



Growing Healthy Communities: One Garden at a Time

Through the eight domains of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, explore the Wasaga Beach Community Garden to find out how this work is helping to nurture quality of life.



Community Vitality

With over 50 well-maintained garden plots in just its first year of operation, the Wasaga Beach Community Garden provides a focal point for local residents to meet on a regular basis. “There are always at least a couple of families working in the garden, or having picnics,” says Shannon Gale, Health Promoter at South Georgian Bay Community Health Centre.

Democratic Engagement

If this community initiative had not been set up through the Healthy Community Network of Wasaga Beach, there is a good chance that it would never have come to life because of a NIMBY group that stood in opposition. Fortunately, this was skillfully handled, leading this project to become a source of civic pride.

Education

As anyone who has tried their hand at gardening will readily admit, there is a certain level of skill and knowledge necessary for people to grow food, unless one wishes to end up with a weed patch. With this in mind, the organizers of the community garden held workshops on a variety of topics, and see opportunity for branching out to local schools with lessons.

Healthy Populations

The benefits of eating local, especially fresh vegetables are widely known, yet local produce only makes up a small percentage of the average North American diet. “Something that is less talked about is how the very act of gardening can have a subtle and yet powerful effect on what we choose to eat” says Peter Willmott, past chair of the Healthy Community Network Committee.

Environment

There are numerous, well-documented benefits of growing local food from an environmental perspective that include the need for less packaging and reduced impact on climate change due to less travel. In addition, the town of Wasaga Beach has installed a communal composting bin.

Leisure and Culture

Gardening is a popular leisure activity among Canadians, and one that is all the more advantageous since it involves physical activity. The Wasaga Beach Community Garden took it one step further by making it accessible and affordable to all residents, even those who do not reside in houses.

Living Standards

“Something that is of real concern to us is the extent to which many of the health issues our staff are confronted with on a daily basis are either caused or exasperated by malnutrition,” says Diana Vangelisti, Chair of South Georgian Bay Community Health Centre. “This was a major factor driving our support for this important community initiative.”

Time Use

“There are few antidotes better for alleviating stress than spending some time in a garden with family and friends. Not only does it get us outside in the fresh air, it gets us outside of our minds, and into our bodies where we can get grounded and reconnected to the earth where we belong,” says Shannon Gale, Health Promoter at South Georgian Bay Community Health Centre.

