

## Follow up of Mac Farm Educational Program

We first want to thank you for the support you are giving us.

It has been an interesting semester for us as we've been working on creating our activities and improving our project. Within the different parts of the Farm to School program, the Ag-Connect program, the chicken coop, and the various activities that took place this past semester we had some good surprises and some unplanned events. Here are some news of our activities.

We had goals set up to offer nice activities and opportunities to the Mac Students, including: documentary nights, chicken coop activities and educational activities.

At the very beginning of the semester we did two pop-corn and documentary nights where, each time around 5-10 people came, enjoyed the evening, and participated in the follow-up discussion.

Around the middle/end of the semester we created an activity called "Mother Nature" where we presented 2 educational modules to the Mac Students: we taught students how to make butter, and held a workshop about edible/useful weeds. This event was quite popular.

We also set up a chicken coop team of volunteers. The team is composed of 10-12 students. Throughout the semester the "Chicken Coop Caretakers" come weekly in pairs to clean the nests, care for the chickens, collect and wash eggs, pack and label cartons and also participate in selling the eggs. We trained everyone and showed them how to handle the birds. Moreover, we did a night session, where everyone one from the community was welcome to join, to discover the coop, install the fence and learn how to set it up for the winter.

Unexpectedly, the Coop was moved to three different spots during only the one semester: from behind the Swine Complex to the Hort Center, because the overpass was closed to pedestrians for renovation, then back to the Dairy Farm because of concerns for water accessibility during the winter. We had to find the new spots each time and show everyone where the coop was being moved and develop new methods of working to facilitate these problems. This demanded lots of coordination and communication.

During the Christmas break we came on campus multiple times to ensure the chickens were cared for while most of the usual volunteers were on break. We also prepared around 12 quiches using the eggs from the chicken coop and the vegetables produced by the club's garden this summer. They were sold on Monday the 6th of January in the MS lobby, while we promoted our activities and started to look for camp counsellors for the summer.

For the winter semester, additional volunteers are being trained to work with us and the ladies (chicken). We are also organizing a collaboration with the Out of the Garden Project, to facilitate the selling of the eggs. This is exciting as it's going to help both of the clubs.

## Concerning Farm to School and Ag-connect

We started the semester with the idea of adding structure to better differentiate the two programs being undertaken by the club. To do so, we decided to create a new club which would be called, Mac Farm Educational Program, and would serve as an umbrella englobing the two projects.

Farm to School is club with a history of being under the Macdonald Campus Student Society, and by creating a new club, we encountered a few concerns from the student association. They cannot be held responsible for the summer activities portion of our project, which is the core of our club's activities, so this is why we applied for funding elsewhere.

As the Farm To School Constitution was still under the Association, we were on hold about creating a new constitution with the new name because it would likely not be accepted by the student council.

We have been working hard to try to keep our activities running while the student association makes their final decision. Many hours and meetings were spent in order to find out how we could remain under de Macdonald Campus Student Society so that what Farm to School has been doing the last 3 years would remain under the students' governance.

At last, mid to end of November, the student society decided to support us until next fall, treating this summer as a transition summer. We had some conditions such as creating a safety policy, and not having Ag-connect running under the club's name.

In order to respect the Student Society' concerns we had to review our activities and how we present them. There is still confusion about creating a new constitution, or letting go of the club and only working under the Macdonald Farm. For now, Farm To School remains a club, while the ag-connect "volet", is led as a project on the side.

Around the end of December, we got to speak with Paul Meldrum, the manager of the Macdonald Farm, to fix our support problem. His response was very positive. He confirmed that we will be working together and maybe become part of the farm activities. We would have access to his little conference room as an office for us this summer (One of our goals had been finding headquarters for us to work from!). He confirmed that we will still be able to use the facilities we had been using in the past. Paul Meldrum also accepted to cover us in a way for the liabilities questions. With the Farm, we are now well supported and both Ag-connect and Farm to School will be taking place this summer.

Apart from all those administrative questions, we also made a partnership with the Faculty of Education downtown. We met with Faye Heather Ana Siluk which is organizing a special topic course downtown called: Ambitious Science Teaching. We also have our special topic course offered this winter for students. The partnership will go as follow:

- Mac Campus Students will give a visit of the farm and will present an educative module to the students from the Faculty of Education, (February)

- Mac Campus Students and the Students in Education will collaborate for the creation of a science educational module related with nutrition, bio-resources, agriculture or the environment. (March)
- Mac Campus Student will present their work to one or more elementary schools of the West Island. (March)

There are many goals for the next semester. We are still running the chicken coop and also planning more activities to involve the community. The coordinators should also follow a training session from the DAFA, to better prepare them for the project.

