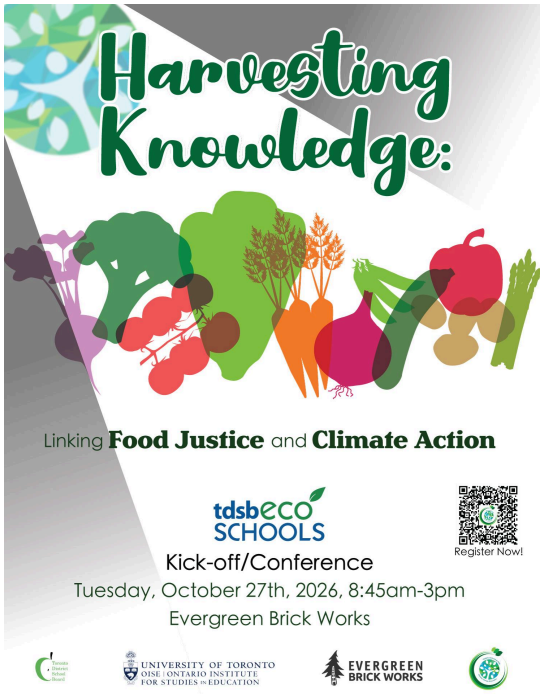
TDSB/OISE EcoSchools Conference 2026

Harvesting Knowledge: Linking Food Justice and Climate Action



Location: This conference is being hosted at Evergreen Brickworks thanks to the generous support of Evergreen. Transportation to and from the Brickworks, (as well as parking) is the responsibility of conference attendees.

Address: 550 Bayview Ave, Toronto, M4W 3X8

Public Transit Options: There is an Evergreen Brick Works shuttle bus from Broadview TTC station. Check times here. Note that at the beginning of the day the shuttle bus is busy with limited capacity, so plan accordingly to arrive on time. There is also a TTC bus, #28 Bayview South Bus from Davisville TTC station with more capacity (check TTC schedule for times).

Driving & Parking: Parking is available, but with limited paid parking spaces on site. The cost of parking is the responsibility of EcoFair presenters (approx $15+ for the day).

Keynote Talk: School Food Programs: Strengthening Food Justice and Climate Action



Keynote Speaker: *Debbie Field*

Debbie Field is the **Coordinator of the Coalition for Healthy School Food,** which has successfully advocated for a National School Food Program and National School Food Policy for Canada, and expanded funding and policy commitments in all the provinces and territories. A longstanding community activist, Debbie believes passionately in the power of grassroots campaigning. Debbie has been involved in promoting and improving school food programs for decades. In a variety of contexts, she and her colleagues were involved in developing innovative and sustainable student nutrition, school garden and school food literacy programs, through extensive partnerships with the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, both French school Boards, Evergreen and many other community organizations in Toronto. Debbie has an Honours B.A. in Sociology from Trent University, a Master's in Adult Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from York University. (photo credit Laura Berman, GreenFuse Photography)

Workshop Options

All workshops listed below are offered for in-person participation only at Evergreen Brickworks.

Please select two (2) workshops (1 morning and afternoon) as part of your registration. Workshops are offered in both time slots.

1	**Workshop 1:** ***Seasonal Teachings from the Land*** (P/J/I/S) **Description:** In this workshop, teachers will spend time learning from Land-Based Program Specialist April Nicolle in the Gitigaan, Ode'imin Wiigawaamen, and the land surrounding Evergreen Brick Works. Participants will explore the connection between all our relations and the seasonality that surrounds us. Note: This workshop will be held entirely outdoors and participants should be prepared for the weather.	**Presenter: April Nicolle from Evergreen Brick Works** **April Nicolle** is an earth worker, storyteller, Wiigiwaamen helper at Evergreen Brick Works, working with a wide range of communities from preschool to elders. April is the Land-Based Community Programs Specialist with Evergreen Brick Works.
2	**Workshop 2:** ***Worms in the City: Hands-on Vermicomposting*** (P/J/I/S) **Description:** Roll up your sleeves and dig into vermicomposting with Zawadi Farm's "Growing Growers" team. Participants will be walked through a simple process for building worm compost bins that can be deployed at school or home. Discussion will focus on the *why* of composting in an urban setting, making links to food/land justice, soil stewardship, climate change and even human resilience. By the end of the session, attendees will be equipped with practical applications for urban composting and a compelling narrative to share with others.	**Presenters: Jon & Corinna McMurray from Zawadi Farm Education** **Corinna McMurray** is a veteran Occupational therapist/farmer who infectiously spreads her joy of growing to any who come near. **Jon McMurray** is a teacher/farm hand who loves to get at the "why" of things, addressing the topics that affect us all. In collaboration with Zawadi Farm, the McMurrays spearhead the Growing Growers initiative, which aims to multiply urban farming practice across the province while simultaneously building a resilient spirit in the grower.

3	**Workshop 3:** ***Harvesting Climate Action: Hydroponic Solutions for Environmental and Food Justice*** (P/J/I/S) **Description:** This interactive workshop offers an inspiring exploration of how hydroponic technology can be leveraged as an intersectional tool to simultaneously address climate education, sustainable food systems, and food security. Focusing on the distinct environmental challenges of Ontario's climate and geography, we will examine how year-round indoor agricultural production offers a viable, climate-resilient solution to food insecurity in remote northern regions and urban food deserts. Through this hands-on exploration, participating educators will discuss the opportunities and barriers of hydroponic farming, engage in a hands-on example of a curriculum-connected hydroponic activity, and learn how to utilize ArcGIS StoryMaps for a summative exploration of regional environmental disparities to inspire tangible climate action.	**Presenter: Catherine Melillo from AgScape** **Catherine Melillo,** OCT, is the Program and Resource Manager at AgScape, where she designs provincially scaled agriculture and food literacy programming. Blending her expertise as an Ontario Certified Teacher with a background in environmental conservation, she specializes in creating experiential learning frameworks that challenge students to think critically about food systems and local ecosystems. Catherine is passionate about equipping educators with practical, high-impact tools that spark student curiosity, enhance food literacy, and foster deep environmental stewardship in modern classrooms.
4	**Workshop 4:** ***Garden Snacks and Indoor Growing*** (P/J) **Description:** In this workshop, participants will engage in ideas around school gardens, climate-aware school systems, and recommendations for actions to support garden and indoor food growing. Participants will prepare and enjoy 'Cold Rolls' - a popular garden snack from the Green Thumbs Growing Kids program as an example of what can be done in school gardens and classrooms. Curriculum connections will be explored, particularly for P/J.	**Presenter: Sunday Harrison from Green Thumbs Growing Kids** **Sunday Harrison** is founder and Executive Director of Green Thumbs Growing Kids, a Toronto-based non-profit organization that partners with schools in the TDSB, TCDSB and ViaMonde.
5	**Workshop 5:** ***Fairness Across the Food Chain: Rethinking Sustainability in Food Systems through a Food Justice Lens*** (J/I/S)	**Presenter: jade guthrie from FoodShare** **jade guthrie** (she/her) is a queer, mixed-race educator, facilitator, and community organizer. As the Manager of Community Learning and Engagement at FoodShare Toronto, jade is committed to social change work rooted

	Description: Do you know where your food comes from? Whose hands harvested your produce? This workshop is designed for educators ready to bring food justice into their classrooms and communities. Together, we'll explore the interconnected sites of oppression and exploitation - of both land and people - along the food chain and discuss how to meaningfully engage students in this critical work.	in justice, liberation, and joy. Beyond 9-5, jade is an organizer for Migrant Workers, a board member at Food Secure Canada, and sits on the City of Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Action Plan Advisory Circle.
6	**Workshop 6:** ***Growing Food Learning and Community Through School Gardens, Competitions, and Agricultural Fairs*** (J/I/S) **Description:** What happens when students move beyond learning about food and begin growing, harvesting, competing, showcasing, and sharing their work with others? This workshop explores how hands-on food learning builds student engagement, environmental stewardship, food literacy, and meaningful connections within and between schools, beginning with the successful garden and food learning program at Don Mills CI. From there, we will examine how both school-based projects and friendly competitions foster authentic learning experiences while creating communities that connect students across classrooms, schools, and even rural and urban Canada. Finally, we will explore how agricultural fairs extend these experiences, demonstrating how competition and celebration can strengthen a shared sense of community.	**Presenters: Daniel Kunanec & Paige Mawson** **Daniel Kunanec** is the ACL of Emerging Green Technologies & Environmental Stewardship, at Don Mills C. I., in the TDSB. He has been at Don Mills for 25 years and leads an incredible program that dovetails Green Industries, Hospitality & Tourism and Technological Design into a Farm to Table experience at an urban school. Daniel worked in the design and construction industry for 10 years before embarking upon his journey as a teacher. His experience in the field drives his Experiential Learning, real-world and entrepreneurial approach in unexpected and varied 'classrooms'. In recognition of his dynamic and exemplary programming, he is a Recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Education, the TDSB Excellence Driving Innovation Award, and the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. **Paige Mawson** holds a master's degree in museum studies with a focus on informal learning environments, combining expertise in educational program design with a background in agriculture. An active equestrian who grew up competing in international showjumping and now lives on her family's farm, she has developed exhibits and educational materials for Ontario museums, published research on ecological learning in school gardens, and now designs interdisciplinary, hands-on agri-food educational experiences at The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair as the Manager of Features and Education.

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