

Brooklyn Elementary School, Comox BC

2018-2019 – year 1.

It was a brand-new Kindergarten parent at [Brooklyn Elementary](#) who proposed and led the Salad Bar idea. Maurita Prato, who also works for [LUSH Valley](#), a food sustainability action society who saw a great opportunity to make healthy local foods part of young children's school experience.

Our PAC supported the idea in principle but was cautious about volunteer pressure that could affect their operations, too. The school was also supportive of the idea but continued to struggle to find teacher leadership to provide that key food literacy learning piece we envisioned for our students. The Principal, Erica Black, and a small team of passionate parents proceeded despite the worries around them.

Brooklyn El. was the fourth school in our district ([School District #71](#) – Comox Valley) @ComoxValleySD71, to receive a grant from [Farm2Cafeteria](#) to support healthy foods and food literacy in our schools. Our community of schools: [Ecole Robb Road Elementary](#), [Lake Trail Middle School](#), [Huband Park Elementary School](#) and [Mark R. Isfeld Secondary](#) (the 5th school to receive) banded with Brooklyn Elementary to share their craft knowledge on where to source local fresh produce, how to prepare the greens and vegetables so that they are desirable to our young students. They shared recipes for dressings and menus for salad bar themes that were as locally sourced as possible and exciting for children to experience.

Salad Bar was an instant hit! We began with an ambitious kick off promotion where every child and staff member were invited to a complimentary salad bar visit. Our F2C grant stated we aimed for 50 children maximum each time, and these launch days served up to 175 each day. A parent / local business owner donated an embroidered set of aprons to honour our volunteers and further the sense of pride our team had.

Because the kick off was so successful, we saw around 125 children pre-order salad bar each week. Our volunteers found the number to be manageable, so we stayed the course. Our groups were split (primary one week, intermediate the following week) to keep our numbers low, to keep our volunteers coming back and to keep our service sustainable.

We planned themes for the salad bars, many influenced by our community mentors: Mexican, Greek, Pasta, with a Bun and our impromptu and most popular – Indigenous. We chose the indigenous theme to honour an indigenous student who won a national contest and oozes pride for her heritage. To celebrate her we looked at adding items to our basic salad offerings (lettuces, cucumbers, peppers, carrots, sprouts, tomatoes, some sort of cheese) and chose seaweed, pine nuts, blueberries as well as bannock as a grain offering and smoked salmon as our first meat-based protein.

Next up is to continue the great work we started in our 6 short months of regular operation. We hope our volunteers will continue to help out – many are not our usual hot lunch volunteers, so it was exciting broadening our volunteer base. Some of them commented how Salad Bar volunteering feels better for them because of the healthy food offering. A couple proposed some super ways to keep children excited about new foods – a tasting station for less familiar fruit / veggies. This was a great way to promote conversation around the salad bar and while children were waiting in line, too. With great people come excellent ideas!



Part of our super volunteer crew with their Brooklyn aprons from Fineline Embroidery



Gr 6/7 + staff launch day



Gr 3-5 launch day



K – gr 2 launch day



Notice our youngest are using china dishes and washable forks!