



Rooted in Community: Cultivating Wellbeing from Waste

*Bridging Food Systems, Community Health, and
Waste Diversion for Collective Strength*

5th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

November 19, 2025

PARTICIPANT PACKAGE

OFC's Symposium & Annual Organizational Update – Participant Package

The Ontario Food Collaborative's (OFC) is a unique collaboration bringing municipal public health and waste management professionals together to share resources and align education and outreach initiatives on food literacy, healthy eating, and food waste prevention.

OFC's 5th Annual Symposium, **Rooted in Community: Cultivating Wellbeing from Waste** – *Bridging Food Systems, Community Health, and Waste Diversion for Collective Strength* and Annual Organizational Update is a virtual event with opportunities to learn from inspiring practitioners in the food system.

We would like to recognize and thank our members and contributors for helping to co-create this program. We hope it is of value to all.

Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today. While we meet virtually today, the Ontario Food Collaborative acknowledges that its work and that of its members takes place on the traditional indigenous territories of many nations across the province. The area we refer to as Ontario includes lands covered by over 40 treaties and agreements as well as unceded territories. We are thankful to be able to work and live in these territories. We thank the generations of indigenous people who have taken care of this land for thousands of years and continue to do so, providing leadership and inspiration for our work. As we share thoughts and ideas today, we encourage you to reflect on how we can honour our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities through the work we do building a more sustainable future.

Program at a Glance

Time	Session	Presenters
10:00 – 10:05 a.m.	OFC Welcome	Julie Hordowick, York Region, OFC Steering Committee Avery Sudsbury, York Region, OFC Steering Committee
10:05 – 10:20 a.m.	Keynote Address	Eric Novak, Modern Media Perspectives
10:20 – 11:15 a.m.	Rooted in Community	Moderator: Eric Novak, Modern Media Perspectives Presenters: Shane Harker, Rethink Resource Corey McPherson, Local Urban Bites Hilda Nouri, Right To Food
11:15 – 11:30 a.m.	Wellness Break	
11:30 – 11:45 a.m.	Supper Heroes: Calling All Volunteers!	Shannon Paré, University of Guelph
11:45 – 12:00 p.m.	Ontario Food Collaborative's Annual Organizational Update and Symposium Wrap-Up	Heidi Levitzky, Niagara Region, OFC Chair

Session Description

Rooted in Community

Rooted in Community examines the relationship between food systems, community health, and sustainability. This session explores how food choices and waste reduction strategies can support both human and planetary wellbeing. It highlights practical approaches to building sustainable food systems and reducing waste—showing how local action and systemic innovation can work together to reshape the way we produce, consume, and value food.

The Story of Sustainability: How We Drive Change

Eric Novak, [LinkedIn](#)

Eric Novak will kick off the symposium with a keynote on the transformative power of storytelling in driving environmental and social change. Drawing from his work as a media consultant, professor, and eco-journalist, Eric will explore how compelling narratives can inspire action, shift perspectives, and build momentum for sustainable solutions. His talk will highlight the role of communication in bridging gaps between sectors and engaging communities in meaningful ways.

Designing Smart Solutions to Protect Resource Value

Shane Harker (he/him), [Rethink Resource](#)

Shane Harker, founder of Rethink Resource, will present on how his company is revolutionizing food waste diversion. With over 30 years of experience, Shane will share how technology, data, and circular economy principles have helped divert millions of kilograms of waste from landfills. His talk will challenge conventional waste management practices and offer actionable strategies for achieving low-emission, high-impact results in food systems.

Rethinking Convenience with Climate Conscious Meal Kits

Corey McPherson (he/him), [Local Urban Bites](#)

Corey McPherson, co-founder of Local Urban Bites, will discuss how his company reimagined the meal kit model to prioritize sustainability, community,

and equity. Drawing from his academic research and entrepreneurial journey, Corey will highlight the pitfalls of mainstream approaches and share how Local Urban Bites integrates climate-conscious practices into every aspect of its operations.

Relationship Building and Community Through Food

Hilda Nouri (she/her), [Right To Food](#)

Hilda Nouri, Senior Program Specialist at Right To Food, will share the organization's mission to advance equitable access to nourishing food across Canada. Her presentation will highlight the importance of relationship-building through community food centres. By centering cultural identity, land-based learning, and wellness, Hilda will demonstrate how community-driven food programs can strengthen protective factors for vulnerable groups and foster long-term wellbeing.

Supper Heroes

Supper Heroes is a theory-based, interactive mobile web application designed to support families with school age children to eat more plant-based proteins and reduce their food waste. Supper Heroes has families work through 8 missions (or modules) focused on increasing their food literacy skills to help them eat more plant-based proteins and reduce their food waste. The program is currently testing interventions designed to promote sustainable healthy eating among families.

Shannon Paré, [Supper Heroes](#)

OFC's Annual Organizational Update

This presentation will provide a brief annual update from the Ontario Food Collaborative, highlighting over a decade of impact, recent accomplishments, and a recap of this year's webinars. It will also revisit the recently launched strategic plan, share reflections from the past year, preview upcoming engagement opportunities, and outline ways for members and partners to stay involved.

Heidi Levitzky (Chair), [Niagara Region](#)

Presenter Bios



Eric Novak

Founder & President, Modern Media Perspectives

Eric Novak is the President and Founder of Modern Media Perspectives, where he provides consulting in media relations, marketing, and communications. He teaches sustainability and business at Seneca Polytechnic, including a new post-grad course on Sustainability and Management. A nationally recognized climate speaker, Eric has reached nearly 40,000 Canadians and presented at TEDx and international events. He also leads public relations for Trail Hub in Durham Region.



Shane Harker

Founder & President, Rethink Resource

Shane Harker is the Founder and President of Rethink Resource, a company challenging outdated waste systems through innovative diversion practices. With over 30 years of experience, Shane specializes in circular economy solutions, food waste reduction, and low-emission technologies. Under his leadership, Rethink Resource has diverted over 5 million kilograms of waste, preventing more than 6 million kilograms of CO₂e emissions. He was named one of Canada's Clean50 for his impact on sustainable waste management.



Corey McPherson

Co-founder, Local Urban Bites

Corey McPherson is a PhD candidate in Sustainability Management at the University of Waterloo and Associate Director at Royal Roads University. He co-founded Local Urban Bites, a zero-waste meal kit company, and serves as Vice President of the QChat Support Association, supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Corey's research focuses on municipal climate leadership through the Municipal Net-Zero

Action Research Partnership. He also teaches sustainability and develops climate education tools for municipal professionals, connecting food systems, policy, and inclusive community empowerment.

Hilda Nouri

Senior Program Specialist, Right To Food



Hilda is a Senior Program Specialist of the Mind Your Food Program at Right To Food (formerly known as Community Food Centres Canada) where she oversees a youth mental health program centered around food and land-based programming in 7 sites across Canada, prioritizing Indigenous and newcomer youth. Prior to this Hilda has been doing community food work for over 8 years; with experience in farming, urban agriculture and leading programming that centres cultural identity, building relationships with land and wellness. Hilda strives to pursue work that uses food as a tool to uplift communities that have been systematically marginalized and to work towards liberation of all oppressed communities.



Shannon Paré,

Student Coordinator, University of Guelph

As a performance-driven industry and academic researcher, Shannon is passionate about improving human health through research management. In coordination with an interdisciplinary team of colleagues at the University of Guelph, Shannon is supporting a CIHR grant to test an online family-based program they designed called Supper Heroes.

Thank You

This event was made possible through the efforts and contributions of OFC members, contributors, volunteers, and participants.

Many thanks to every one of you for your engagement with and commitment to our collective efforts towards advancing food literacy in Ontario.

For more information about the OFC, visit: ontariofoodcollaborative.ca