

# Where do we buy our food

North Renfrew Times Feb 2020

Where do we buy our best and healthiest food? That is a question most of us would like an answer to.

Here in Deep River we often hear the slogan, "Buy local".

These thoughts were entering my mind when my daughter, Claire and I drove to the farm of Sheila Selby to pick up my monthly food purchase from the Ottawa Valley Food Cooperative (OVFC).

Sheila is our local distributor volunteer for the OVFC. The night was pitch dark on the country road to her farm, but finally we could see the light at the small shack where Sheila stores the food that the Deep River and area people had ordered. "Ah John," Sheila says. "I have not seen you for a long time! Come in." As a local, she knows all her customers. She looks at the list of my purchases and goes to the box where the food is stored. She takes out the parcel with my name on it and Claire puts it in the large bag we have brought with us. Item after item is checked off. In the meantime, other people are waiting in the snow outside for their turn, but nobody is in a hurry. We are all people who know each other and have the same desire to buy and eat locally produced food. We are a start of an Ottawa valley community where we support each other.

Here in this small shack on a snowy country road we become neighbours.

Walking through the aisle of our local food store, I always want to know where our food comes from. Reading the labels it seems to me that the world is feeding us. Most of our food comes from all over the world. Then I see in my mind all the airplanes and trucks that are used to feed us and wonder why not buy local, especially in this time when we are concerned about the impact of food production and movement on our environment.

A friend of mine mentioned the **Ottawa Valley Food Cooperative**. I wanted to know more about this organization and typed this name in my computer. This Food Coop acts as an agent for food producers of our Ottawa Valley. It brings together producers and consumers. The essential business of the co-operative is to provide a marketplace where willing buyers and sellers can meet.

The coop has an interesting website with a lot of information about the producers and I felt connected. So I enlisted and became a member. Every month the members can order food from this well organized website.

I was always much interested in buying meat locally. I am always hesitant to buy the meat sold in the supermarket. We do not know where it comes from and how the animals are fed. Now at the website of OVFC, I can read the name of the farmer and how he feeds his animals. I can also contact the farmer who keeps bees and sells the honey. Then there are producers who bake homemade bread with sourdough and different kinds of flour. There are producers who make delicious soups, jams and kombucha. I can go on and on about all the products the OVFC is offering for sale.

Going back to the start of my story I now repeat, "Buy local!"

I include here what Kim and Gary write about their Alder Creek farm in Golden Lake. It gives a feeling about why some people are going back to farming in our Ottawa Valley. Kim

Groskleg & Gary Schmidt Alder Creek Farm Golden Lake, ON

“We are fortunate to be the fourth generation to farm our family homestead. Upon permanently moving here in 1997, we adopted a lifestyle of growing our own vegetables and raising our own meat products. It is rather humorous how we got started in the sheep farming business. The farm was originally a beef operation. When our daughters were young, we bought two lambs as pets. Now at peak times, we have 120 sheep on the farm!!! For several years, we hosted a Sheep 4H Club so as many children as possible could learn about and get to know sheep. We kept our two pets Snowball and Dipsy for 10 years. They were special to say the least. Now we shepherd a flock of 50 Dorset ewes. We have wonderful and rich green pastures available from May through to October. During the winter, the flock have free access to both indoor and outdoor large areas. We feed mostly our own hay and silage that we grow on our own farm. We do not use chemical fertilizers.”

You can find the Ottawa Valley Coop at,

[https://www.ottawavalleyfood.org/shop/members/orders\\_login.php](https://www.ottawavalleyfood.org/shop/members/orders_login.php)



**Our new board looks forward to continuing to provide local food access to our members!**

**Left to right: Sarah Bennett, Dan McCarthy, Marshal Buchanan, Joanne McManus, Chris Tanner, Ashley Cluff, Greg Parsons, Bob Dobson, Marilyn Paxton, Dwight Mick.**