

Inner City Community Gardens Bus and Bike Tour!

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Well, it was an even more ambitious community gardens tour than in years past... and what a success it was!! West Broadway Development Corporation, Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA), Daniel MacIntyre St Matthews Community Association and William Whyte Residents Association (WWRA) joined together along with generous funding and support from Heifer International to create the Inner City Community Gardens Bus and Bike Tour. We visited 8 gardens and drove/rode by another 7 up and coming sites. This city has such a magnificent gardening community.

We kicked things off at Orioles Community Club with a tour of their 26 personal raised beds, 3 kids' garden boxes and 5 compost bins. This year they added a butterfly garden. Orioles' gardeners prepared a delicious lemon verbena and mint iced tea for the tour participants.

Then we were off to Lipton Street Community Garden. Here we learned about this brand new kids' garden created in a long-empty City of Winnipeg tot lot. This is the first year for this garden and its 11 raised bed. We even got to meet the dedicated neighbours to the north who have been working so hard to develop the site along with the kids, and have been sharing their seeds and gardening expertise all season long. The kids from this garden prepared zucchini muffins for all us hungry travelers.

Next stop was the SNA Greenhouse at 689 Maryland Street. This is a tremendous example of what all our gardens may achieve one day! In its third year, this is a beautiful urban jungle with a handful of small greenhouses and other gardens offering homes to many birds, local garden programs and horticultural therapy programs among the many other benefits... An awesome urban success story. Check it out! (Oh, and the herbed butter with fresh bannock was delicious!)

As we trekked farther north, we stopped at Dufferin School. These gardens have been here for 5 years, originally started with Audrey Logan's help and expertise. Here students learn traditional North American Aboriginal growing methods with a focus on vegetables. There are 56 raised beds here that are tended by youth from Freight House Boys and Girls Club, IRCOM House, Dufferin School Day Care, and Sunshine House. This year, Dufferin School is planning to integrate vegetable growing into the curriculum. Yay!

First stop in the North End was Hope Centre Garden at 240 Powers. Hidden in the back are beautiful community gardens all being tended by Karen people from Burma participating in the Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Program (NISP) based out of WWRA. They planted cilantro, corn, pumpkin,

cucumber, tomatoes, beans, peppers and eggplant. These gardeners prepared an amazing meal of Pumpkin Leaf soup, Green Tomato salad, Cucumber salad and an Ice Salad drink.

At 400 Pritchard we saw a huge range of garden plots full of indigenous plants and other common vegetables and flowers. This garden is tended by many different residents, including kids, newcomers and long time traditional gardeners. The NISP coordinates this garden along with 26(!) others in the North End and Spence neighbourhood.

On we continued, to the SNA Kids Community Garden. This beautiful garden is located just west of the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre. Here the kids have planted amazing butterfly gardens, released ladybugs and created a 'scratch and sniff' garden. The 6-12 year old kids who garden here get to eat the peas and carrots they've grown themselves... as well as learn to make spaghetti sauce and ketchup from their own tomatoes. This garden plans to expand next season to lots at 433 and 435 Furby. The kids had a bake sale ready for the tourists including a special treat: worms in mud!

Last but not least, the tour wound its way over to West Broadway. We stopped at the Klinik site at 545 Broadway to see the work of the Seventh Generation Seed Savers. Here we learned the difference between a male and female zucchini flower, met (and tasted) some chickpeas growing on the vine, were serenaded by a fiddle, accordion and jiggers... and were fed a delicious potage d'été. To learn more about this cool project, join us for their upcoming workshops on seed saving and traditional growing methods in September 2010. Contact Katie for full details at 774.7201 x 4.

Thanks to everyone who was able to join us on this year's tour. It was an excellent opportunity to share ideas with fellow gardeners and to learn about exciting neighbourhood projects. If you weren't able to make it to this year's tour, don't miss this annual event next year!