

Harvest the North



By Nate Smelle

APPETITES MAY VARY IN intensity, but no matter what our station in life may be we all look forward to our next meal. Whether one's bottomline is counted by the hundreds or by the millions, in this very simple way we all understand hunger. Poverty, as I understand it, is the condition of not being able to satisfy such hunger.

Under this light poverty is not a condition exclusive to low-income earners. For instance, someone bringing home \$2 million a year may see less value in life than someone else earning \$20,000 a year if happiness is factored into the equation of measuring one's wealth. Is the cost of that million-dollar-bottomline to the earner? a sacrifice of their time, energy, family, friends and overall quality of life? worth the freedom that comes with a bursting bank account?

According to a study conducted by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion regarding the relationship between an individual's income and their quality of life found that people earning less than \$50,000 a year identified themselves as less happy than those earning \$50,000 plus. ?Mo Money No problems,? right? Isn't that what the Notorious BIG was trying to tell us? Not exactly.

Looking at the responses of the participants in the study, it further revealed that the happiness of people earning more than \$50,000 did not rise substantially if their income continued to rise. However, for those making a living on less than \$50,000 a year, happiness becomes a loftier goal to achieve the deeper their income sinks below the magic number.

To attach a measurable value to the happiness of those participating in the study researchers focused on the defining characteristics of happiness itself. The study looked at: family, neighbourhood safety, spiritual life, housing, health, work and how one's days are spent, friends, free time, finances and community involvement. All very important contributing factors to our quality of life, but I think they missed a big one?our accessibility to food.

Questioning our community's access to food years earlier while sitting in on a meeting of the sub-committees working to create the Sustainable Bancroft Plan I felt a similar sense of surprise when the guest speaker told me that he had worked on sustainability plans for more than 50 municipalities, and until then no one had mentioned food as part of the plan for building a sustainable community. Having spent most of the meeting thinking about what I was going to eat that night for dinner I could not believe there could be such a grandiose oversight in the planning process. Even the most energy efficient, eco-effective building known to man is nothing but a waste, a pile of rubble waiting-to-happen without at least a few well-fed monkeys to turn on the lights and enjoy the shelter.

Without food, like water, we don't last very long.

Hats off to all of the Harvest the North volunteers getting their hands dirty while preparing the community vegetable gardens in Riverside Park. A big thanks is in order to this crew of communally concerned citizens for making locally grown non-GMO food part of the plan for a Sustainable Bancroft. These gardens, built and maintained by the community, will help supply healthy food to those who need it most throughout the Bancroft area. Creatively re-purposing public space to grow food for the public sends a message to those who choose to live here that every individual's quality of life matters.

Eradicating hunger in North Hastings may seem like an impossibility to some, however, with projects like Harvest the North turning ideas into action I think it can be done. Building community from the grassroots level up, these kind of initiatives give people more

power over their own survival.

That my friend, is never a bad thing.

Come out and show your support for this delicious community endeavour on Saturday, June 27 as community partners and volunteers gather in the newly established gardens in Riverside Park for the Heart of the Park celebration on Saturday, June 27 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.