SPOTLIGHT ON MIGRANT FARMWORKERS

2021 Educator Toolkit

JOIN US FOR THE 2021 GREAT BIG CRUNCH!

WHEN:

Thursday, **March 11, 2021**, at 2:30 pm EST, or ANYTIME in March!

WHAT:

A special day, class, lesson, lunch hour or 5 minutes dedicated to locally-grown apples and ending with a synchronized "crunch" to celebrate! **This year, we'll be focusing this toolkit on the crucial role that migrant farmworkers play in Ontario's harvest - including apples!**

HOW:

Don't forget to **register** your Crunchers via the Coalition for Healthy School Food here: **healthyschoolfood.ca**. No matter what your crunch or how you do it - let us know!

WHO:

Anyone can participate! From students to teachers and individuals in classrooms, virtual classrooms, at home, socially distant workplaces and communities across Ontario...and beyond! So get on board, and get others around you involved too!

Since 1985, FoodShare Toronto has been working alongside communities for equitable access to good food. Our programs contribute to dismantling sites of exploitation within the food system and food movement. We use a critical equity lens to seek justice, and food security, for everyone. We envision a Toronto where all people can feed themselves, their loved ones and their communities with dignity and joy.

FoodShare

WHY PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT BIG CRUNCH?

- It's really fun and you'd be joining hundreds of thousands of other folks across the country (and beyond).
- *NEW!* To support **#StatusForAll**, a campaign from the Migrant Rights Network, calling for full and permanent immigration status for all migrant workers, visit **migrantrights.ca**.
- To support **#NourishKidsNow**, a campaign from the Coalition for Healthy School Food, calling on the federal government to invest in universal school food programs. For more ways to get active and support student nutrition, visit **healthyschoolfood.ca**.
- For Nutrition Month. This year's theme is "**Good For *You***" - how your culture, food traditions, personal circumstances & nutritional needs all contribute to what "healthy" looks like for you. To learn more, visit: **dietitians.ca**.

SIX EASY STEPS TO GREAT BIG CRUNCH GREATNESS:

MIGRANT FARMWORKERS

Did you know migrant farmworkers fill many gaps in Ontario's food system?

FARMING

Farmworkers prep the soil, seed, tend & harvest the crops.

PACKING

Farmworkers pack produce up for transportation.

TRANSPORT

Farmworkers move the food to the food terminal, farmers' markets, organizations, restaurants or stores.

RETAIL

Food can be sold by **farmworkers** at the market, or by stores, organizations and restaurants to customers.

DISPOSAL

Food waste and scraps go to the landfill or are composted & sold back to the farms (to be properly managed by **farmworkers**).

EATING*

Consumers buy, prepare and eat the food.

*Recent reports have shown "child-size" portions of food being rationed to adult migrant workers who test positive for COVID19 and are in isolation. **The very workers our food system depend on are going hungry.** (Windsor Star, July 2020)

FoodShare

Migrant Farmworkers

Worker Statistics in Ontario...

Approximately 20,000, primarily BIPOC, migrant workers arrive in Ontario to work on farms, in greenhouses & food factories each year.

Living conditions on the farm are cramped. Beds can be as close together as 1.5 feet. Only one toilet & shower are needed for every 10 residents. Spaces are often divided by hanging sheets.

Many migrant workers have been shut out of emergency income supports during COVID19, which means they go hungry, lose their savings, can't pay rent & sacrifice essential healthcare.

Ontario migrant workers are reportedly 10x more likely to contract COVID19 than the general population. To date, over 1,600 migrant farmworkers have contracted the virus & 3 have died.

CONTRACT

"Closed" work permits mean temporary foreign workers are tied to one employer which means switching (for any reason) is very difficult and risks deportation.

"Temporary" foreign workers aren't so temporary. Many workers return to Ontario for 8 months at a time, sometimes for decades.

Temporary foreign workers represent about half of all paid agriculture employees.

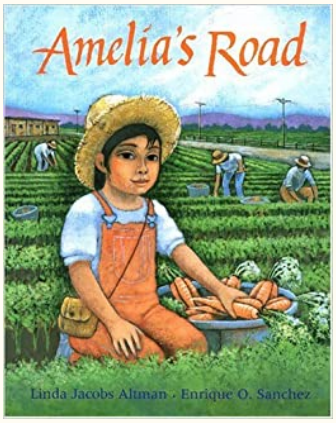
Activity: Amelia's Road

For *Younger* Students

Recommended Reading:

Amelia's Road

By Linda Jacobs Altman & illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez



Amelia Luisa Martinez hates roads. Los caminos, the roads, take her migrant worker family to fields where they labour all day, to schools where no one knows Amelia's name, and to bleak cabins that are not homes. She longs for the day when she doesn't need to move again...One day Amelia discovers an "accidental road." At its end, she finds an amazing old tree which inspires her to put her own roots down in a special way–by placing her favorite things in a box and burying it next to the tree, so she will always have a place to go back to. (adapted: www.leeandlow.com)

Discussion Points & Activity Ideas:

IDENTITY:

Like many young people, but especially those in migrant worker families, Amelia is struggling with her own sense of "identity". Moving from place to place each season, where people don't know her name and having nowhere to settle down, makes her feel lost, lonely and a little bit angry too.

Investigate the different ways we assume our identity by making a "ME" chart:

Encourage students to create their own unique mind map of all the things that make them who they are. Begin by writing "Me" (+/- a self-portrait) in the centre of some blank paper. Fill the space around "Me" with personal attributes.

For example - pronouns, family members, favourite TV show/ subject at school/ sport/ music/ food/ holiday, culture, religion, ethnicity, age, aspirations, interests, character traits, beliefs and values...

For someone like Amelia, who is having trouble asserting her identity for reasons beyond her control, what can we do to support her? Brainstorm some ways that would make Amelia feel better acknowledged and more "herself."

ACTIVITY: AMELIA'S ROAD

Continued...

ROUTINE:

In the story, we learn about Amelia's "routine" or, daily schedule. It starts very early in the day with hours of labour on an apple farm. By the time she leaves for school, she's sore and tired and hasn't even had time to eat breakfast.

Using a computer spreadsheet or graph paper, make a schedule of your "typical" school day:

Begin with the column headers, Time Of Day, Location and Activity. Now add in one last column called "Feelings". Ask students to graph out their entire day using the columns provided and finish each task by describing how it makes them feel.

Put yourself in Amelia's shoes and add a three-hour time slot in your schedule for picking apples before school. Remember to fill in the "Feelings" column and describe how you think Amelia feels about this part of her day.

BELONGING:

Amelia's "accidental road" leads to a very special tree. Amelia has an excellent idea to bury some of her personal belongings under the tree, so she can feel like she's "home" when she returns for the apple harvest next year.

Gather the student's "ME" charts and make a time capsule to bury somewhere on the school property.

With the caretaker's permission (of course), find the perfect spot to honour your class for years to come! Students will love imagining what the world will look like when your time capsule is eventually discovered. For example, will people still be doing the Great Big Crunch then? *(yes)*

To avoid disaster, ask students to create a detailed map of the location of your special time capsule, just like Amelia did. Create a Legend, or "key" to identify surrounding landmarks and for older students, use a scale to size.

Activity: Amelia's Road

Continued...

Seasonality:

Amelia's mother can remember where Amelia was born, and her father can recall the month because they were picking peaches at the time. Life as a migrant farmworker is dictated by the seasons and marked by the crops being harvested.

Construct a classroom birthday chart using the seasons and harvest as your guide:

Referring to the **Foodland Ontario** availability guide, ask students to pick a fruit or vegetable that is considered "local" during the month they were born. Craft large veggies or fruits with their name and birthday and arrange decoratively on the wall.

Did you know, over 20,000 migrant farmworkers arrive in Ontario each year to work on farms and in greenhouses and to support our "local food system"? That's a lot of support! What do you think would happen to our "local food" supply without these farmworkers coming and working each year? What would (theoretically) happen to the birthday chart you just made? What would happen to the amount and variety of local foods?

As Ontarians, we are dependent on migrant farmworkers for our local food supply. So let's thank a migrant farmworker today! Create thank you cards and send them to an organization supporting migrant workers of your choosing (some are listed at the end of this toolkit).

For more great lessons on Amelia's Road, visit Lee & Low Books' Teacher's Guide.

Activity: Migrant Dreams

For *Older* Students

Recommended Viewing:

Migrant Dreams (2016)

A film by Min-Sook Lee

A group of migrant farmworkers dare to resist the systemic oppression and exploitation from their brokers, employers and the Canadian government in small-town Ontario.

Discussion Points & Activity Ideas:

Workers' Rights:

Becoming a worker in Ontario gives employees, by law, "*the right to know, the right to participate, and the right to refuse*". These basic rights are structured to give the workers the power in the relationship.

Create a 3-column chart and brainstorm what these "rights" might mean for all workers in Ontario.

For example, employees have the "right to know" about any workplace health and safety concerns, COVID19 outbreaks in the workplace and the process for making a complaint.

Once you've generated a list together as a group, you can refer to resources like **settlementrights.org** to fill any gaps you may have missed.

Using this chart, cross out any rights you witnessed being abused or withheld from the workers featured in Migrant Dreams. How would automatic and full #StatusForAll influence your list?

If all workers were granted full status upon arrival, how would this impact others in the community? For example, the farm owner, other non-migrant farmworkers, consumers (us), "The Recruiter" etc.

Activity: Migrant Dreams

Continued...

Local food system Report Card:

We've all heard "good things grow in Ontario", but by who, and at what cost? This documentary highlights some of the risks migrant farmworkers, who make up about 50% of the agricultural workforce, take in order to do the work that other Canadians won't.

In small groups, generate a local food system "report card" (complete with grades) for Ontario.

You can refer to the list you generated in the previous activity to inform your report card criteria. Examples could be worker's health, living standards, access to adequate food and nutrition, decent pay, fair contracts, transparent employers, language accommodations, immigration status/rights etc. Educators can refer to the Canadian Council of Refugees' **2018 report card for Migrant Workers Rights** as an additional resource.

Work together to generate some "calls to action" based on your report card. Examples could be $15 minimum wage, full access to EI (even post-COVID), improved living conditions, better COVID19 PPE and isolation practices (e.g. adequate nutrition), certified and monitored recruitment protocols and full #StatusForAll etc.

Civic Engagement:

Okay, so now you've learned a bit about what it's really like for foreign workers to come to Ontario and work to support what we call our "local food system". You've generated a "report card", complete with calls to action... now what?

Send your report card and calls to action to your local MPP as well as the Ontario Minister of Labour.

You can send copies of the whole class' report cards and calls to action, or collate them into one succinct summary document.

Hon. Monte McNaughton
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
14th Floor
400 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

Activity: Migrant Dreams

Continued...

Highlighting BIPOC Stories & Labour:

Over the past decade, branding and advertising for Ontario fruits and vegetables have increased significantly. Now we see local food ads on social media, at supermarkets, on billboards, in magazines and on public transport. In a recent effort to better connect consumers with local food, advertising agencies are more likely to feature the farmers in those ads, to give us a "behind the scenes" appreciation for those who are responsible for getting our food from field to table.

Using the technology available to you and your own lived experiences and observations, do a scan of Ontario fruit and vegetable advertisements.

Once you've collected a wide range of advertisements in various media formats, take note of the faces predominantly featured. Given that you know about 50% of the agricultural labour workforce is made up of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) migrant workers from the global south, do you think these advertisements accurately reflect the population that they claim to?

In the film industry, "whitewashing" describes a casting practise in which white actors are cast in non-white roles. The same might be said for advertising. In the public representations of our local food system, systemic racism is present in the erasure of BIPOC stories and labour. Who do you think "whitewashing" might benefit? What would be the outcome if advertisements were more accurate in their depictions of Ontario farmworkers and their lives?

Collage your own Ontario produce advertisements using photos of real-life migrant workers as the unsung heroes (e.g. source photos in news clippings, stills from Migrant Dreams or on the websites of migrant worker-ally organizations). Connect your advertisements to your "calls to action" and consider posting them on social media using the hashtag, #StatusForAll.

In your search, you'll likely find many produce advertisements that look something like this image shown here. We challenge you to reject the *media bias* and *systemic racism* at play to more accurately depict the diversity of Ontario's agricultural workforce in your own advertisements.

Recommended Resources

And ways to get involved

ORGANIZATIONS:

JUSTICIA FOR MIGRANT WORKERS (J4MW):
A non-profit political collective that advocates for the rights of migrant workers in Canada. See also,

MIGRANT WORKERS ALLIANCE FOR CHANGE (MWAC):
Canada's largest coalition of self-organized groups of migrant workers, with the support of grassroots organizations, unions, faith groups, activists and researchers that have come together to fight for justice and dignity for migrant workers.

MIGRANT RIGHTS NETWORK:
The Migrant Rights Network is a cross-Canada alliance to combat racism and fight for migrant justice. We are a network of self-organized groups of refugees and migrants and allies.

For a more extensive list, visit **The Migrant Worker Health Project**

VIDEOS, PANELS & DOCUMENTARIES:

MIGRANT DREAMS (2016)
Director Min Sook Lee's award-winning documentary follows the story of migrant workers who come to labour in Ontario greenhouses as part of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

THE AGENDA - TVO news segments on migrant workers

POLITICAL BLIND DATE, EP 4 MIGRANT LABOUR (2021), TVO documentary exploring possible solutions to the problems faced by migrant workers in Southwestern Ontario, including COVID-19 outbreaks and living conditions that some critics call inhumane.

FOODSHARE - YOUTUBE
Recording of "Know Your Rights At Work" webinar co-hosted by UFCW and recorded on 11 February 2021.
Recording of "Highlighting Migrant Farmworkers in Ontario" panel discussion co-hosted by J4MW and recorded on 10 March 2021.

Recommended Resources

Continued...

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION:

PETITION - TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT FARM WORKERS AND CANADA'S FOOD SUPPLY - UNITED FOOD & COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION
Sign the UFCW petition for immediate reforms to protect agricultural workers who are so vital to Canada's food supply.

PETITIONS & DIGITAL DAYS OF ACTION - HARVESTING FREEDOM
Join Justicia 4 Migrant Workers (J4MW) in speaking out and taking action when injustices are done to migrant workers. Donations also accepted.

PETITION - TOGETHER FOR FULL AND PERMANENT IMMIGRATION STATUS FOR ALL - MIGRANT RIGHTS NETWORK
Sign the Migrant Rights Network petition for a single-tier immigration system, where everyone in Canada has the same rights without exception.

LESSON PLANS & RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS:

Human Rights Educators (HRE) USA (collection of lesson plans)

BrainPOP Educators, **Chavez Day Lesson Plan: Understanding the Life of Migrant Workers**

Teaching Tolerance, **More Than Migrants** (activity ideas)

Migrant-Rights.org, **An interactive exploration of migrant issues in the Gulf** (infographics depicting life as a migrant worker in the middle east)

Canadian Council for Refugees, **ON Migrant Worker Report Card 2018**

United Food and Commercial Workers Union, **Status of Migrant Workers Report (2020)**