



Cowichan Green Community
Cultivating food, community, and resilience

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

CONTENTS

ABOUT US	02	ISLAND FARM & GARDEN MAGAZINE	17
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	03	KINPARK YOUTH URBAN FARM	18
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT	05	KINPARK KIDS CAMP	19
BOARD OF DIRECTORS	06	reFRESH FOOD RECOVERY PROGRAM	20
CGC STAFF	07	reFRESH COWICHAN MARKETPLACE	21
INTERNS & SUMMER STUDENTS	09	THE RESILIENCY PROJECT	22
VOLUNTEERS	10	COWICHAN GREEN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION	23
CERES EDIBLE LANDSCAPING	11	CGC KITCHEN & MEAL PROGRAMS	25
COWICHAN FARM HUB	12	COMMUNITY COB OVEN	27
COWICHAN FOOD HUB	14	MEALS ON WHEELS	28
COWICHAN GROWN FARM MAP	15	reFRESH COUPON PROGRAM	29
FRUITSAVE	16	THANK YOU	30



ABOUT US

Cowichan Green Community Society (CGC) is a non-profit organization located in Duncan, BC, that has been working toward environmental sustainability in the Cowichan Region since March 2004. Our mission is to cultivate food, community, and resilience. Our mandate is to improve local food security by developing a strong food system, supporting an increase of urban and rural food production, and by offering a variety of food-related initiatives. We continue to witness how important increased access to healthy food, food education, and local food production capacity is to our community's health and well-being.

We envision a food secure Cowichan nourished by celebrating our connection to food, our environment, and each other. CGC cultivates resilient, inclusive and healthy local food systems and vibrant social fabric. Our food security projects include the creation of food policies, reFRESH Food Recovery and Marketplace, KinPark Youth Urban Farm and Summer Camp, the Cowichan Farm and Food Hub and events including Seedy Sundays to promote the role of ecological agriculture in our local community.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's beginning to feel redundant to keep saying how the years are passing by in a blur - but 2023 was another one of those years. As we are now over the worst of the Covid times, we all have adapted to the new normal, and with most staff back in the office, including myself, it's like it was all a bad dream.

It was incredible to be back in person again for our annual Donor Breakfast, which raised a record-breaking amount for our reFRESH Coupon Program - supporting over 100 low-income families and seniors to tackle the astounding increase in food costs, we've all been hit with. And we were fortunate enough to be back in our old venue for Seedy Sunday - hundreds of anxious seed buyers lined up before the doors even opened - we're not sure if it was to celebrate being back in person or because Spring arrived early and we were all caught off guard with our annual planting. But the music, the buzz, the delicious food, the fabulous weather - it just warmed our hearts that we were able to be back together again celebrating everything gardening.

The Emergency Task Force that has continued to meet since March 2020 rebranded as the Cowichan Food Security Network - and although one emergency ended, the dire need for more affordable, nutritious, healthy food continues to increase, so our mighty group will continue to face the challenges head-on. And with funding from Plan H the team, supported by Royal Roads University, drafted the first Cowichan Food Policy. We will continue that work over the next year or so.

Other community initiatives included forging ahead with the Extreme Weather Shelter plans. In a devastating move by the City of Duncan with pressure from the Cairnsmore Neighbourhood, the St Andrews Church was not permitted to open a shelter but after many meetings and a new bylaw requiring regions to support these shelters, the CVRD opened the shelter at the Cowichan Community Centre. They are continuing to search for a more suitable location but for now, at least on the worst of the days, folks can get inside and get warm and dry.

On a happier note, we were thrilled to sponsor the Duncan Chamber of Commerce's Black Tie awards again for the non-profit category, and our very own Volunteer Extraordinaire, Susan Smith, was nominated and won the City of Duncan's Scroll of Honour Volunteer Award - we are so darn proud of her.

As 2024 is upon us, despite all the challenges, we are looking ahead with a renewed sense of purpose, increased partnerships, and successful social enterprises. We have an incredibly strong management team who I am grateful for every day. AND although the eternal optimist in me has taken a beating lately... I know our Cowichan Food Hub is going to be built for real this time! We can't wait to invite you to our grand opening - this will definitely be our year and we welcome all of you to celebrate with us!

Laughter is brightest in the place where food is good. - Irish proverb



Judy Stafford
Executive Director

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

I would like to highlight some significant events of the year. First, and foremost, was the sale of CGC's building, 'The Station', located in downtown Duncan, that we purchased over 10 years ago. We had no idea the positive impacts this purchase and subsequent renovation would have on our downtown neighbourhood, our clients, members, tenants, and programs. This was a major decision for CGC that will have trickling effects down into all of our programs. Ultimately, the sale will allow CGC to focus and continue to expand on our mission and deliver on our mandate for the Cowichan Region. We have been expanding operations at the farm on Beverly Street, including selling our farm produce on the Cow-Op, online farmer's market, and other restaurants, and we opened a Thursday Farmer's market as well as still providing educational programs and workshops. The Farm and Food Hub will include a new commercial processing kitchen, warehouse, and office space which will become our primary location sometime in 2024.

As a Board, we also saw some changes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Nadeane Nelson and Julia Rylands for their steadfast commitment to CGC. Nadeane had been a member of the board since 2012 and was instrumental in the purchase of The Station, and the growth and success of various programs within CGC, serving in multiple roles within the board, including Director, President, and Treasurer. Nadeane has also been an integral member of our corporation, Cowichan Green Community Holdings Ltd. She will be very missed.

Julia also transitioned off the board in 2023 as she is focused on spending as much time as possible on her own farm and assisting with other community roles to help support and promote the greater agriculture sector. We will miss her commitment and insight.



Mike Smith
Board President

Later in 2023, we were very pleased to invite Joy Emmanuel as a Director and in her short period of time with CGC, she is already making her indomitable mark helping to organize and support our next Strategic Plan and a Sustainable Finance Committee. We are so looking forward to her contributions to our organization.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mike Smith
Board President



Lucy Thomas
Vice President



Eduardo Sousa
Director



Joy Emmanuel
Director



Penny Lehan
Director



Danielle Bellefleur
Director

FORMER BOARD MEMBERS

Nadeane Nelson
Julia Rylands
Chris Davies

CURRENT STAFF



Alyssa Krawchuk
Program Manager



Carron Harte
Kitchen Assistant



Darian Deering
Facilities Manager



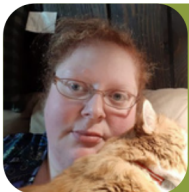
David Martin
Maintenance



Hannah Auer
Community Coordinator



Hassan Syed
Kitchen Manager



Heather McKenzie
Administrative Assistant



Janice MacKirdy
Ceres & Farm Hub Manager



Judy Stafford
Executive Director



Julika Pape
Marketing Coordinator



Kristen Panzenboeck
Finance Manager



Lekha Hayes
Farm Hub Assistant



Linda Williams-Martin
reFRESH Grocery Clerk



Micheal Elford
reFRESH Driver



Michelle Mostacci
Cob Oven Coordinator

CURRENT STAFF



Naomi Kulhawy

*KinPark Youth Urban
Farm Manager*



Nathan Harben

Farm Hub Manager



Sabrina Dowler

Kitchen Co-Supervisor



Sarah Kate Knight

reFRESH Manager



Sean Burnett

reFRESH Assistant



Thomas George

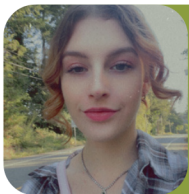
Kitchen Assistant



Tracy Popcock

Kitchen Assistant

INTERNS



Anastasia Gauthiot

Food Security Assistant



Austin Martin

Farm Assistant



Fiona Grant

KinPark YESS Intern

FORMER STAFF

Alexis Quigley
Angela Nessel
Carol Kastelic
Chris Campbell
Corbin Rolfe
David Andrews
Desiree Tompkinson
Hugo Millere

Jasmine Hachey
Kristen Watt
Leela Hamilton
Levi Bryant
Mathew Pettit
Melissa Parker
Rhythm Hunter
Scott Dieckbrader

FORMER INTERNS & SUMMER YOUTH

Chloe Szepesi
Christina Delainey
Denzy James
Eric Beaudet
Fiona Tousignant
Holly Williams
Jessie Gray

Kris SteithBart-Tasa
Melissa Parker
Shayln Sullivan
Skye Baylis
Victoria Kovacs
William Cerres



DAVE WOODALL

We would like to give a special shoutout to our Volunteer Dave, who has been working with the Food Recovery Team for almost 2 years! Every Monday and Wednesday morning, he joins Driver Mike on his run to pick up food donations, and helps us sort them as well. Kind and knowledgeable, he is a joy to have around, and he always has interesting insights to share. We appreciate Dave's ongoing support, his dedication to the cause, and his commitment to volunteerism.

VOLUNTEERS

Cowichan Green Community has been beyond lucky to have such a strong team of dedicated and passionate volunteers. Without their support, programs such as Meals on Wheels and FruitSave would not run. You may have met some of CGC's wonderful volunteers in the reFRESH Marketplace, KinPark Youth Urban Farm, Cowichan Farm Hub, or CGC's kitchen. Whether they are cooking up delicious meals, rescuing fruits and veggies, welcoming store customers, or being gardener extraordinaires, their hard work and warm smiles are greatly appreciated. Here is a list of just some of the amazing volunteers who contributed over 5,000 hours to helping us achieve our goal in 2023:

Allison Ibbotson
Azja Jones Martin
Belinda Wright
Bruce Coates
Bryson Smyth
Caroline L.
Cathy Lombard
Christopher Carruthers
Corbin Rolfe
Craig Jones
Debra Lamb
Diane Kay
Elizabeth Elliott
Gary David
Glenn Tait
Heather Pearson
Jacqueline Troger

James Griffin
Jayne Lin
Jordon Cain
Judy Appleby
Kate Warren
Karen Burnham
Lara Tataryn
Liz McKinnon
Marian Van Weiren
Martha Lescher
Michel Appleby-Millette
Nancy Horn
Nicholas Sugiyama
Noreen Banow
Pat Brandon
Pat Crowther
Patrick Maguire

Richard Whitehouse
Risako Okada
Robert Mills
Rosanna Sanderson
Sandra Junkin
Sandy McPherson
Stephen Fisher
Susan Smith
Tina Campagne
Todd Williams
Tom Devereaux
Valerie Townsend
Wendy Zeer
Wilma Appleby-Millette

CERES EDIBLE LANDSCAPING

In 2023, Ceres Edible Landscaping celebrated its 13th year in operation. Despite facing challenges that led to a restructuring and downsizing due to staffing issues, we are pleased to report that we successfully met the needs of our long-term clients for another season. The resilience of our team and the dedication of our management were critical in overcoming these obstacles.

Ceres Edible Landscaping underwent a management transition during the year, with Jan MacKirdy dedicating much of her time in her role of Farm Supervisor at the Farm Hub, while entrusting property maintenance to a team of interns and funded staff.

We are proud to report that, regardless of the restructuring, our long term clientele remained satisfied with the services provided. As we enter our 14th year, Ceres Edible Landscaping is optimistic about the future. We will continue to build on our legacy of providing exceptional landscaping services while exploring new opportunities in sustainable farming through our involvement in the Farm Hub. We remain committed to adapting to challenges and evolving, and we look forward to another year of growth, innovation and success.



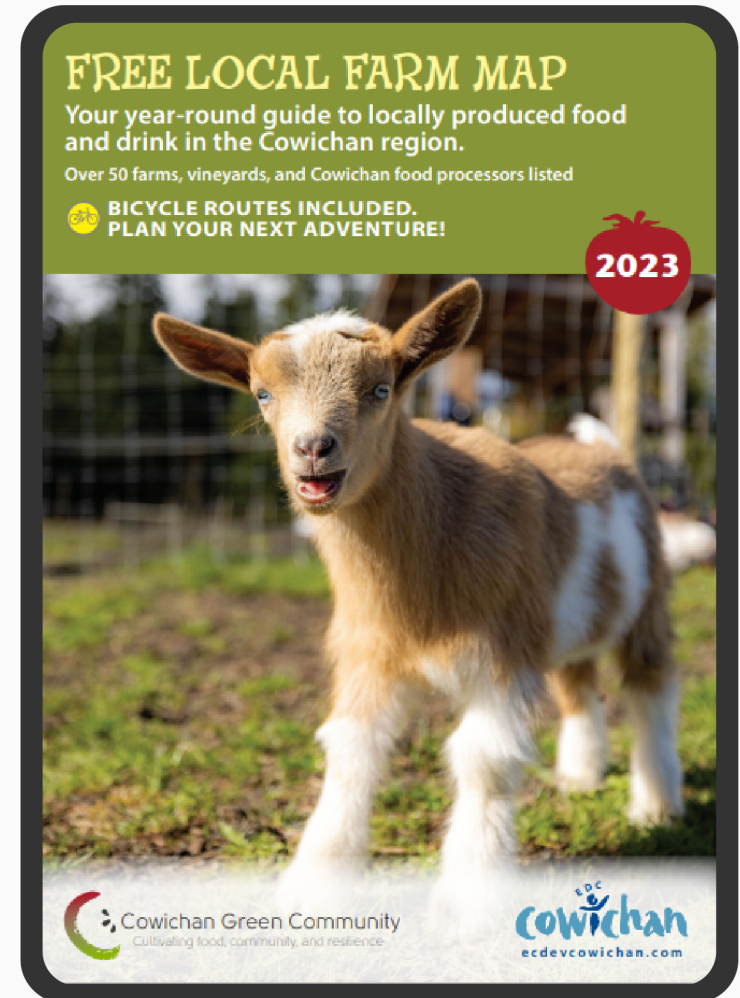
Janice MacKirdy
Ceres & Farm Hub Manager

COWICHAN GROWN FARM MAP

2023 marked the 14th year of publication for the popular Cowichan Grown Farm, Food and Drink Map. The map featured 53 farms, food and drink producers, and 23 advertisers.

With sponsorship from Economic Development Cowichan and Tourism Cowichan, and support from local farms and businesses, the map was cross promoted and distributed to over 6,000 people. The map also featured three bike routes, with a brand new route added for 2023.

The map continues to be one of the region's most popular guides for local farm stands, and local food and drink producing businesses. It is popular with both tourists and locals as it highlights the region's diverse bounty while celebrating good food, good drink, and a fabulous place to explore.



Naomi Kulhawy
*KinPark Youth Urban
Farm Manager*

COWICHAN FARM HUB

The Cowichan Farm and Food Hub is the CGC's largest regenerative farming project - a 3.5 acre farm, growing healthy local food for the community in our large market garden and greenhouses. We have a plant nursery on site featuring a unique selection of edible, medicinal, and native plants. We also grow a wide selection of seed crops. This year we expanded our seed varieties to 50 different varieties.

In 2023, the Farm Hub doubled our food production! Our produce is primarily sold on the Cow-op Marketplace, as well as to several local restaurants. As part of our efforts to make our produce more available to the surrounding neighborhood, we started hosting a weekly Thursday Market Day at the Farm Hub, which has become a community favourite.

One exciting new project at the farm is a tomato seed breeding program, a collaboration with Karen Olivier of True North Seeds. Karen grew a variety of her experimental new tomato varieties on the farm, and we were able to share these beautiful new varieties of tomatoes with the community. We hosted a very fun tomato tasting workshop in August, where community members were able to come out into the field with us, learn about seed production and tomato growing techniques and then taste a dazzling diversity of different tomatoes together. Our team is very inspired to create more farm-to-table events, where we can get as close as possible to the food we are growing here and share that experience with community members. We hosted a variety of other workshops on the farm, including garden planning and seed saving.



COWICHAN FARM HUB

In autumn 2023, thanks to generous funding from a private foundation, we were able to build a new 120 foot greenhouse, which will increase our production and capacity to grow crops year round. The Farm Hub is eagerly anticipating the new growing season with enthusiasm and dedication.

The Inclusion Garden continues to be a safe and inclusive community space for our enthusiastic group of volunteers and participants. In this program, we create space for participants of all abilities to come and grow and learn together in the gardens. Over the course of the growing season we worked to seed, plant, harvest, and tend the gardens, in collaboration with our excellent group of participants.

The Elders' Gathering Garden is an extension of the Inclusion Garden, which offers safe, accessible community garden space for 12 seniors. This year, we expanded the programming available to gardeners, hosted a series of community pizza nights at the Cob Oven in Centennial park, as well as a workshop series at the farm. The gardeners were very happy with the new accessible crushed gravel pathways, which make the whole garden much more easily accessible. We are grateful for the lovely community that is growing alongside the vegetables.



Janice MacKirdy
Ceres & Farm Hub Manager

COWICHAN FOOD HUB

2023 has seen CGC move closer to a working Cowichan Food Hub that will allow small and medium-scale businesses to access shared food and beverage processing facilities, and equipment for value added processing of locally sourced products. The Hub will bring together advanced food processing, testing, and entrepreneurship training under one roof to help incubate food processing innovation in the region. Although, there haven't been many physical changes on site, there was still work being done behind the scenes. We had additional staff turnover with Darian Deering assuming the Manager role in October.

In late November 2022, we had submitted our Development Permit Application to the Municipality of North Cowichan. However, it took until October 2023 for the municipality to approve and subsequently issue, the permit. Now the ball is rolling on the building permit application. Elmworth Construction has taken on the role of General Contractor and will be helping the project as we move forward. Proposals have been received for pile driving and foundation work, erecting the prefabricated building currently onsite at the Farm Hub, and mechanical and electrical engineering. Plans are also underway to relocate the existing portable to a new location on the site.

A Ministry of Agriculture sponsored conference in Salmon Arm provided an excellent opportunity for shared learning and networking opportunities with other BC based Food Hubs. We also toured the "Zest" Food Hub in Salmon Arm and the "Stir" in Kamloops - both working Food Hubs with successful track records. We have applied to the REDIP grant in partnership with Vancouver Island University and to the United Way Infrastructure program for additional infrastructure and equipment. We are on the right track and look forward to opening our doors in 2024!



Darian Deering
Facilities Manager

FRUITSAVE

FruitSave is a local gleaning program that organizes volunteers to harvest backyard fruit that would otherwise go to waste. This naturally grown fruit is shared between the homeowner, the pickers, the Valley's many emergency food providers, and CGC's programs.

2023 was a bountiful year for FruitSave, despite lack of resources to fully support the program. 55 tree owners, including 17 new registrants, donated a total of 8,871.5 pounds of fruit, indicating a total of 26,614.5 pounds of fruit harvested in total. That is the highest yield since 2013.

Of special note was the huge supply of apples that was distributed to local food suppliers, pressed into cider, processed/dehydrated for low cost sales at reFRESH Marketplace, or sold at a fractional cost of regular grocery prices.

29 active harvesters were responsible for harvesting from approximately 143 trees and 1000 blueberry bushes. The berry bushes were located at a local farm which will benefit from an 'in kind' tax receipt for their business.

Several schools registered a classroom harvest and the students learned the value of being food and fruit stewards in their local community.

A harvester and tree owner appreciation event was held in November at the Centennial Park Cob Oven, where we were able to provide a humble Thank You. We are amazed and extremely grateful for their investment of time, caring, energy into our amazing community.



Caroline L.
FruitSave Coordinator

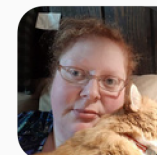
ISLAND FARM & GARDEN MAGAZINE

Edited by Eric Morten and marketed by Arla Vander Voet, Island Farm & Garden Magazine (IFGM) is a local publication owned and distributed by CGC.

The emphasis of the publication is to keep readers informed about local environmental and agricultural initiatives.

The IFGM is printed five times a year and distributed between Campbell River and Port Alberni, as well as down to Victoria and Sooke. The IFGM is a wonderful platform for local businesses, gardeners, and artists to advertise and share their names and expertise with the public.

While the magazine is a free publication, several individuals have decided to pay for a subscription and have it mailed to them directly. Most notable is one long-time IFGM reader who recently moved from BC to Ontario: Finding she was missing reading the IFGM, she decided to become a subscriber and have a copy mailed to her. We are happy to help her out.



Heather McKenzie
Administrative Assistant

KINPARK YOUTH URBAN FARM

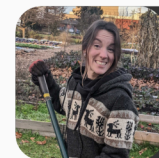
2023 was a year of celebration at KinPark. We welcomed back Cowichan Secondary Students from Environmental Stewardship and Earth Science for weekly sessions and garden related skill building, students from Duncan Christian Secondary who participated in a service day, and a new group of young students from Alexander Elementary who joined for sessions every second week throughout the spring. We even welcomed several groups for one-off field trip tours. What a joy it is to spend time with so many youth!

As a special project for the spring of 2023, the Environmental Stewardship Class took on the responsibility of four designated “Food Bank” beds in the Kinsmen Community garden. The students developed crop plans for each bed, started the seedlings, and cared for the beds throughout the spring. The project was largely self-guided with staff lending support as needed. All food grown in these beds was donated to the Cowichan Valley Basket Society and Community Food Pantry with the assistance of children attending KinPark’s annual summer camp.

KinPark was fortunate to share a couple of interns from the Canadian Conservation Corps for three months through the spring as well as welcoming a new full time intern for the year. With the help of funding, extra hands and volunteers’ generosity in time and labour, a new produce wash station, a three bin compost structure, and additional garden beds were constructed.

The free Community Food Pantry, built in the spring of 2022, continued to grow in popularity with a constant stream of daily visitors. Community members expressed gratitude for the availability of fresh and shelf stable goods stocked in the pantry through the reFRESH Food Recovery program as well as community donations. The pantry continues to foster relationship building as well.

It was a successful year at KinPark and we are excited to start a new season as positive stewards of this special space who care for the people who come here.



Naomi Kulhawy
*KinPark Youth Urban
Farm Manager*

KINPARK KIDS CAMP

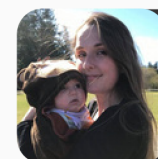
KinPark Kids Camp had another fabulous summer at KinPark Youth Urban Farm! Our park was full of laughter, learning, and joy amongst our camp counsellors and the 52 children ages 6 – 10 who registered this year, giving us a total attendance of 164 throughout the summer. Thank you to our incredible camp counsellors who made our camp year special – Eric Beaudet, Victoria Kovacs and Shaylyn Sullivan.

Camp continues to be a combination of education and fun in the garden, in the kitchen, and in other spaces throughout our community. Each day, our campers and camp counsellors engaged in farming and gardening activities such as planting, watering, seeding, harvesting, and even weeding! New this year, our campers took great care of the community garden bed designated for the Cowichan Basket Society. They watered, harvested, and delivered fresh veggies over to the food bank across the street.

Taste testing throughout the farm was always a favourite activity; especially when produce were being used in our cooking classes. With a huge variety of farm fresh produce harvested by the campers themselves, we turned it all into tasty and healthy goodies during our weekly cooking classes at CGC's kitchen. The menu this year included fresh garden salsa with nachos, refrigerator beans, zucchini cookies, cob oven pizza, beet brownies, and solar oven smores!

Camp also had a series of workshops including a visit from our feathery friends at the Northwest Pacific Raptor Centre, STEAM workshop with Nicole Jansz, fire hall tours at North Cowichan, and a variety of craft and educational workshops with previous CGC staff Carol Kastelic, and Em Harris.

We can't wait for another fun-filled summer next year at KinPark Kids Camp!



Alyssa Krawchuk
*KinPark Kids Camp
Coordinator*

reFRESH FOOD RECOVERY PROGRAM

It has been another big year for the reFRESH Food Recovery Program which picks up food donations from local grocery stores and redistributes them to more than 15 local service providers and community groups.

We set another record and recovered 353,853 lbs of food. About 77% - or 275,467lbs - were distributed to groups such as Cowichan Tribes, Lake Cowichan Community Services, Penelakut Island, Meals on the Ground, a local daycare, a youth center and many more. Several new recipients were added to the roster, such as a group of Ukrainian refugee families, Life on Wheels, and Abbeyfield House. The program also supplies the Community Food Pantry at KinPark with fresh food daily. We thank our awesome volunteers who assist with the food sort each week - their assistance makes this big job much easier for all.

About 5-10% of donations from select grocery stores go to reFRESH Marketplace to be sold, while the kitchen selects items that are useful to them to make meals for various programs. Food that is deemed unsafe for human consumption goes to local farmers as livestock feed.

Thanks to KalTire we were able to get a new set of tires for our trusty van, ensuring our driver Mike is safe on the roads in all kinds of weather. We are also very grateful to our retail partners who we work closely with to reclaim as much food as possible, and the local farms and gardeners who have donated produce.



Julika Pape
Marketing Coordinator

reFRESH MARKETPLACE

So much happened in 2023 at reFRESH! Our bulk program, reTHINK Zero Waste, has been going strong. We have been researching various suppliers to find the best deals on bulk products. Our customers love the program, with most of them opting to take the jars home for a deposit, rather than using a plastic alternative. The hardest thing about the initiative is keeping enough jars in stock.

We have had so many amazing volunteers and interns this year. They have helped us enormously with the food sort, produce display, as well as helping keep the store tidy and dust-free. We can't thank them all enough.

In the fall of 2023, we hired an intern who helped us make affordable, value-added products to sell. These included apple chips, fruit leathers, quiches, pies, jams, and dehydrated soup mixes. We had a lot of fun creating the products, marketing them, and watching our clients thoroughly enjoy them.

We started selling products on Cow-Op again, and sales have been picking up lately. Our biggest seller were smoothie mixes.

August brought a big change to reFRESH, when Sarah took over the Manager position from Julika, who had been managing the store for 2.5 years and is now pursuing a Graduate Degree. Julika did a wonderful job passing the reins to Sarah to make her feel fully supported in her work.

Besides the reFRESH Coupon Program, we also administered the Farmer's Market Coupon Program in collaboration with the Duncan Farmer's Market. The 140 spots on the program filled up quickly. Participants received 16 weeks' worth of coupons at \$27 per week. In addition, we continue to hand out meat and eggs for Margaret Moss' Pregnancy Connections Program.

One of our goals in 2024 is to rebrand as a store as open to everyone. We need to get the message out there; we want people from all income levels to feel comfortable shopping at reFRESH.



Sarah Kate Knight
reFRESH Manager

THE RESILIENCY PROJECT

The Resiliency Project is a community meadow making project focused on creating pollinator habitat in shared green spaces and local parks. We currently maintain five local meadow sites, with the support of community volunteers, students from local schools, and staff. This year, we continued to plant a larger diversity of local wildflowers in each of the meadow sites, planting over 1250 native plants over the course of the season. We also facilitate the native seed library, which is a completely free and accessible seed bank, available for anyone working to “re-wild” their yards and gardens. We have 36 different varieties of local native seeds available in the seed bank, all of which are gathered from the meadow sites, in an ethical and sustainable way. We also expanded the native plant nursery stock, available at the Cowichan Farm and Food Hub Nursery, and now have over 20 varieties of locally grown native plants available for nursery customers.

Over the 2023 season, we continued to host educational workshops and community events, highlighting pollinator-friendly gardening practices, ecological land stewardship practices, and creative invasive species management. We collaborated with the Q’ushin’tul’ Ancestors Walk, and hosted a four-part basket making workshop series, where we wove baskets out of invasive species which were gifted to the indigenous elders who supported the Q’ushin’tul’ Walk. We are so grateful for all of the ways we were able to increase biodiversity within our community, and work with our amazing team of volunteers to make the Cowichan Valley bee-friendly!



Hannah Auer
Community Coordinator

COWICHAN GREEN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Foundation had an extraordinarily successful year, especially the kitchen team which produced over 22,000 meals for our most vulnerable community members. Staff turnover continued to be our biggest challenge, but as usual, the incredible team pulled together and helped each other in unprecedented ways. Almost everyone took a turn in the dish pit and we didn't miss delivering even one meal despite a lack of staff, drivers, or even in inclement weather. The team is so grateful as always, for the incredible interns and volunteers who never fail to help fill in the gaps as needed. We're also extremely grateful to the Mischa Weisz Foundation who funded the homeless youth meal program for the 2nd year. They have recently agreed to fund the program for 2024, which is fantastic news. We will be looking for funding for 2025, but for now, we are happy we can help warm the bellies of so many youth on our streets. The youth have shared that this is their only meal a day and without it, they wouldn't eat. Our partnership with Discovery Youth and Family Substance Use Services has been instrumental in this program's delivery.

The Community Pizza Cob Oven project was successfully launched with a grant through the United Way's Reaching Home funding. The Coordinator Michelle has done a fabulous job engaging with dozens of community partners and welcoming vulnerable youth into the space with not only delicious pizza but with workshops and resources to help support them with housing and employment. We're thrilled we have also received another year's funding from United Way which will take us to April 2025!

Other programs such as the Pregnancy Connections program continued with ongoing fundraising efforts from the Rotary Club. The support the community has provided to the Foundation and the



Stephen Bishop

Board President

programs continues to be incredible. All donations, whether cash, in-kind, or the gift of time has been instrumental in helping sustain our critical work. We hope you think of us when considering making your next donation.

Thank you all so much!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS - CGCF



Stephen Bishop
Board President



Jane Nares
Secretary



Amanda Vance
Treasurer



Brent Wingham
Director



Tina Reynolds
Director



Vivianne Allen
Director



CGC KITCHEN & MEAL PROGRAMS

The CGC Kitchen team had an exceptionally busy year and prides itself on coming up with innovative ideas to transform rescued food into nutritious and wholesome meals for our three main meal programs. As the majority of ingredients used in our cooked meals consist of rescued foods, every meal has many moving parts that are unseen by those who receive and enjoy them. This process takes dedication and hard work - not only by the staff but by every member of the amazing CGC team and its volunteers.

Our kitchen team faced its share of manpower challenges, but nonetheless, the team worked hard to ensure the community meal programs operated seamlessly throughout the year.

CGC has partnered with Island Health's Meals-on-Wheels program (MOW) to deliver cooked, nutritious meals for our seniors and other valued members of our community. The team also cooked and helped deliver over 12,400 hot meals and breakfasts to The Village Temporary Housing facility on Trunk Road - 365 days of the year. In addition, the CGC Kitchen produced over 4,000 meals for the Discovery Youth program providing hot, nutritious food to youth who are street entrenched or precariously housed. In addition, we also provided prepared frozen meals to the Cowichan Valley Youth Services.



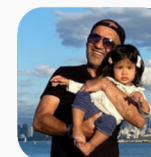
CGC KITCHEN & MEAL PROGRAMS

Collectively, the kitchen produced over 22,463 meals for the three main community meal programs. Once again, the CGC Kitchen also made traditional Christmas meals for our clients including freshly roasted turkey, traditional trimmings such as in-house mac and cheese, sweet and savoury cranberry sauce, gravy, garlic mashed potatoes and herb-infused stuffing. The Boxing Day and New Year's Eve meals were also special meals to convey the love and care of CGC towards all its clients.

We're looking forward to the completion of our new kitchen to be located at the Cowichan Farm and Food Hub on Beverly Street, so we can expand our services and continue to support our most vulnerable community members.

We would also like to acknowledge our Kitchen Manager Dave Andrews who passed away suddenly in October. Dave was a valued team member, a fantastic cook, and a very kind person, who is deeply missed by many.

The entire team at CGC came together to support the kitchen during the sad and difficult time following the loss of Dave. CGC staff and volunteers worked tirelessly, going above and beyond to ensure the Kitchen was able to deliver its promised outputs to the community.



Hassan Syed
Kitchen Manager

COMMUNITY COB OVEN

The Cob Oven 'Feed Youth First' project has nearly completed its first year. This project is utilizing the beautiful cob oven in Centennial Park to cook and feed precariously housed young adults while also offering resources, educational opportunities and community! We are an alternative outdoor space where people can find the resources they need to survive, to be cared for, valued, respected, and to thrive. We accept people where they are in their lives and welcome them happily through a trauma informed, youth centred lens.

Over the summer we made pizza using garden fresh produce for toppings and side dishes when possible. As the winter came, we set ourselves up as a warming space with heaters and a tent. We moved into serving warm chilies, fresh soups, as well as a solstice turkey dinner! We also served tea and the best free coffee in town. We have been hosting workshops along with our meals throughout the year; getting into medicine making, public speaking, writing and visual arts, as well as round table conversations on housing and community support.

We started a small library and have a continual large frame loom weave that many people have contributed to. Our resource lists include information on housing, food banks, job search, shelters, crisis support, and more. Many of the organizations on the list have come to visit with groups of young adults or as professionals offering information.

It has been awesome watching this project grow and to see the youth showing up, wanting to get involved, always offering a helping hand, building friendships and community. I'm looking forward to another year of growth, building relationships and trust, and providing solid support.



Michelle Mostacci
Cob Oven Coordinator

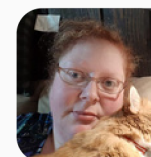
MEALS ON WHEELS

With passion, compassion, and dedication the CGC kitchen staff has been dutifully cooking delicious meals for the clients of Meals on Wheels (MOW). During 2023, MOW delivered hot food to its clients six days a week through all types of weather, holidays, or the unexpected.

Partway through the year MOW switched up its menu options to help streamline cooking for the CGC kitchen. Starting in April 2023, MOW clients had the options of a regular meal, which included a protein, starch, and veggie, or two specialty meal options: vegan or dairy-free.

Each month, on average, MOW delivers 480 meals to 30 clients. The client receives a three-course nutritious and delicious meal each night at a very reasonable cost.

The MOW Coordinator has been diligently submitting articles each quarter to the Island Food & Garden Magazine. Her goal in submitting these articles is to bring more awareness to the public about MOW and some of the benefits the program has to offer to its clients.



Heather McKenzie
MOW Coordinator

reFRESH COUPON PROGRAM

After “rebooting” the reFRESH Coupon Program program in early 2023, we supported 100 low-income families and seniors with \$25 worth of groceries at reFRESH Marketplace each week.

In total, \$90,232.20 worth of reFRESH Coupons were redeemed- an astonishing amount, considering the program is now funded almost exclusively by donations. At the end of the year, we had a waitlist of over 50 people eager for a spot in the program.

reFRESH Coupons can be used for almost all items in the store, including grocery essentials, organic dairy, local meat, frozen meals, zero-waste products, bulk items, and of course, recovered produce.

Since Sarah took over the position of reFRESH Manager, she has seen how essential this program is. Participants of the program often tell us that they don’t know what they would do without us. They especially appreciate that they are given healthy and nutritious options, and the opportunity to choose which foods they want and need. We truly hope that we can keep this important program going in 2024.

We collected testimonials from participants recently:

- “Such a great addition to my food every month. Helps me get little specialties sometimes”
- “I was able to eat oyster mushrooms last week and it felt like my life is improving!”
- “My daughter loves coming to our ‘special’ little store.”
- “I finally have access to fresh foods!”
- “This program makes nutrition accessible, not just food.”
- “We would starve without you!”



Sarah Kate Knight
reFRESH Manager

THANK YOU

We would like to share a special Thank You to all our community members who have donated to CGC. Your generosity supports programs with limited or no funding. We also thank the following funders and supporters:

PARTNERS & DONORS

Canadian Conservation Corps
Children & Family Council of the Cowichan Valley
Cobble Hill Farmers Institute
Community Food Centres Canada
Country Grocer Cobble Hill
Country Grocer Lake Cowichan
Cowichan Secondary School
Cowichan Valley Basket Society
Cowichan Valley Garden Club
Cowichan Valley Heritage Quilters
Cowichan Valley Naturalist Society
Cowichan Valley Open Learning Centre
Cowichan Valley Regional District – Area E
CVRD Summer Camps
Diva International
Fisher Road Recycling
Fraser Basin Youth Council
Great Greens Market
Harmony Life Services
Island Ford
Island Return It
Libra Tree Services
Municipality of North Cowichan
Quamichan Middle School
Queen Margaret's School
Rotary Club of Duncan

Save On Foods Duncan
Thrifty Foods Duncan
Thrifty Foods Mill Bay
Valley Cider Company
Vancouver Island Regional Library
Vancouver Island University – WEST Program
Victoria Foundation
Wilder Restoration

FUNDERS

Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada
Awesome Foundation
BC Association of Farmer's Markets
Canadian Red Cross
Career Launcher
Community Foundations of Canada
Farm Credit Canada
Government of Canada
– New Horizons for Seniors
– Canada Summer Jobs
– Enabling Accessibility Fund
– Youth Employment and Skills Strategy
Gardening Know How
Innovate BC

Investment Agriculture Foundation
Island Coastal Economic Trust
Island Health
Island Savings Credit Union
Mazon Canada
McConnell Foundation
– Innoweave
Ministry of Agriculture
– Innovation & Adaption Services
Misha Weisz Foundation
Our Cowichan
Plan H
Project Learning Tree
Province of BC – Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Province of BC – Community Gaming
Rotary Club of Duncan
Telus Foundation
United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island
Whole Kids Foundation
WorkBC – Ethos Career Management Group Ltd
WorkBC – GT Hiring Solutions
Young Canada Works

FARMS

Allium Co-op Farm
Boots 'n' Roots Farm
Deerholme Farm
Farm Table Inn
Farmer Ben's Eggs
Glenora Farm
Green Fire Farm
Home for Hooves
Honeybush Farm
Innisvale Farm
Island Hothouse
Keating Farm
Local Forage Farm
Lockwood Farms
Red Nettle Farm
Tatlo Farm
Tattam Valley Farms
Under the Oak Farm
Muddy Feet Farm
Wedderspoon Organic
Westholme Tea Farm
BUSINESSES
Ajac's Equipment
Buckerfield's
Cowichan Hydroponic Supplies
Cowichan Valley Citizen
Cowichan Valley Voice

Craig Street Brew Pub
Dogwood Lumber
Duncan Plants 'n Ponics
Duncan Farmer's Market
Duncan Garage & Café
Duncan Paving
Dinter Nursery
Fast Eddy's Tree Work
Good Juju Body & Home
Hanks Bakery
Happenstance
Papercrafting & Home Decor
Juice FM
Kal Tire
Little Guy Supply
My Smart HR & Leadership
Peaks Coffee Co
Peter's Hauling
Portofino Bread
Progressive Growth
Nanaimo
Reber Creative
Saltspring Seeds
Serious Coffee
Take5 Newsmagazine
True Grain Cowichan Bay
West Coast Seeds
Windsor Plywood

CONTACT US

Phone: 250-748-8506
Email: info@cowichangreencommunity.org
Website: www.cowichangreencommunity.org
Address: 360 Duncan Street
Duncan, BC, V9L 3W4

FOLLOW US



[@cowgreencom](https://www.instagram.com/cowgreencom)



[facebook.com/cowichangreencommunity](https://www.facebook.com/cowichangreencommunity)



[youtube.com/cowichangreencommunity](https://www.youtube.com/cowichangreencommunity)

