

Seedy Saturday helps launch seed library



By Nate Smelle

Hundreds of sustainable food enthusiasts made their way to the old community centre on the afternoon of March 14 to take part in the 6th annual Seedy Saturday seed exchange. Adding to the excitement at this year's event was the launch of the Growing Stories Seed Library and the announcement of this year's first recipients of the Real Food Heroes award. Looking after the main information table at the event was Seedy Saturday organizer Brian Sharpe. One of the original founders of the annual seed exchange, Sharpe looks forward to spending the day sharing seeds and secrets of the soil with his fellow growers. "The seed library and the Seedy Saturday exchange are trying to teach people how to save their seed properly, and to encourage them to do that," said Sharpe. "It's not only to make sure that people have the proper skills to save their seeds, it is also about ensuring that the seeds survive." The method food growers need to practice when saving seeds depends on the type of seeds and plants they choose to grow, he explained. For instance, while bean seeds tend to be easy to save Tomato seeds require a little more care to get started. Sharpe said the new Growing Stories Seed Library in Maynooth will be an amazing new resource for the community to access this type of seed-specific information. The idea to create a seed library in Hastings Highlands came from winner of this year's first Real Food Hero award Laurie Ann Storrington. She and her partner Richard Baynes—who care for and nurture the Madawaska House Retreat and Organic Gardens—were awarded the prize for their hard work and passionate dedication to promoting a sustainable local food system. By living in harmony with the seasons and connecting with the land where they live Storrington and Baynes have transformed the landscape around their home into an abundant food forest. Wanting to share the valuable lessons they had learned from the land with the public, Storrington held a series of seed sharing workshops, and published a column in Bancroft This Week from 2013 to 2014. The Growing Stories Seed Library will help continue this push for better public education around the food we eat. Jane Kali is one of the founders of the Seed Library; she accredits much the project's early success to all of the partners and volunteers involved in bringing it to fruition. Seed library volunteers Urpi Pine, Salvador Gallegos-Santinoli and Leilah Ward have been working tirelessly along with Kali, Storrington and Baynes to make the project happen. The municipality has also been an important partner in supporting the project right from the beginning, supplying Growing Stories with resource staff and donating space at Hastings Highlands Public Library. Kali said the municipality also committed to ordering books that are specific to seed saving and to help with some of the costs. "The idea of the seed library is that we have an ongoing venue to share the seeds," Kali said. For five dollars members can take home as many seeds as they like from the seed library as long as they promise to return seeds back to the library after the fall harvest. Kali said they plan to continue this exchange every spring and fall as the growing season begins and ends. This ensures that the seed stock in the library will grow stronger and more plentiful each year, she explained. "What we are doing here today is promoting the idea of saving seeds and sharing them within the community, given that the seeds that we grow here will be more resilient to this place," said Kali. "We are sticking to heirloom seeds and heritage seeds, this is also connected to saying no to GMO seeds it's politically motivated in that way to try and take some ownership of our food through our seed saving efforts."