4
Radish and pickles	385
Hot sauce	240
Pesto	1650
Fall market vegetable sales	1049.75
Agrikol restaurant sales	466

FWC merchandise sales	580
Sales Sum	4690.15

Grants and Donations

Hawkesbury Rotarians	500
Subvention MEES	16866
Tremplin Santé	1125
Camp overhead and food contribution	2525
Personal donations	4000
Inspirit foundation (FWC)	10000
CSU Community Action Fund (FWC)	2000
QPIRG Concordia (FWC)	400
Grants and Donations Sum	37416

Revenues Total	42106.15
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Balance	-668.63
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Figure 19. Zucchini tipping the balance.

Visibility

Website: www.youngrootsfarm.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/YoungRootsFarm

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/youngroots_farm/?hl=en

Our Farm and Wilderness Camp report is shared widely.



Reflections

Testimony of the positive value of our program appears in different ways: the beaming faces of campers and staff on the farm, the beautiful products conjured by the youth entrepreneurs, the sheer volume of vegetables harvested, prepared and eaten. Wholesome experiences overflow from Young Roots Farm during the summer, and the Farm and Wilderness Camp has found a formula that has developed into year-round relationships of mutual learning, support and collaboration. If values of community, health and environment were economically quantified, the program would be showing robust annual growth.

As it stands, we continue to balance our values with what shows up on the spreadsheet. The entrepreneur program is the part of our farm that generates the most income, while also providing valuable lessons. The work of making a sellable product, talking to the public, and going to market are unique lessons for our 13-year old youth entrepreneurs who are building self-esteem and finding direction and agency. We could devote more time to making more products and selling them but as a primarily educational organisation, we are content with our sales revenue of \$4,600, recognising that the other lessons we share are equally valuable. Our program brings our whole community into relationship with the land, and that shows up in ways that are not seen on the accounting ledger.

The groundwork and infrastructure laid down from 2017-2019 have been indispensable to our farm's growth. Though stable funding continues to be a yearly challenge, the continuation of the farm is a strong priority. Granting and government organisations have shifted towards strengthening local food initiatives and building healthy habits for kids, so we hope that our program will continue to receive support.

In terms of future direction for the farm program, we hope to:

- 1) Implement a more rigorous and regular evaluation process to better understand our impact. We conducted a thorough survey in 2018 that helped us evaluate our program but devoted less time to it in 2019 and ended up having unusable results. We often feel that the results of the program speak for themselves for anyone who visits the farm or sees the pictures, but we also recognise the need for objective measures in the long term.
- 2) Continue to strengthen our relationship with indigenous communities. This may take the form of further collaboration, exchanges, camp visits, and outreach and hiring of indigenous community members.
- 3) Meaningfully reduce our environmental impact. When we ask our campers what they hope for the future, their answers are simple: clean food, clean water, clean air, and more kindness for everyone. Our work for the near future will be to hold ourselves accountable to these goals.

As an organisation that upholds the best interests of our campers, it is our responsibility to model leadership and action despite the complexity of the problems and imperfect solutions.

Finally, we would like to sincerely thank all of our donors (MEES, Inspirit Foundation, CSU Community Action Fund, Fondation Tremplin Santé, The Red Apron, QPIRG Concordia) for their support and belief in our program. For the farm team and the staff at Camp Amy Molson, it is truly a joy and privilege to work on this project and spread the love and vegetables. We couldn't do it without their support.

