



# HEALTHY BRAIN CHEF

INNOVATIVE NEW IDEA

Photo credit: [Marco Verch](#)

## DEPARTMENT

Neuroethics Canada

## CAMPUS

Point Grey

## FUNDING YEAR

2018

## ABOUT HWIP

The Healthy Workplace Initiatives Program (HWIP) is an annual fund available to UBC departments and units to support grassroots activities that promote wellbeing in the workplace. The program provides start-up funds and support for health-related, sustainable initiatives.

[www.hr.ubc.ca/hwip](http://www.hr.ubc.ca/hwip)

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Neuroethics Canada is a research unit within the Faculty of Medicine's Department of Neurology. While the unit provides many public outreach events to promote brain health for external audiences, activities that promote and foster brain health among staff were limited. Through a food focused initiative, they sought to provide opportunities for staff to develop and practice brain health promoting skills.

*"We always focused more on ergonomics or good communication as a part of a healthy workplace, but we often forget that food is a big part of it. Because we're a brain focused research group, we decided to focus on brain healthy foods for our initiative."*

The HWIP initiative kicked off with a private cooking workshop led by Ms. Lynn Raires, RHN at the Canadian School of Natural Nutrition. The workshop focused on brain healthy foods and how to incorporate them into daily meals. Following the cooking lesson, the "Healthy Brain Chef" portion of the initiative was launched. Each week, one team member was designated to make a brain healthy dish to share at the weekly lab meeting.

A mid-project food tour with Vancouver Foodie Tours in the Gastown neighborhood helped maintain momentum and enthusiasm for the initiative and introduced team members to new and creative brain healthy dish ideas.

## KEY TO SUCCESS

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By making healthy snacks for weekly lab meetings the focus of the initiative, it became a regular part of the unit's culture.

The cooking class and food tour helped team members gain new skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm, but it was critical to have the ongoing "Healthy Brain Chef" piece to help staff apply those new skills and knowledge, share new ideas, and continue conversation around brain healthy foods.

## SUSTAINABILITY

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While funding limitations and staff turnover have brought the Healthy Brain Chef initiative to an end, all recipes used during the project were compiled to produce a [recipe book](#) which was posted on the Neuroethics Canada website and made available to the public and for team members.

The initiative also changed the way Neuroethics Canada talked about food as a critical component of health. Through this initiative, food became a part of the conversation about what makes a healthy lifestyle and a healthy workplace.

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*"The bigger impact has been the conversations that revolve around food. It's a conversation that's ongoing."*

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## VALUABLE OUTCOMES

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The "Healthy Brain Chef" initiative increased awareness about brain healthy eating practices among team members.

It also provided opportunities to practice preparing and sharing healthy foods and helped built team spirit and group engagement.

UBC WELLBEING  
STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK  
PRIORITY AREAS

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Food & Nutrition

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Social Connection

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[wellbeing.ubc.ca/framework](http://wellbeing.ubc.ca/framework)

## ADVICE FOR FUTURE HWIP GRANTEES

1

### Consider integrating a healthy eating initiative into regular team meetings

"We thought, well, we can just incorporate it into our lab meetings! The bigger events were just complementary to our main focus of the weekly Brain Chef."

2

### Communication is key

Communicate regularly with your team members about the initiative! Make sure the team understands the purpose of the initiative and ask them for input or ideas.



Photo credit: Neuroethics Canada