


Migrating Mennonites: Understanding the Impacts of Anabaptist Farmers on Local Food in Northern Ontario

By: Sara Epp and James Newlands

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Funding Partner

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Outline of Presentation

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- Starting premise
 - Overview of research project
 - Movement of Mennonites
 - Methods
 - SWOT Analysis
 - Reflections
 - Moving forward



Starting Premise

- Northern Ontario lacks access to local and healthful food
 - Lack of access impacts food sovereignty/security, which are heightened in northern communities
- Important to understand food access limitations and how access to local food can be improved



Project Overview



- The larger research project will identify systems currently in place to produce and distribute local food
- Will assess the potential expansion of the agricultural sector and opportunities to create a network for food production and distribution
 - Look to existing community linkages and opportunities to create partnerships between communities to improve distribution systems



Project Overview

- Need to understand challenges faced by farming community
 - Existing and new farmers, including migrants from the Anabaptist farm community, young farmers and immigrants
- Seek to understand the impacts of these farmers on local food and their role within a local food network

A Mennonite
migration is
transforming
agriculture - and
diets - in the north

By TIM ALAMENCIAK

Mennonite
Feeling
North

Bright Future for Farming in the North

By BENJAMIN AUBE

Mennonites Moving to Northern Ont. Rework Old Farmland

By ERIK WHITE

TIMMINS - This part of the province may be witnessing a slow tide creeping back up towards the Arctic watershed. It has the potential to turn into a wave that could shape the future of Northeastern Ontario's economic and cultural landscape.

The market manager at the Johnson Farmers Market. They not only brought innovative ways, and were creative in terms of their crops. They had originally come north thinking they would be cattle and pig farmers but when the market wasn't here they turned to market gardening.

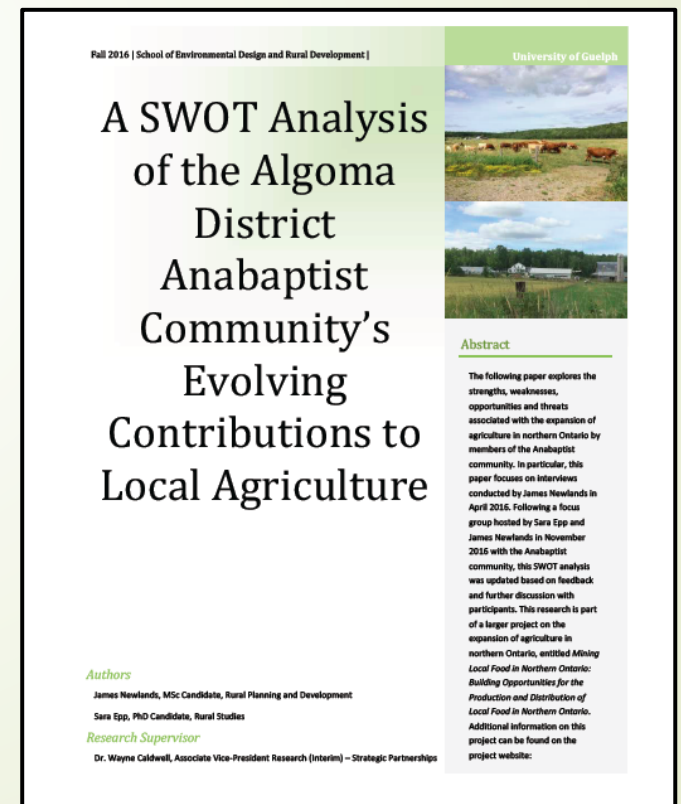
Data Collection

- Interviews in Algoma conducted in mid-April 2016
 - 12 interviews with members of the Mennonite community
 - 1 interview with a member of the Amish community
- Focus group in November 2017
 - 7 Mennonite farmers attended



SWOT Analysis

- Based on interviews from April 2016
- Reviewed during focus group in November 2016
- Revised based on the findings from this focus group



Strengths

- Lower cost of land
- Abundance of workable or cleared land that is under- or unutilized
- Some agricultural products grow well
- Good soil qualities and longer summer days
- Assistance provided by OMAFRA, RAIN and Scotiabank





Weaknesses

- Distance to markets, suppliers and grain mills
- Limited local suppliers, veterinarians, transportation/shippers and abattoirs
- Logistics to markets
- Low levels of competition
- Shorter growing season and fewer heat units
- Lack of research relating to northern farming
- Size of operations

Opportunities

- Connections with Mennonite communities in southern Ontario
- Climate change
- Promotion of locally grown food
- Expanded usage of greenhouses
- Local food auction
- Growth of Mennonite community



Threats

- Lack of labour force
- Transportation costs
- Speculators holding land
- Increases in taxes
- Changes to product regulations



Reflections

- There is immense potential but a lot of initiatives are informal and not well-communicated
- Sense of optimism and recognition of the importance of agriculture in the north
- Expansion of the Mennonite community will continue and so will availability of local food





Next Steps

- The final SWOT Analysis will be shared with the Anabaptist farmers, contacts in Algoma and other interested parties
- Research in the north will branch out to other farmers and will begin later this spring
 - Survey
 - Interviews/focus groups
- All research activities will be updated on the project website:
www.enhancinglocalfood.com

Questions?



The Research Team