

LEARNING CENTRE

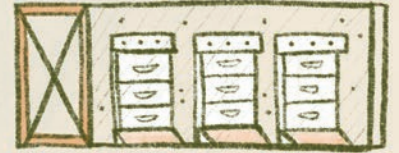


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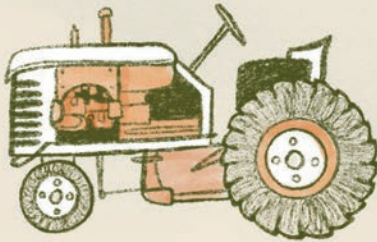


# Room to Grow

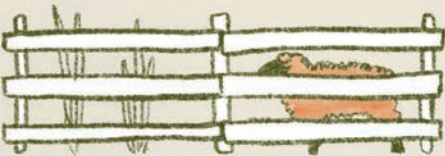
A Campaign for O'Brien Farm



LEARN TO GROW



THIMBLE COTTAGE







# Message from the Honorary Patron



I come from farmers. My great-great grandmother came to Newfoundland from Ireland to farm. As a boy, my mother would take me to Thimble Cottage to visit with Aly O'Brien. We'd talk about the importance of farming, green spaces and of our shared Irish heritage. I want the next generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to visit the farm and hear that message too.

It wasn't very long ago that families here in the province were self-sustaining.

Fishing, hunting, gathering and farming were integral to the community. But, in the past couple generations we've gone from growing and raising almost all our own food to producing a small amount and importing the rest.

Here, at the O'Brien Farm, we want to change that. We want to encourage backyard and enterprise farming, homesteading, local produce and sustainability. And we have the plan to do it. But we need your help.

We are launching a capital fundraising campaign and have set a goal of \$500,000 in order to support the construction and programming of the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre. We've got the space and the teachers and the will to do it—all we need now is your support. So please get behind our farm initiative and donate if you can. After all, money doesn't grow on trees. I'll see you at the farm.

***Mark Critch***



*Thimble Cottage, 1990s*



# Message from the Chair



Over 200 years ago, the O'Brien family came from Ireland to St. John's and built a farm which still stands today. While the Farm tells the story of how agriculture started on the northeast Avalon, we believe the revitalized farm will have the potential to influence the future of farming here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Whether it's tending a small garden plot, raising bees or tapping maple trees, more and more people are rediscovering their close connection to the land and the importance of growing their own food. Many of the skills cultivated over the years on the O'Brien Farm remain relevant today and will be shared at the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre. The Room to Grow campaign is about creating a space where people can learn about sustainable farming and gardening—both in theory and in practice. By tapping into a network of community partners with a wide range of expertise, the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre will be a place where people can share their skills and acquire new ones. Revitalization of the farm's land will also provide educational opportunities for budding farmers through a Farm Incubation project.

The majority of early farmers in and around St. John's were of Irish origins and the O'Briens exemplified the story of Irish farming families here. Aly O'Brien, the last of the family, was a gaelic speaker who taught the language to others. The O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre, together with the newly-restored Thimble Cottage (built circa 1850), will provide a chance for visitors to learn about the fascinating story of Irish settlement and culture in our province while enjoying this lush, peaceful centre of learning in the middle of the city.

I invite you to join me in this campaign to grow the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre and help us deepen our roots.

***Shannie Duff***



# Getting Back to Our Roots



## In the heart of the city lies a quiet space with room to grow.

Nestled amongst the spruce and balsam fir of Pippy Park, a two hundred year old Irish family farm prepares to grow the next generation of farmers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Located on one of the oldest urban farms in the province, the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre will provide a unique space in the middle of the city for people who want to learn about growing and preparing their own food.

The O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre will showcase farming practices from the past while cultivating agricultural

skills for the future. It will build capacity, providing basic education for home gardeners and continuing education for experienced farmers.

The O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre is an investment in the future. Through hands-on educational programs, young and old can get back to their roots while preserving an important part of the province's Irish heritage and agricultural history. Community partners will benefit from access to the farm's revitalized land base and infrastructure. They, in turn, will provide benefits to the farm by sharing their knowledge and practical skills.



*Three O'Brien brothers,  
Mike, Aly, and John, 1980*









## Planting the Seeds of Sustainability and Self-reliance

Before Confederation, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians grew 90% of their own food. Steeped in a tradition of fishing, hunting and gathering, people in this province lived primarily off the land and sea. Today, over 70% of our food is transported to our province by plane or ferry. According to Food First NL, if our current food supply is threatened due to harsh weather, there is only a 2-3 day supply of produce on our grocery store's shelves.

Food security and consistent access to fresh produce are issues that people in our province are facing. One of the ways we can help increase self-sufficiency in our province is by reducing barriers and providing opportunities for

young farmers. As part of the proposed development, the O'Brien Farm Incubation Program will provide training and farm plots to new farmers and agritourism operators, supporting a new generation of farmers. Once interested farmers are identified and receive training, they will be able to work and receive support from the farmer-in-residence.

From raising backyard hens to beekeeping to growing vegetables, many people in the province are striving to become more self-reliant. There is a hunger in our community for knowledge and skills and this is where the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre will fill the gap.





*Proposed design for Learning Centre.  
Architectural design by  
Woodford Sheppard Architecture.*



## Room to Grow

Your donation will support the construction and programming at the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre. This will be a place where people can learn about and practice sustainable food production. Programming offered at the Centre will help local farmers, gardeners and home-steaders to deepen their connection with nature through sustainable practices. It will also provide a space for mentors, teachers and guest speakers to share their knowledge and expertise with each other, their families and the wider community.

The O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre will serve multiple functions including space for workshops, classes, meetings, entertainment and rentals. It will provide additional space for interpretation. Working with community partners, the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre will act as a central venue for educational and participatory events that will provide a valuable community learning experience. The quiet, peaceful and scenic surroundings are an ideal setting for retreats and community programs.





## About The O'Brien Farm

The O'Brien Farm (OFB) is a 30-acre property in St. John's, NL located in Pippy Park. It is leased to the O'Brien Farm Foundation from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador under a fifteen-year renewable lease agreement for the purpose of maintaining the farming heritage and objectives of its former owners, who operated it as a family agriculture enterprise for approximately 185 years. The farm tells the story of the O'Brien Family who were one of many Irish immigrant families farming in the Freshwater Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## The O'Brien Farm Foundation

The O'Brien Farm Foundation was established in 2011 as a not-for-profit organization and registered charity. Its mandate is to preserve, develop and manage the historic farm. As a steward of the property, the Foundation strives to operate the property consistent with the will of the final O'Brien descendant, Aloysius (Aly) O'Brien, who died in 2008. In keeping with Aly's wishes, the Foundation's key objectives are to advance public education on past, present and future sustainable agricultural practices and preserve the history of Irish settlement and farming on the Northeast Avalon.

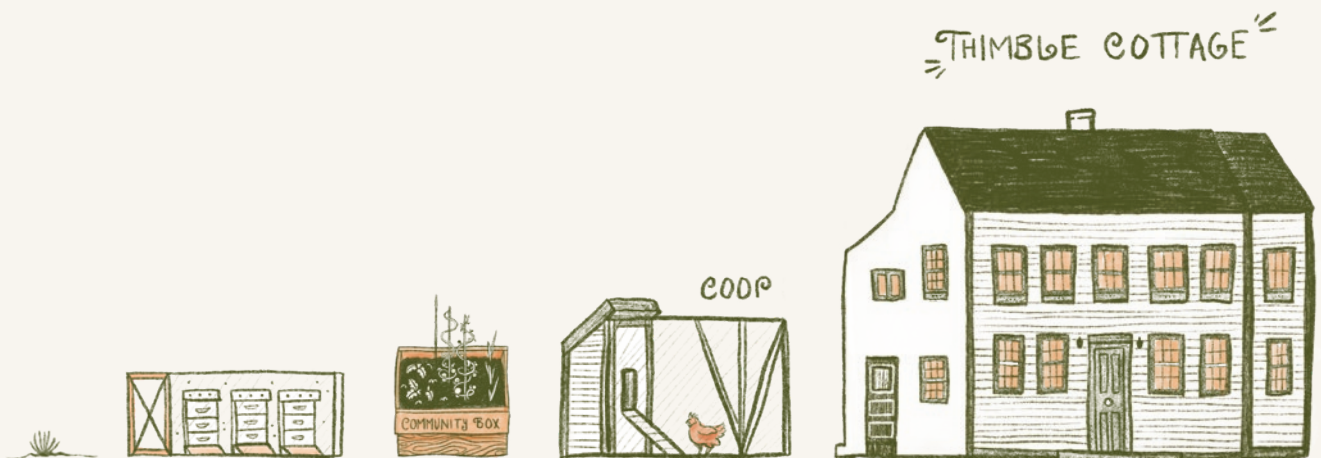
*Aloysius (Aly) O'Brien, 1990*



# Currently on the Farm

**Thimble Cottage**, built in the 1850s, was recognized as a Registered Heritage Structure in 1992 by Heritage NL. It is an excellent example of a saltbox house situated on a beautiful pastoral site. It will play an active role in interpretation and programming at the farm.

One of the objectives of the O'Brien Farm Foundation is to generate and enhance awareness of sustainable food systems in Newfoundland and Labrador. **Community Gardens** represent an excellent opportunity to promote traditional and participatory farming by both recreational and potentially commercial farmers. Participants in the Community Gardens will be offered instruction in the growth of vegetables and other crops. These will be available to existing and potential community gardeners and will serve as a feeder system for the growth of the community garden.





Many of the new immigrants to Newfoundland and Labrador come from farming regions and farming backgrounds. We are currently working with immigrant support groups to establish an “international garden” within the community gardens where non-traditional (to Newfoundland and Labrador) crops could be grown.

Incubator Farms are designed to encourage and facilitate the introduction of new entrants to the farming sector. At the O’Brien Farm, this could include limited capacity for livestock and animal husbandry. The O’Brien Farm Incubator Program will include a farmer-in-residence who will mentor new farmers as they gain the hands-on experience necessary to establish their own farms. We will also explore the development of greenhouses and the potential for hydroponic agriculture as part of our incubator farm program.

### **Trail system**

Visitors to the farm can enjoy the beauty of the landscape and vistas through a network of trails. This system will link the various distinct but related venues.



# Donor Recognition

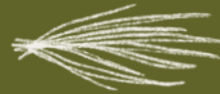
We understand it takes many hands to build and grow a lasting legacy. Over the years we've benefited from the donations of funds and services to help restore Thimble Cottage and maintain the Farm. Now that we are ready to realize the full potential of the O'Brien Farm, we need your support more than ever.

Through our donor recognition program, your donation will be acknowledged and recognized in a variety of ways tailored to meet your needs. We want to ensure that you are engaged with the vision and mission of The O'Brien Farm Foundation and keep you informed of our progress and programming in the months to come.

To find out more about our donor recognition program and what we can offer your organization, please contact us at (709) 576 6882.



# How You Can Help



The goal of the *Room to Grow* campaign is to raise \$500,000 to support the construction, development and programming of the O'Brien Farm and Learning Centre.

There are several ways that you can support the *Room to Grow* campaign. You can donate funds directly in person or online through our GOFundMe page. Tax receipts will be provided.

You can also volunteer to champion a fundraiser inside your family or business or donate as part of a group gift on behalf of a sports team or service club.

**Donate Now**

## Contact us:

O'Brien Farm Foundation  
P.O. Box 23034 Churchill Square  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 4J9



**709 576 6882**  
**[obrienfarm.ca](http://obrienfarm.ca)**



**O'BRIEN FARM**