

From the Grassroots - Climate and Justice

Bringing community together; orchard education

By Ilse Turnsen

What prompted a troop of hardy people to tromp across frozen fields, past thousands of young trees lying dormant under the snow with March continuing to roar like a lion?

“It has been a deeply rewarding experience being part of a group effort to grow good food.”

– Nicole Koch



From left: Steve Ferguson, Ilse Turnsen, and Alain Piche evaluating trees in La Pêche Organic Community Orchard at Minnes Farm. Photo courtesy John Duimovich

Their destination was La Pêche Organic Community Orchard (POCO) on the Eco Echo campus behind the defunct Jean Burger. Their quest was knowledge: how to identify fruit buds and leaf buds (so thrilling to observe those swollen buds even as the winter wind howled); how to distinguish lateral limbs from water shoots; how to distinguish lichen from blight; how to form a relationship with your trees in order to encourage a bountiful harvest; and getting up close and personal with trees — good for all concerned.

The lively hands-on workshop was offered by Shelley Lambert and Stephanie McNeely from Forêt Capital Forest, funded by a grant from the MRC des Collines-de-l’Outaouais as a part of Eco Echo’s ongoing Community Forest Workshop series. Lambert continued to share her vast store of knowledge, motivating students in the rich context of community-based education in a warm and welcoming spot on a chilly

day. POCO planted its first trees during the Spring of 2010 – on an acre of Minnes Farm set aside by Eco Echo – to a small group of people wanting to experiment with growing organic fruit and nut trees. It is a splendid location for an orchard by the way, offering a perfect opportunity to work with nature rather than against her.

POCO’s Paul Brown (Wakefield) recalls how steep the

learning curve was in the early days and the challenges of solving problems within a group that was a collective. We had to do research and buy and plant trees; raise money and build a fence; figure out a watering system. A dedicated core of people have persevered and many trees, bushes and vines are thriving.

We started out with big, rowdy meetings, recalls Owen Tuf (Wakefield), but growing trees is a tough, long-term

investment. We had a lot to learn about combining problem-solving and getting work done with inclusion, communication and meaningful collaboration. This partnership with Forêt Capital Forest feels like a renewal.

Stephen Ferguson (Wakefield) was drawn to the challenge of contributing to local food security. We continue to seek out best practices and learn from one another and together; to show up in a positive way; to remain committed.

Nicole Koch (Wakefield) reports that POCO is continually experimenting with new trees and hybrids to see what works best for this location and learning about the challenges of a changing climate. “It has been a deeply rewarding experience being part of a group effort to grow good food.”

“We can begin by doing small things like planting a community orchard,” says Grace Lee Biggs. “That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above, but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously.”

To learn more about POCO and/or participate in future activities please email: info@ecoecho.ca

Ilse Turnsen lives in Wakefield.

THE LowDown Presents

Pet of the Month

ENTER YOUR PET FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A \$25 CHICO GIFT CARD AND TO SEE YOUR PET IN PRINT!

How to Enter:

Email: general@lowdownonline.com
(Subject line: “Pet of the Month”)

- Include a high-resolution photo
- your name, your pet’s name & your location
- up to 50 words* about what makes your pet special (*Entries will be edited for length & clarity.)



We’ll keep your submission on file so you only need to email us once.

***SUBMISSION DEADLINE*
APRIL 3 at 9AM**

Draw winner will be announced in the April 5th edition of the Low Down



MAYA

chico.ca
819.485.0381  
1707 Rte 105 suite 103, Chelsea
MON-FRI: 9am-9pm | SAT-SUN: 9am-5pm

Sponsored by
Chico
Chelsea