



Public Health  
Association of BC

RiSE  
UP!





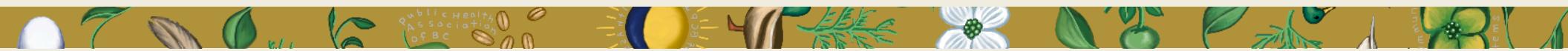
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# Executive Summary



**The Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship project was launched in Fall of 2023 by the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC), in partnership with CityHive and MeaningfulWork.**

This project aims to engage youth aged 15-30 from across BC in their local food systems through meaningful service placements, education, networking opportunities and community events. Drawing on PHABC's networks with Farm to School BC, the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food and Community Garden Roots (Formerly Can You Dig It), as well as 13 partner organizations, volunteers were matched with a number of impact-driven food systems organizations across the province to support them in their ongoing work or conduct unique projects.

The Rise Up! project welcomed 33 volunteers in its pilot year:

- 4 from Vancouver Island
- 5 from Prince George
- 5 from Kamloops/Salmon Arm
- 2 from Kelowna
- 17 from the Lower Mainland



Youth were connected with diverse food systems related service placements in their region or online. Service placements ranged from leading free cooking classes for kids, preparing and packing school breakfasts, participating in community garden work, supporting community food systems research, and more. Service placements were supplemented with an online food systems curriculum and webinar series created in partnership with CityHive.

In-person engagement opportunities supported the professional and personal development of youth participants. A number of regional gatherings were held across the province to allow participants to connect and learn from each other in addition to a 3-day food systems retreat hosted in March 2024 in Parksville BC.

At the retreat, participants from across the province came together to engage in land-based learning and community connection.

PHABC is privileged to have been able to launch the Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship project and facilitate meaningful learning and connection for BC youth. Thank you to all of our partners, funders and staff who made the project possible.

The following report was co-developed with CityHive.



# Acknowledgements

## Land Acknowledgement

PHABC is a provincial organization and acknowledges that our work goes beyond the places we live and impacts the lives of nations across British Columbia and Turtle Island.

The Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship program occurred across British Columbia, with leadership staff located on the following traditional territories.

**PHABC is a provincial organization and acknowledges that our work goes beyond the places we live and impacts the lives of nations across British Columbia and Turtle Island.**

## Public Health Association of BC (PHABC)

PHABC is a voluntary, non-profit, non-government, member driven organization that provides leadership to promote health, well-being and social equity. We fulfill our mission through advocacy, collaboration, education and research and do this work through the spectrum of public health practice; including prevention, promotion, protection and policy.



Public Health  
Association of BC



## Funder Acknowledgement

Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship is funded by the Government of Canada under the Canada Service Corps. Se soulever! Renforcer les systèmes alimentaires et la gestion de l'environnement est financé par le gouvernement du Canada dans le cadre de Service jeunesse Canada. And the Food Security (Provincial Initiatives) Fund through the Victoria Foundation.



Employment and Social Development Canada

Emploi et Développement social Canada



## Partnership Acknowledgements

Thank you to our partners for their important contributions to the Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship project.



**CityHive**

**CityHive** is an award-winning youth-run not-for-profit organization based in Metro Vancouver on a mission to transform the way that young people are engaged in shaping their cities and communities. In the fall of 2023, CityHive was engaged by Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC) to support the Rise Up! Project. Through this project, CityHive designed 3 online educational modules for youth volunteers, supported host organizations in developing meaningful youth engagement practices, and developed and delivered a youth-centered evaluation process. CityHive's work on the Rise Up! project and this report was led by Miley Leong, with support from Rowan Gentleman-Sylvester and Olivia Shaw.



**MeaningfulWork** is building the most impactful global community of individuals, companies, and nonprofits for giving. They build purposeful connections through our cloud solutions empowering individuals, organizations and their people to take action on issues they care about. They help companies build vibrant, giving cultures and engage their employees and customers to create greater sustainability and business impact. PHABC and MeaningfulWork worked together to develop a digital food systems volunteering platform.



**Farm to School BC** is a healthy eating program for K-12 students administered by PHABC. This program brings healthy, local and sustainable food into schools across British Columbia and provides students with hands-on learning opportunities that develop food literacy, all while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness. Farm to School BC brings healthy, local and sustainable food into schools across British Columbia and provides students with hands-on learning opportunities that develop food literacy, all while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness.

THE COALITION  
FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD



**BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food** is part of the national coalition for healthy school food who are collectively advocating for public investment - including funding and support - for a high-quality school food program that meets guiding principles based on best practices. The BC Chapter provides a united voice for those across British Columbia, to advocate and work collectively towards the development, expansion and enrichment of school food programs that meet the diverse needs of BC's school communities. PHABC is the provincial secretariat of the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food.



**Community Garden Roots (formerly Can You Dig It)** is a community garden program administered by PHABC which supports communities across British Columbia to create inclusive and welcoming food-growing gardens where individuals from all backgrounds and life experiences can learn, share, grow, and contribute to the betterment of their community.



## Partnership Organizations

Thank you to the 13 partner organizations who collaborated with the Rise Up! project to support the creation of meaningful and mutually beneficial service placements for youth.





# Program Goals and Objectives



**The Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship project was launched in Fall of 2023 by the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC), in partnership with CityHive and MeaningfulWork.**

- 1. Host a minimum of 27 youth participants** (age 15-30) using an equity framework in effecting positive social change through institutions and organizations partnered with PHABC that can host placements to offer food systems volunteering experience.
- 2. Increase awareness** of how agriculture, education and environmental stewardship can be viable and sustainable career options for youth.
- 3. Support conditions that empower youth** to gain valuable life and professional experiences while helping youth feel more connected to their communities and in their local food systems.
- 4. Strengthen knowledge translation** between working professionals and knowledge holders and participants.



# Project Evaluation

This report was made possible in part by CityHive, who carried out a participatory, youth-led evaluation process.

## Youth-led Evaluation

### Pre-project: Co-creating metrics with youth

In order to ensure that the design and activities of the project is aligned to the youth participants' needs, participants were invited to co-create evaluation metrics during the orientation phase. The intention is to center a youth-driven approach by hearing directly from participants entering the project on the specific skills, outcomes, and knowledge they would like to gain through participating in Rise Up!.

### Mid-project: Focus group at youth retreat

CityHive designed and facilitated a reflective focus group to gather input from youth on their experience in the project. The structure of the focus group involved a mix of self-reflection and small group discussion activities. Using multi-modal engagement pathways, this session held by CityHive ensured there was appropriate space for critical reflections.

### Post-project: Survey

A comprehensive post-project survey was distributed to all participants to complete at the end of the project, relating to process evaluation and content evaluation. The findings from the survey added to the focus group findings on participants' attitudes, perceptions, and perceived outcomes of the project.





## Program Participants

33 youth participated in the pilot year of the Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship Project.





# Program Activities



## Volunteer Placements

Volunteer placements were diverse, ranging from leading free cooking classes for kids, preparing and packing school breakfasts, participating in community garden work, supporting community food systems research, and more.

Volunteer placements were created in partnership with Farm to School BC, the Coalition for Healthy School Food and Community Garden Roots and our 13 partnered Host Organizations. In person and virtual placements were offered in order to create accessible opportunities for participants that met the needs of their schedules and desired learning outcomes.



## Stories from the field

Three youth in Surrey volunteered at Quest Food Exchange, an organization that aims to provide dignified food access for local community members.



*Rise Up! Participants volunteer at Quest Food Exchange*

A Rise Up! participant from Kamloops and Sonya, the Kamloops Regional Lead supporting the local Seedy Saturday event! Alongside this event, this participant supported the youth skills cooking class at Mount Paul Community Food Centre, and volunteered at their local farmers market.



Two Rise Up! Participants supported the design of a seed pen pal program to be implemented by Farm to School BC in Spring 2024!



**Seed Pen Pal Exchange**  
Farm to School BC invites your class to participate in our first Seed Pen Pal Exchange project!

 Exchange 2+ seed packets and a class letter

 Grow the seeds you receive in your school garden

 Send a garden update to your pen pal class!

**How It Works**

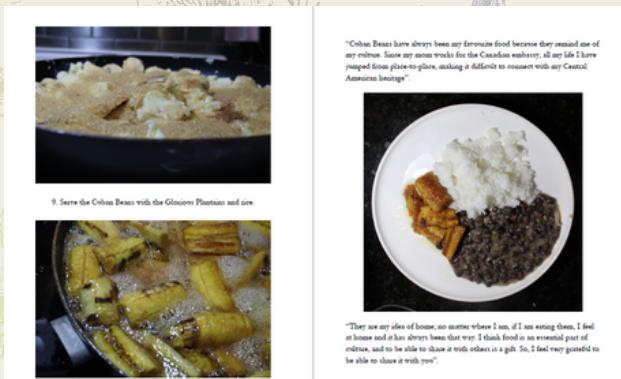
**Get Matched:** We will use the form below to connect you with another class in BC with a school garden.

**Happy Exchange:** In April, you will send your "pen pal" class a letter and seeds and receive the same in return.

**Stay In Touch:** In June, you will send and receive a garden update from your pen pal.

**F2SBC Support:** We'll provide some guidelines for a successful pen pal exchange, and be here to support you along the way! We will also provide a printable class activity for each pen pal exchange to further class engagement and enhance learning outcomes from participation in the project.

Rise Up! participants supported Farm to School BC's "Cultural Food Ways" project, interviewing community members about recipes important to their culture, and documenting their stories.



 9. Serve the Cuban Beans with the Glorious Plantain and rice.



"Cuban Beans have always been our favorite food because they remind me of my culture. Since we move trucks for the Canadian industry, all my life I have cooked from place-to-place, making it difficult to connect with my Cuban American heritage".



"There are my ideas of beans, no matter where I am, if I am eating alone, I eat at home and it has always been that way. I think food is an essential part of culture, and to be able to share it with others is a gift. So, I feel very grateful to be able to share it with you".

“I'm so grateful that I was able to participate in both of the programs that Growing Chefs operate. Within the LunchLAB program, **I loved teaching the older-elementary kids** food preparation skills like cutting, spiralizing, julienning, coring, peeling, and dicing, and then observing how they had a stronger relationship/connection to their school food system when they prepared it.

Within the Classroom Program, I loved getting to know the students in our cohort, and one of my favorite lessons we did was surrounding how different elements might affect our food preferences- all of the kids sharing what they eat in different seasons, times of day, and food appearances was not only super fun but **I could tell that they understood that food systems heavily impact our lives.**

“Definitely **one of the program highlights for me was the ability to be able to go to Valemount to meet the lead of the organization** that I was working with and do surveys in person to set the foundations of a summer program for them.

It was such a wonderful experience and **I learned so much from those that are outside of my age group** and have many life skills and experience to share with me. It was also wonderful to work with another organization and organize a book swap at the university in collaboration with a student-led university club.



Rise Up! volunteer and Farm to School Regional Leads on a site visit in Valemount, BC.



## What We Heard

Overall, participants appreciated the opportunity to get hands-on experience in their service placement and felt that they were able to learn a lot from them. Some highlights include:

### **Continuing volunteer placement:**

Many participants shared that they enjoyed their placements so much that they plan to continue volunteering after the project ends or seek out similar opportunities.

### **Impactful experience:**

The service placements exposed participants to new and different sectors and issues relating to food systems. From learning how to farm sustainably to using photography to document the cultural significance of food to cooking classes, participants appreciated the different avenues they could engage with food systems. Many participants felt that they were making an impact and serving their community in a positive way.

**I've been renting for 2+ years in my community and have found an amazing and important organization that works 5 min walk away from my place that I otherwise wouldn't know about.**

**I'll be continuing with volunteering after this program.**

As a newcomer to Prince George, **this has been a great opportunity for me to meet new, like-minded individuals and get involved within the community.** Without this experience, I do feel as if I would have never stumbled upon the many great organizations I have participated with.

## Regional Gatherings

Throughout the course of the program, regional gatherings provided opportunities for youth participants to build relationships with each other and network with community partners and PHABC staff members. 8 Regional gatherings were hosted over the course of the program where folks shared a meal, connected with each other and engaged in an activity related to their volunteer placements.



Prince George Regional Gathering

I really appreciated the time that [the regional lead] took to build a sense of community in our region with an in person gathering and consistent communications.

**Vancouver Host Organization**

The regional meet-up at a local restaurant was a nice touch to get to meet the other volunteers and staff members.

**Rise Up! Volunteer**



Vancouver Regional Gathering

# Rise Up! Youth Retreat





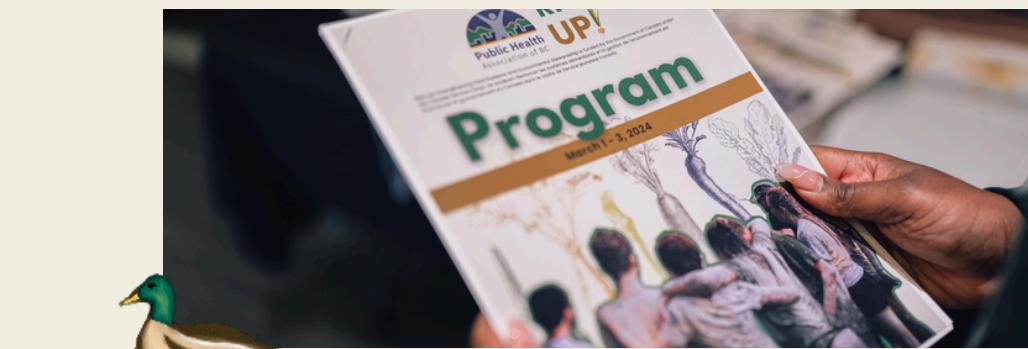
The Rise Up! Youth Retreat created space for youth participants from across the province to gather, build connections, and learn amongst each other. Between March 1-3, 2024, 24 Rise Up! participants age 15-30 engaged in land-based learning activities, presentations from guest speakers and knowledge keepers, intentional reflection and social activities.

The Rise Up! retreat took place amidst the breathtaking vistas of Parksville, British Columbia, at the Sunrise Ridge Waterfront Resort. Nestled along the pristine coastline, this resort stands as a beacon of sustainability, having garnered accolades for its steadfast commitment to reducing emissions through energy conservation initiatives.



## Day 1

Participants travelled from various corners of British Columbia, with some traveling from as far as Prince George, Kelowna, and Kamloops. Upon arrival, participants nestled into their rooms before enjoying dinner together. Introductions and orientations were held before folks participated in team building exercises to foster connections and camaraderie amongst attendees.





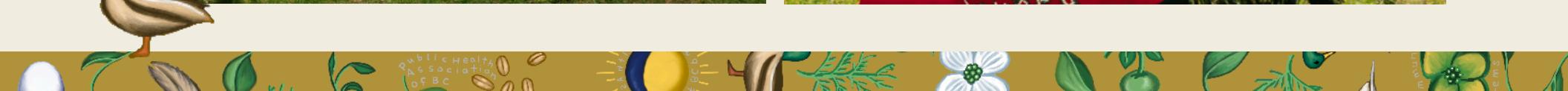


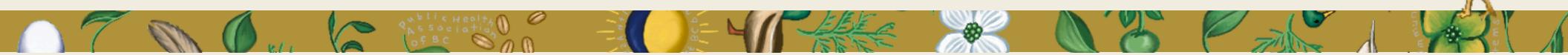
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## Day 2

Participants loaded the bus early in the morning to head to Earth Craft Farm in Nanaimo, BC. Upon arrival, participants were greeted by **Elder Lolly Good of Snuneymuxw First Nation** who generously welcomed the group to the land, and encouraging youth to participate in a traditional welcome song.







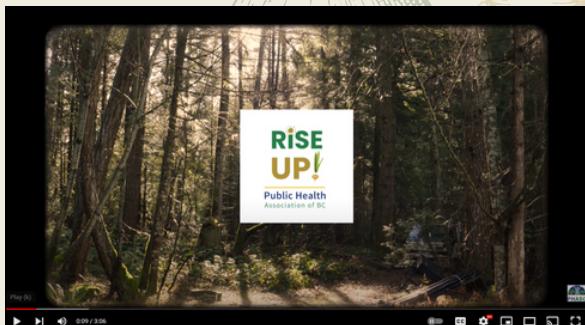


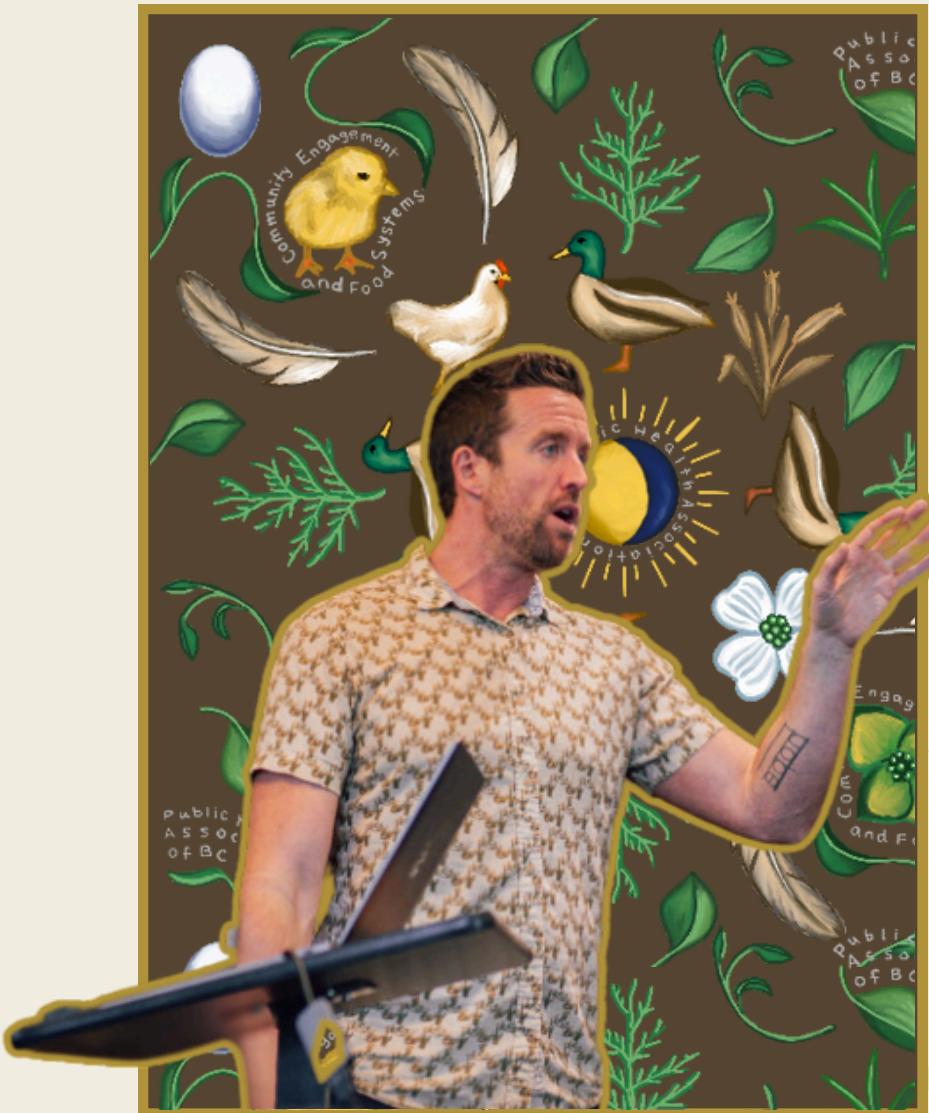
## Chris Brown and Jake Thornburn – Permaculture Farming at EarthCraft Farm

The session on Permaculture Farming provided an overview of regenerative agriculture practices aimed at fostering ecological sustainability and resilience. Participants were introduced to innovative approaches like no-till farming and the cultural tradition of seed saving for future seasons.

Participants got their hands dirty, planting broad beans, weeding garden beds and practicing using tools such as wheel hoes and broad forks. Overall, the session provided attendees with practical skills and holistic perspectives essential for supporting sustainable agriculture practices in their own contexts.

**To see the video on youth experiences at Earth Craft farm, please click [here](#).**





## Brent Mansfield – Careers in Food Systems

Brent, an Edible Education teacher and staff member at the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, discussed leadership within the realm of food systems and school food advocacy.



With enthusiasm, Brent engaged participants in topics of leadership, advocacy, food systems change and roles in activism and social movements. With greenery purchased at Earth Craft Farms that morning, Brent showed participants how to make a fresh salad with HollyHock dressing.



## CityHive

CityHive designed and facilitated a reflection workshop to gather input from youth on their experience in the project. The structure of the focus group involved a mix of self-reflection and small group discussion activities.



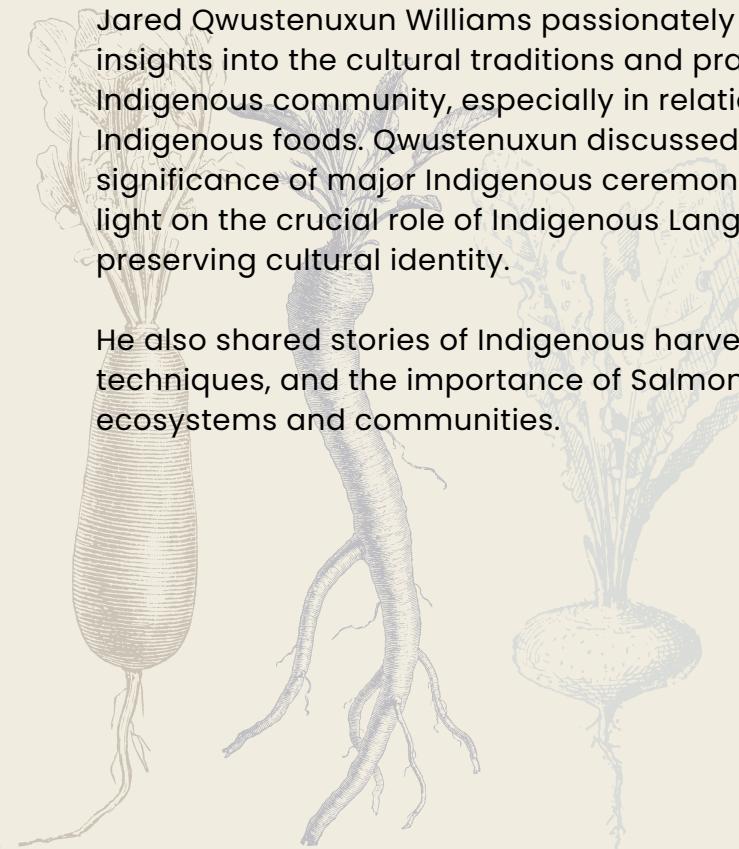


## Day 3

### **Qwustenuxun Williams (Jared) - Indigenous Food Sovereignty**

Jared Qwustenuxun Williams passionately shared insights into the cultural traditions and practices of his Indigenous community, especially in relationship to Indigenous foods. Qwustenuxun discussed the significance of major Indigenous ceremonies, and shed light on the crucial role of Indigenous Language in preserving cultural identity.

He also shared stories of Indigenous harvesting techniques, and the importance of Salmon to local ecosystems and communities.



## Communications

A videographer and photographer were on site to capture the weekend, and make all attendees feel welcome while taking headshots of all participants for their professional portfolios. A number of videos were created to showcase the program.

Watch all the Rise Up! videos now on [\*\*PHABC's YouTube channel:\*\*](#)



- [\*\*Youth Interviewed Summary\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Richard Han Interview\*\*](#) (Director of Community Engagement and Food Systems, PHABC)
- [\*\*Taylor Sacré Interview\*\*](#) (Project Coordinator, PHABC)
- [\*\*Marcus Lobb Interview\*\*](#) (Provincial Manager, Farm to School BC)
- [\*\*Rise Up! Conclusion Summary\*\*](#)





“

The farm visit with Farmer Jake and Farmer Brown at EarthCraft Farms was enriching, **especially with all participants coming together to prepare the garden bed** using broad forks and other tools and planting some seeds that farmer Brown gave us!



## What We Heard

Overwhelmingly, participants really enjoyed the in-person retreat.

**Retreat activities:** The hands-on, place-based activities offered allowed youth participants to feel more connected to the land, to each other, and to food systems work as a whole. In particular, the farm visit and the Indigenous welcome were recurring highlights from almost every participant.

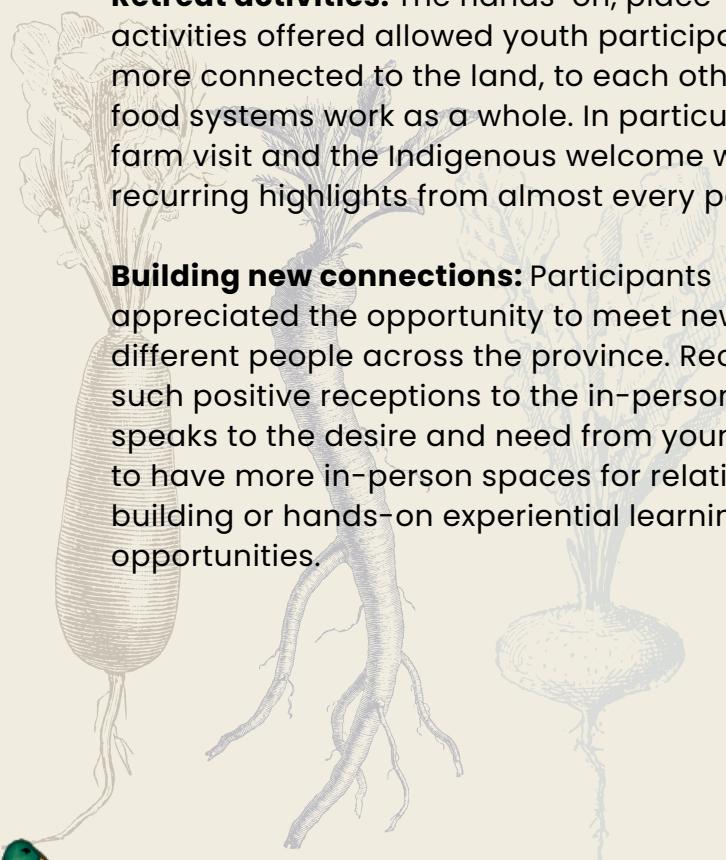
**Building new connections:** Participants appreciated the opportunity to meet new and different people across the province. Receiving such positive receptions to the in-person retreat speaks to the desire and need from young people to have more in-person spaces for relationship building or hands-on experiential learning opportunities.

“

I really enjoyed the hands-on experience at the farm. **It was exciting to be able to see where food comes from in a more personal way.**

“

I really enjoyed the farm visit and hands-on experiences because **we don't normally have those opportunities.**





# Education

## Food Systems Curriculum

The Rise Up! Food Systems Curriculum was developed in partnership with CityHive, offering 3 modules. For accessibility, modules were offered in written and audio forms.

### Modules and Learning Outcomes:

#### 1. Who am I as a Leader?

- a. Introduce volunteers to different types of power and how it shows up in their lives
- b. Highlight a holistic, community-centered understanding of leadership
- c. Support volunteers to map out the qualities and strengths they bring as a leader

#### 2. Introduction to Food Justice

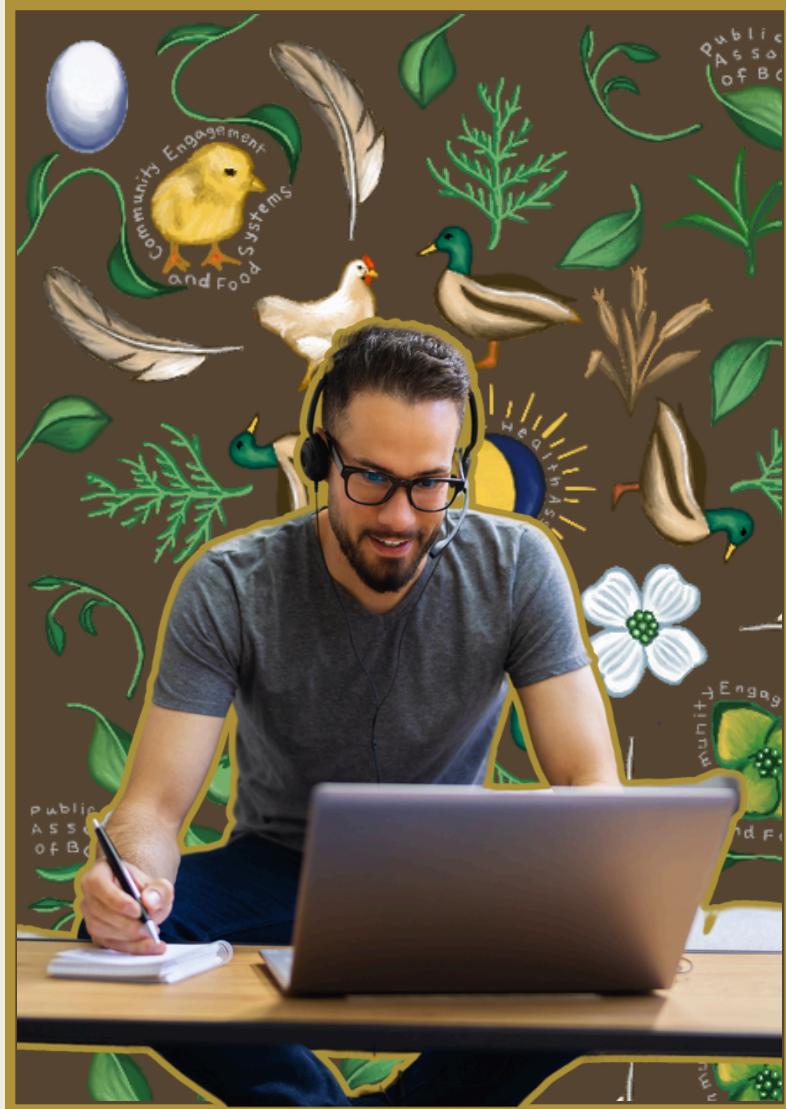
- a. Introduce volunteers to key terms in food justice
- b. Invite volunteers to explore key issues in food justice
- c. Support volunteers in connecting key issues to their service placement and own lived experience

#### 3. Civic Action

- a. Increase learners' understanding of different levels of government
- b. Introduce learners to civic action through the Civic Action Continuum
- c. Invite learners to reflect on how their interest can be moved into action

**To access the curriculum, reach out to [rise.up@phabc.org](mailto:rise.up@phabc.org).**





## Webinar Series

In addition, Rise Up! collaborated with 3 BC-based food systems advocates to host a webinar series:

1. **Will Valley:** Introduction to Food Systems Thinking: In this webinar, we explored fundamental food systems thinking capacities that enable individuals to better understand, engage with, and work towards economically viable, ecologically regenerative, and socially just food systems for all.
2. **Hemant Kulkarni:** Inclusive Community Garden Programs: Hemant shared the founding story of Can You Dig It!, speaking to the power of community gardens, and steps that can be taken to ensure community gardens are accessible, inclusive community spaces.
3. **Shay Paul:** Indigenous Food Sovereignty: Participants learned about the difference between food sovereignty and food security, traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge and practices, and the impacts of colonialism on traditional food systems in the province of BC





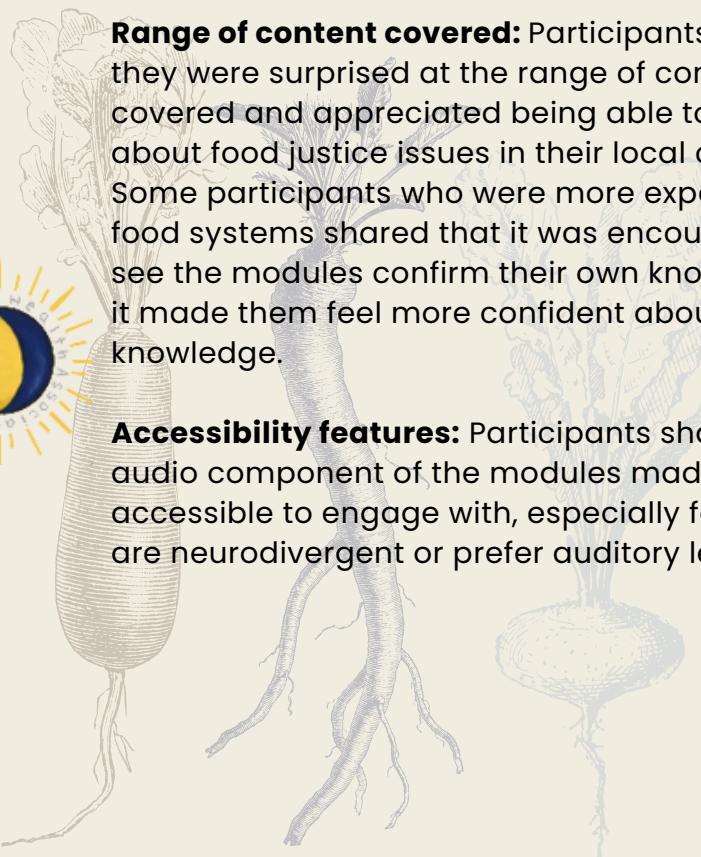
“ I was encouraged to see that migrant labour was covered in Module 2 because that’s in my region and **it’s not an issue that’s talked about a lot.** ”

## What We Heard

Participants appreciated different aspects of the online educational module. Some key highlights were:

**Range of content covered:** Participants shared that they were surprised at the range of content covered and appreciated being able to learn more about food justice issues in their local contexts. Some participants who were more experienced in food systems shared that it was encouraging to see the modules confirm their own knowledge and it made them feel more confident about their own knowledge.

**Accessibility features:** Participants shared the audio component of the modules made it more accessible to engage with, especially for folks who are neurodivergent or prefer auditory learning.





# PHABC Rise Up! Platform



**PHABC and MeaningfulWork collaborated through the Rise Up! project to create a digital platform that helps young people to get involved in volunteering within the food systems.**

It offers multiple volunteer opportunities, integrates resume-building and educational modules, and provides streamlined processes for recruitment, registration, and data management. Rise Up! participants and Host Organizations were engaged with the creation of the platform.



## Improving Meaningful Volunteer Engagement

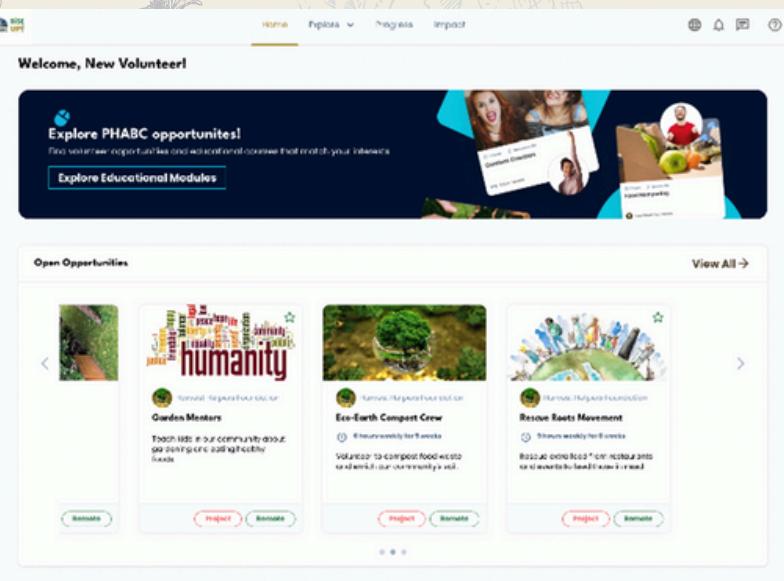
The platform aims to make volunteering easy and meaningful! With the meaningful app, volunteers have the option to create a profile showcasing their skills and experiences. Plus, they can choose the impact areas they're most passionate about, so we can match them with organizations supporting those causes. Our platform provides a centralized hub for them to explore and apply for volunteer opportunities –whether it's in-person, virtual, or hybrid placements.

## Connecting Community Organizations with Youth

The PHABC Rise Up! Platform helps host organizations connect with youth by offering tools to manage volunteer applications and track their progress. Hosts can use customizable templates to create volunteer opportunities easily. Plus, the platform makes it simple to manage volunteers, generate reports, and provide support, making it easier for host organizations to engage with young volunteers.

## Online Education

The PHABC Rise Up! Platform integrates with educational modules developed by CityHive, enhancing the volunteer experience with engaging and informative content. This combination of learning and hands-on volunteering ensures that volunteers not only contribute their time but also acquire valuable insights, empowering them to create a greater impact in their communities.

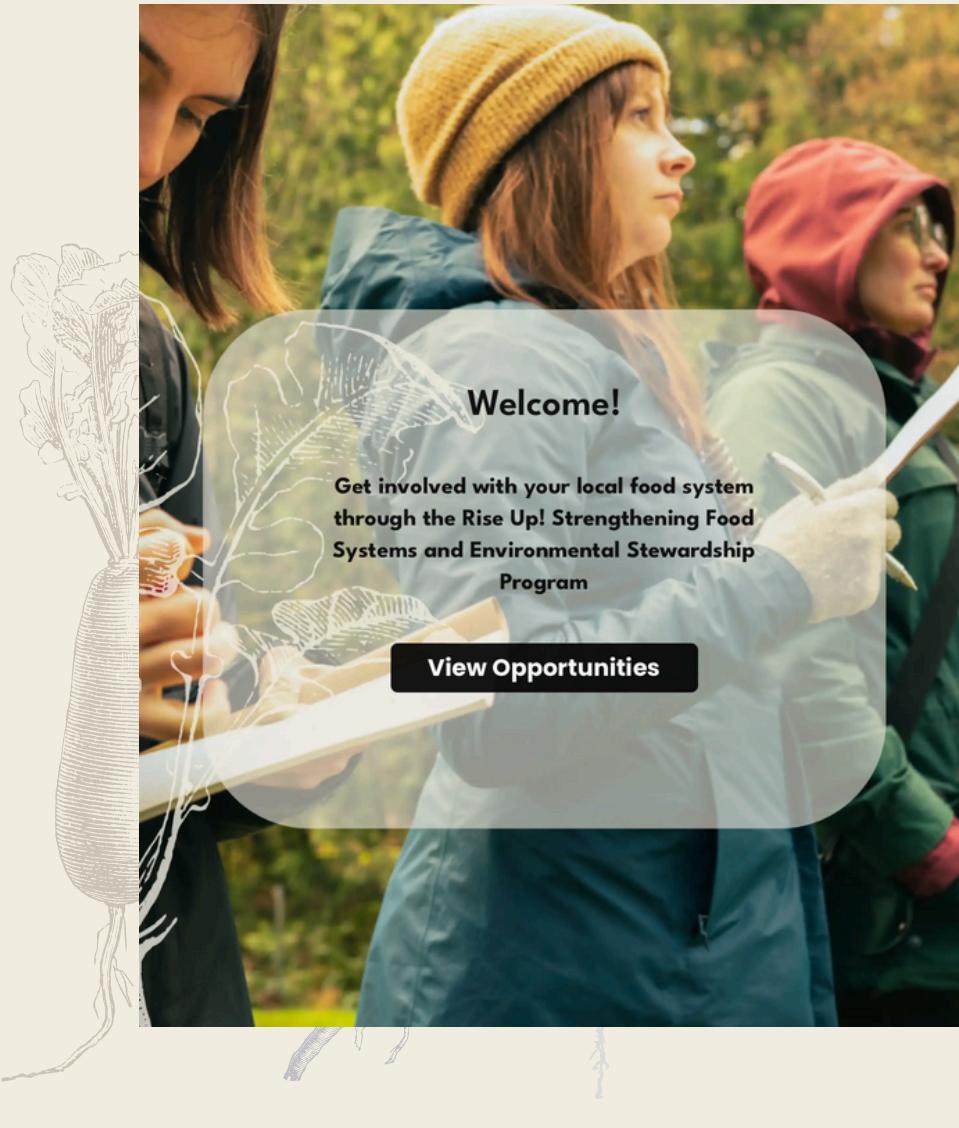


## Rise Up! Digital Management Platform

Co-Designed with MeaningfulWork and CityHive to enhance the youth and host org experience while boosting program scale and delivery.

The platform:

- Improves efficiency through centralized data management, enabling more accurate tracking and reporting.
- Boosts organizational capacity to support a much wider network of host organizations and volunteers.
- Streamlines reporting by including all required CSC data, ensuring compliance and clear communication with stakeholders.



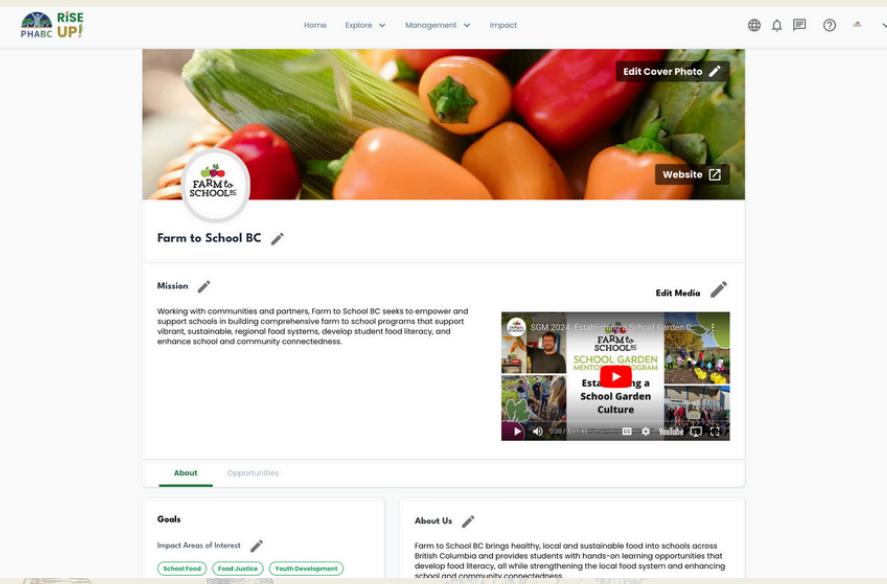
## Youth Experience

- Provides easy access to service opportunities tailored for youth engagement.
- Offers an integrated learning platform for skills enrichment and professional development.
- Streamlines the process of finding, applying, and keeping track of volunteer impact with a user-friendly interface.



## Host Organization Experience

- Reduces administrative workload with optimized volunteer management and customizable templates.
- Connects with volunteers based on their interests and skills, ensuring meaningful engagements.
- Motivates others to join and support the organization by sharing impact stories.



Farm to School BC

Mission

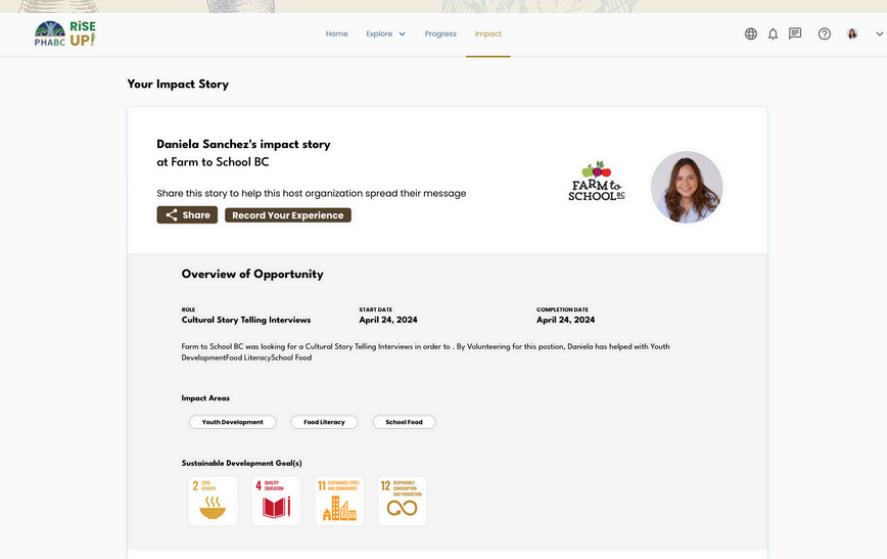
Working with communities and partners, Farm to School BC seeks to empower and support schools in building comprehensive farm to school programs that support vibrant, sustainable, regional food systems, develop student food literacy, and enhance school and community connectedness.

Goals

Impact Areas of Interest: SchoolFood, Food Justice, Youth Development

About Us

Farm to School BC brings healthy, local and sustainable food into schools across British Columbia and provides students with hands-on learning opportunities that develop food literacy, all while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness.



Daniela Sanchez's impact story at Farm to School BC

Share this story to help this host organization spread their message

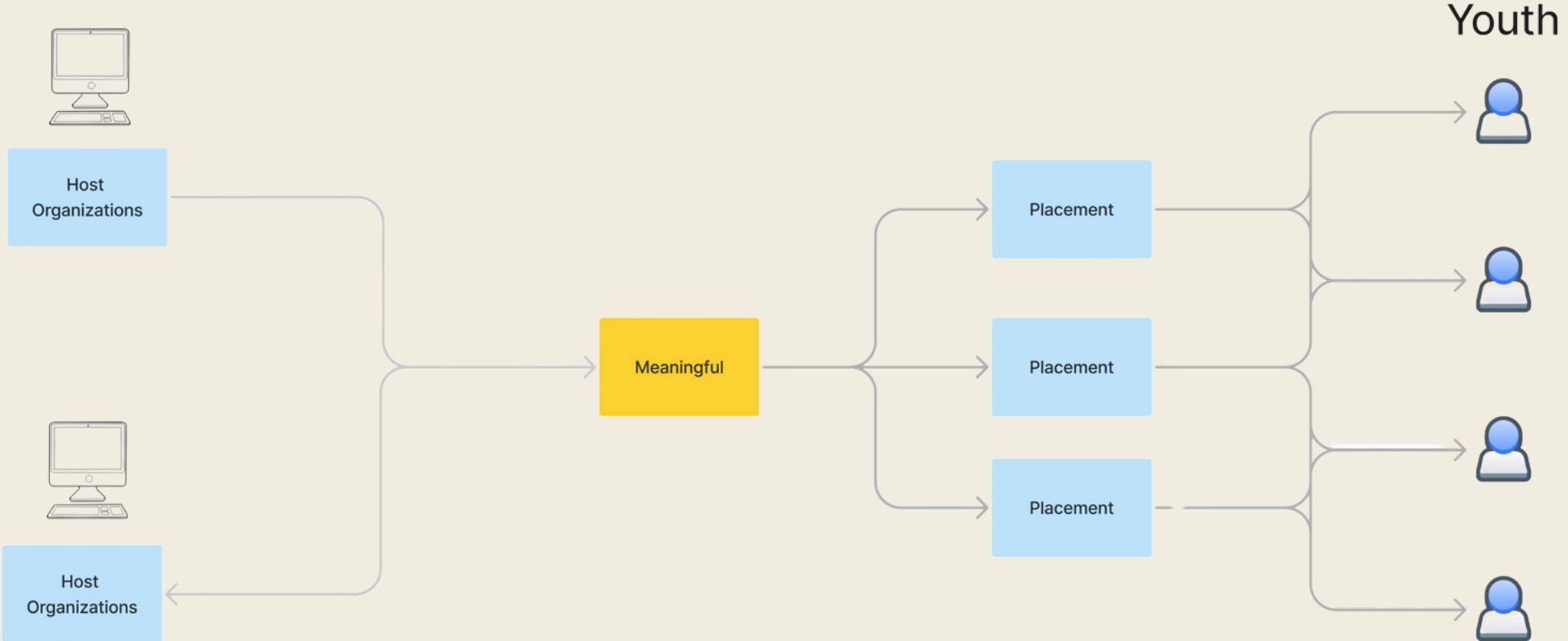
Share Record Your Experience

Role: Cultural Story Telling Interviews   Start Date: April 24, 2024   Completion Date: April 24, 2024

Impact Areas: Youth Development, Food Literacy, SchoolFood

Sustainable Development Goal(s): 2, 4, 11, 12

# PHABC







# Project Impact

## Youth Experience

When asked about how the Rise Up! Project made an impact on participants, there were strong themes around the range of skills and knowledge gained, the connection participants have to their local community, and their desire to continue pursuing food systems-related initiatives.

### **Skills and knowledge gained**

#### **Increased knowledge around food systems**

At the beginning of the focus group, when asked about their knowledge of food systems prior to the project, participants were split in the room with half saying 'Yes, I knew a lot' and the other half saying 'No, I didn't know anything'.

Whether participants were already familiar with food systems work or just beginning their exploration, the project provided opportunities for everyone to learn something new. Some participants shared they learned a lot about food systems as a whole, from the different components of a food system to challenges that face different communities.

Others shared they gained more understanding around the value of food and different cultural relationships communities have to food. Participants also shared learning about the different challenges, such as lack of public supports that perpetuates a cycle of scarcity.





“I learned about the importance of food, its culture and the **interconnectedness of how we interact with it.**”

“I learned how much the **food systems impact the community** like, providing free lunches/ dinners or free cooking classes.”

“I learned about intersectionality and **cultural relationships with food.**”

The project was particularly successful in increasing awareness of the organizations and programs in participants' local communities.

**93%**

respondents are more aware of local initiatives

**73%**

respondents learned about local advocacy efforts



## Advocacy

Many participants shared that they gained more understanding around the different ways they can create change in issues they care about around food security, equality, and justice. Being able to learn about different types of advocacy and social movements increased many participants' confidence in engaging in ways that align with their interests and capacity.

“ I like how advocacy can look like different things and there's not one way. And that **we can find our place in advocacy** in terms of being a rebel or changemaker.

## Personal and professional development

The project fostered a space for both personal and professional development. Participants shared being able to develop effective communication skills and how to work with people from different ages and backgrounds. The project allowed participants to gain more confidence in sharing their ideas and taking initiative on issues they care about.

It showed me **how easy it is to start making a difference**. For example, through volunteering.

Allowing myself to speak and share my own perspectives and **knowing that what I share is important**.

**77%**

**respondents shared  
they were mentored by  
people with experience  
in their local food  
systems**



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Association  
of BC





## Community Engagement

The project also allowed participants to learn the importance of engaging with their local community and building connections. Many participants shared that they learned more on how to support organizations in their work and that they were encouraged to work in community as opposed to on their own.

“ Seeing cross collaboration between different agencies within the program inspires me that **it's not just up to one organization or person.** ”





## Connection to community

### Youth feel more connected to their local community through volunteering

Many participants shared how their service placements made them feel more connected to their local community. Being able to be part of and witness the impact that they made through volunteering fostered a sense of connection they didn't previously have, especially for those who are newer to their regions or community. Some participants shared how meeting new people or deepening the relationships they already had allowed them to learn more about different experiences in their community such as to different cultural connections to food.

“ Being a student in university, it feels like I have **gotten to know the community more and make friends.** ”

“ Being not originally from Prince George, **I feel now I'm more connected.** ”

# 83%

respondents shared that they made connections with people and organizations in food systems work that they would not normally make.





## Youth feel invested in their regional food systems

In addition to increasing their connection to community, almost all respondents (97%) shared that the Rise Up! Project increased their personal connection to their local food system.

Whether it was through volunteering to lead free cooking classes for kids or packing school breakfasts or through community garden work, many participants shared how they were able to gain a deeper understanding of their local food system.



**I got to learn just how complex these systems are, and **how we interact with them.****

**I joined local groups that **I will continue volunteering** with after the program.**

**It gives me a visual understanding of how many **kids/ teens lack adequate and a reliable source of food.****



## Youth feel connected to a larger network of like-minded peers

Participants appreciated the project's provincial-wide reach. Most participants enjoyed being able to connect with a large range of people and being able to network both within and outside their communities. Some participants highlighted being able to make connections for their own personal interests as well as learn from those who are experienced in a specific trade.



# 63%

respondents shared they were able to connect with a group of like-minded peers

# 87%

respondents were able to meet people who are outside of their usual friend groups



## Taking action to address community or food-related topics

### Increased awareness of different actions

Participants agreed that the project increased their awareness and knowledge of the different ways they can take action within their own communities. Participants appreciated learning about different impacts they could make through volunteering, advocacy, or education. Many participants expressed that they now have more knowledge on what initiatives exist in their own community and now they have a better sense of where they can make a difference.

“ It showed me ways to take action in my own community – **there's often not enough focus on northern communities or regions outside of Metro Vancouver/Lower Mainland.** ”

“ **It deepened my knowledge that was already there.** I was surprised by the different initiatives that existed within my own community. ”

“ Awareness of existing organizations and there are **people doing what I want to do** so I can join. ”



## Clarified personal interests and role

Many participants shared how the project allowed them to get a better sense of their own personal interests and roles they want to take in their local food systems. Whether that was continuing to be engaged with their volunteer placement or seeking out other ways of making an impact, it's clear that a lot of participants are leaving the project with more clarity on where food systems work fits in their day-to-day life.



“ It encourages me to become more involved in helping programs that are focused on providing a **stable, healthy option for food**. ”

The program demonstrated a need to **educate people about food security**.

“ It made me realize there's a **desire for a community** about these issues. ”



## **Increased motivation and affirmation to create change**

Outside of specific actions, participants agreed that the project provided them a general motivation in taking action around food systems work. Many participants felt affirmed that they can make a difference as young people.



**“Hearing everyone’s stories and experiences made me feel **motivated and inspired.****

**“I’m inspired by **Brent and CityHive** to be more involved in increasing access for youth in civil/municipal affairs.**

**I definitely learned more about the different ways food policy and advocacy has changed** the way my community is able to sustain food security. That knowledge is very important and has connected me to want to work more locally.



## Pursuing a career in food systems

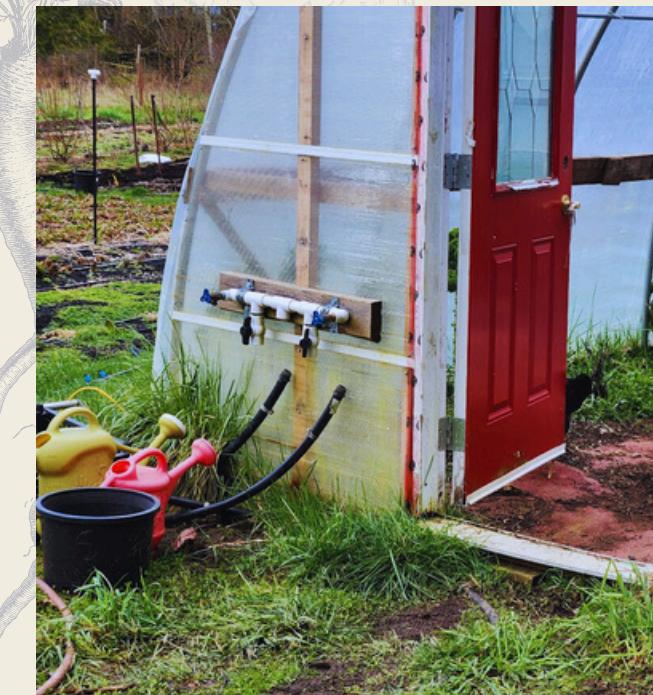
At the beginning of the focus group, we asked participants whether they can see themselves pursuing a career in food systems after the project. In the photo below, you'll see that most participants were on the right side (the 'Yes' side) while some were in the middle or more towards the left side (the 'No' side of the room).

For participants who answered 'Yes', there were a range of interests including, teaching, culinary school, policy change work, and working with farmers.

For the participants who were more in the middle or 'No' side of the room, they shared that they don't see themselves solely pursuing a career in food systems but rather integrating food systems in the careers they're interested in. One participant shared an interest in pursuing counseling and seeing lots of connections between land, food systems, and mental health.

Another participant shared that they are pursuing nursing and are interested in bridging food justice and health.

**Overall, when asked whether participants are excited to get more involved in food systems volunteering opportunities, the room answered a resounding YES!**







We asked Rise Up! participants to describe their experience in one word, and here's what they said:





“Rise Up gave me the opportunity to connect with the community for **a topic that I was not going to connect for if I did not join Rise Up.**

This program gave me the opportunity to learn about what schools around me offer to students like having gardens which my elementary and high school did not have.

“The people I have met through the rise up program will continue to be **friends and mentors throughout my life.**”

What I learnt on the farm is that **people don't grow crops, but people provide everything the seed needs to grow.**





## Project Support

Participants were well supported by their regional leads. When asked about the relationship with their regional lead, respondents agreed (97% of participants Strongly agree and Agree) that they had a positive relationship.

The lack of disagreeing statements highlights the important role regional leads played in both as a point of contact and mentor for participants.

**“ My regional lead worked hard to ensure and maintain a positive relationship with me and others in my area. **She was always kind, informative, helpful, and supportive.****

**“ I'm shy, but have made a very positive relationship, one that will continue after the program ends.**

**“ I have nothing but amazing things to say about my regional lead. We had met previously but the Rise Up program had given the opportunity to connect and learn from one another in a way that we wouldn't have been able to without this program. **My regional lead was unlike any mentor I've had previous and I am so grateful for that opportunity.****



## Host Organization Experience

The Rise Up! project was thrilled to partner with organizations across the province to help create meaningful volunteer placements. Partnerships were created through our Farm to School, Can You Dig It and BC Coalition for Healthy School Food Networks, and supported by our Rise Up! Regional leads.

“I really enjoyed working with our volunteer and Rise-Up partner. **They brought a great energy to our organization.**

“I appreciated the follow-up and check-ins by coordinators, to keep in touch and **we look forward to hosting more youth in our programs as volunteers.**

**The youth involved were helpful with many aspects of EAT's activities**, including actively participating in the weekly canning circle activities, being involved in some on-campus "Eco Living Community" events at UNBC, and supporting the food bank at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre.





13

host organizations  
participated in an  
evaluation survey

{source: Host  
Organization Evaluation  
Survey, March 2024}

10/13

want to provide  
meaningful volunteer  
placements for youth in  
our community

100%

agree that they want to  
be contacted again

100%

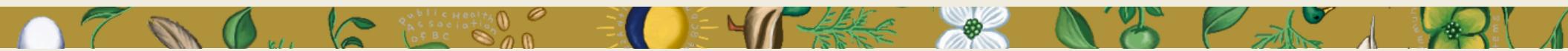
benefited from being  
matched with a rise up  
volunteer (7 Agree, 6  
Strongly Agree)

12/13

motivated to  
participate in Rise Up!  
because the project's  
goals and objectives  
aligned with our  
organization's values

12/13

agree or strongly agree  
that hosting youth  
volunteers through the  
Rise Up! program  
increased my  
organization's capacity  
to execute projects and  
activities (3 Strongly, 9  
Agree)



# Future Opportunities and Program Sustainability



PHABC aims to ensure that efforts invested in the 2023-2024 Rise Up! program are sustained for future years. The following steps will be taken to ensure a sustainable program.

**PHABC Rise Up! Platform:** The digital platform created alongside MeaningfulWork will be a self-sustaining space to help food systems organizations and youth connect with each other. Following completion of Canada Service Corps funding, the platform is complete and ready to launch. Ongoing maintenance will be required, and PHABC is seeking additional funding to ensure ongoing support. The Rise Up! project has proven there is an appetite for service opportunities in the food systems sector, which will be continued by the PHABC Rise Up! platform.

**Education:** The Food Systems curriculum created in partnership with CityHive has been connected to the PHABC Rise Up! platform, ensuring it can be self-sustaining and available for volunteers into the future.

**Future Opportunities:** In collaboration with CityHive, PHABC underwent an extensive evaluation process which illuminated many areas of success to maintain in future years, as well as opportunities for improvement.



Education: Participants came to this project with a wide range of existing food systems knowledge. Future iterations of Rise Up! could offer additional engagement strategies to improve accessibility for a wide range of learners (15-30), along with a broader range of content.

Retreat: The retreat was a highlight for many participants. However, participants wished it was longer and contained more opportunities for leisure and social connection. Future program iterations could also include even more land-based and outdoor learning opportunities that catered to the wide range of knowledge levels. Youth also expressed a desire to support more diverse and local food vendors for catering options.

Regional Gatherings: Participants enjoyed opportunities to meet and learn together in person. Future program iterations should increase in person engagement opportunities, especially those that include hands-on and land-based learning. Participants especially requested more opportunities to connect in person prior to the retreat.

Service Placements: Youth today have multiple important life commitments including school, work, and social lives. Future program iterations should prioritize a longer duration to increase accessibility

and improve learning. The 2023-2024 program highlighted an appetite for a wider variety of placement options across the province.

Host Organizations: All partner organizations expressed interest in taking part in this project again. We hope to maintain existing relationships while expanding our partnership base to broaden options for youth volunteers. We hope to create more opportunities for host organizations to connect with each other, and explore opportunities for improved appreciation and/or compensation.

Program Outreach: Employing existing partnerships and the PHABC Rise Up! platform, PHABC has identified a number of strategies for broadened project outreach. We hope that the Rise Up! program can be made available to a wider range of youth across BC, especially Northern BC in the future. Promotional videos created during the 2023-2024 project will support in future outreach.

**PHABC is engaging with potential funders to build upon this pilot project and continue Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship through youth engagement for years to come.**



# Conclusion



PHABC is privileged to have been able to launch the Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship project and facilitate meaningful learning and connection for 33 youth. Thank you to all of our partners, funders and staff who made the project possible.









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