



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Gratitude, Reflection and Adaptation

The Nelson Food Cupboard is flourishing as a food-focussed community resource because of incredible support from the local community of donors and volunteers, as well as from funders further afield. Meeting the needs of community members in need of emergency food access or in need of social and educational opportunities was truly a group effort once again in 2015, and we thank all those who contributed. We wish this work did not need doing - that everyone could afford to buy their own food, know how to make it into nutritious meals, and enjoy doing so - but since there is such a gap between our vision and reality, we are grateful to be successful in our work.

In June, our Board of Directors and lead staff met to renew the organization's five year strategic plan. We reflected on results from customer surveys, our 2014 Community Food Assessment, and best practices in the field and came to consensus that we will continue to operate our food bank to high standards, but also commit to offering upstream programming on an ongoing basis. The five goals we agreed on are:

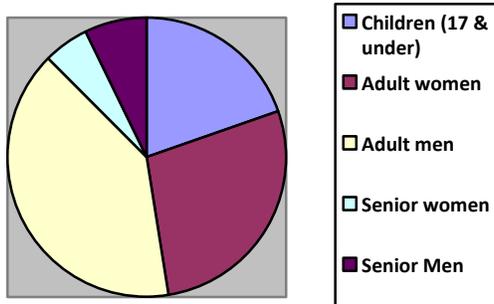
- To increase ways to acquire, grow and produce food locally for use in our programs,
- To build health, social and emotional capacity in low income community members through diverse programming,
- To engage in food security issues at the systemic level,
- To diversify food access opportunities, and
- To operate in a space that suits our needs and where all community members feel welcome.

Shortly afterwards, we received a Good Food Grant from Community Food Centres Canada to help us start working to achieve these goals. In specific, the grant funded a new food skills program, additional infrastructure in our garden, and a new part-time Community Outreach position, as well as offering us professional support from many of their team members experienced in our field.

We are pleased to share some of our recent accomplishments with you over the next few pages.

Everyone has access to enough good food. We trust people to know what they need.

Our food bank continued to be our core service; we served an average of 150 customers each day we were open which was similar to 2014, but much higher than in previous years. The gender and age breakdown was:



The shelves of the food bank are stocked with foods donated by community members and food we purchase with donated funds. A grant from Mazon Canada, monthly donations from the Nelson United Church and fresh tofu donations from Silverking Tofu enable us to offer our customers fresh protein sources; donations of prepared foods from the Hume Hotel's restaurants provide our customers with easy meals that only need reheating; and fresh vegetables from our garden and local farmers help us give our customers at least five fresh produce items on every visit. They regularly thank us for the quality of food they can pick up.

"It feels so good just to have the eggs. They are visually pleasing and very appetizing. For the past five years, I have been living on \$150 for all my expenses except rent, so if it wasn't for the Food Cupboard, I would go hungry."

"It is such a relief that I can get healthy food through the Food Cupboard because I just can't afford it otherwise. The fresh vegetables, especially all that organic kale that is accessible over the summer months, make great live smoothies."



Acquiring, growing and producing food locally for use in our programs

Since its inception the Nelson Food Cupboard has supported local farmers and accepted donations of fresh produce from local gardeners and since 2007 we have managed Harvest Rescue, a fruit gleaning program, but in 2015 we committed to growing some of our own food as well.

Our Garden

Adding a gardening program to our roster was the first step in this direction and the biggest programming change in 2015. The goals of the Food Cupboard Garden Program are to grow food organically for our food bank while simultaneously providing low income community members with opportunities to learn valuable gardening skills, grow some of their own food, be physically active, and have a healthy social experience. With the support of a Garden Coordinator, volunteers and supported employees grew over \$4,000 worth of vegetables in 2015.

The garden is four blocks uphill from the Food Cupboard on the corner of Ward and Hoover; the property is owned by Brooke and Sandi Leatherman who have generously donated its use to this program. The Columbia Basin Trust is the major funder of the program and Community Food Centres Canada is also funding some of the infrastructure. Many local businesses have made significant contributions too.

Harvest Rescue

The 2015 fruit tree gleaning season was the most fruitful season to date – almost \$17,000 worth of produce was gleaned. Approximately 70 volunteers picked apples, pears and plums at 113 sites in and around Nelson, and gleaned at the farmers' markets and Nathalie's Fruit Stand at 1 Mile.

The Nelson Food Cupboard customers were the first priority for gleaned fruit, but thousands of pounds of produce was also shared with other organizations and places frequented by people living on low incomes.

In addition to gleaning fruit, Harvest Rescue participated in the Family Faire at Touchstones Museum by hosting an apple cider pressing booth. The apples had been harvested at an orchard in Blewett by the Food for Life class at Trafalgar Middle School.

“We know that fresh fruits and vegetables are essential to people living with chronic illness such as Hep C and HIV, so we are so grateful to the Harvest Rescue Program for enabling us to give the people we support fresh produce throughout the harvest season.” Laura Kearnes, Outreach and Support Worker, ANKORS



Building health, social and emotional capacity in community members through diverse programming

Our Garden Program

In its first year, the Food Cupboard Garden Program was a great success: eight people participated in a supported employment program at the garden on a part-time basis, 98 volunteers contributed time and energy and five school classes helped with gardening tasks while learning about community food security issues. The supported employees spent the most time at the garden and reaped many benefits:

- 100% of program participants who completed an evaluation form said they had improved their gardening knowledge,
- 83% said their mental health had improved, and
- 83% said they ate a wider range of fresh produce.



“I joined the program after years of setbacks and unemployment. I loved the new gardening experience, the escape from home life it provided and all the positive encouragement I received. I learned about some new foods and how to identify plants. I was able to go off my mental health medications. After a few months of participating in the program, I finally had enough confidence to apply for a full-time job. It was a seasonal job, but by the time it ended I had the courage to enroll in Selkirk College’s Women in Trades Program. The garden was the greatest stepping stone I could have had.”

A New Food Skills Program

We received funding through our Good Food Grant from Community Food Centres Canada to create a food skills program to help diversify our array of capacity building programming. We began to develop the program in late-2015 for launch in 2016.

Engaging in food security issues at the systemic level

Eat Think Vote

Leading up to last fall's federal election, we joined organizations across the country calling on the new government to develop a national food policy through the Eat Think Vote campaign spearheaded by Food Secure Canada. The campaign drew attention to the need to address important pan-Canadian issues such as the need for 4 million Canadians to use food banks, the lack of a national school lunch program, the huge challenges that face new farmers as the current generation retires, and the need for better access to healthy affordable food in the north; and asked willing candidates their opinions on the issues.

We sent all Kootenay-Columbia candidates six related questions, posted the questions and their responses in the Food Cupboard reception area, and worked with the Nelson Star to have this information published in the paper.

We also wanted to encourage more of our customers to vote, so set up a voter information booth in our reception area in the weeks before the election. Volunteers staffed the booth and helped some of our customers find out if they were registered, gave them information on how to register, and reminded them to vote on Election Day. It was tougher to navigate Elections Canada's website than we had anticipated, but nevertheless we did help some people.

Operating in a space that suits our needs and where all community members feel welcome



We are bursting out of the Cupboard in every direction and know that, in addition to needing more space for current programs and in our office, to better meet the needs of the people we serve we need our own space dedicated to the work we are doing. In follow up conversations to our strategic planning sessions, we decided the need to move to a space that we can configure to meet our needs is paramount. A committee has been struck to research and plan the move with the goal of being in a new space by the end of 2017.

Thanks to all our supporters

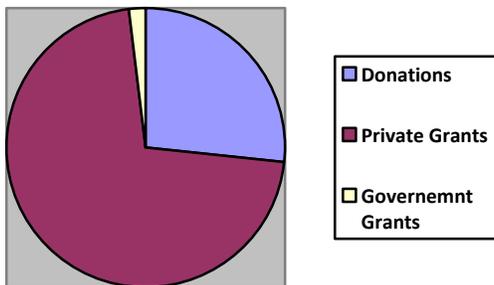
Food and financial donations of all sizes, plus more than 3,000 hours of volunteer labour, enabled us to contribute to community food security in many ways. Due to space constrictions, only major donors and funders are acknowledged.



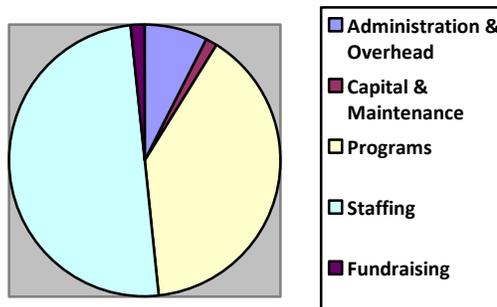
Financial Overview

In 2015, the Charities Directorate of Revenue Canada approved our application to change our fiscal year to November 1st to October 31st, so 2015 was a transitional fiscal year: January 1, 2015 – October 31, 2015.

REVENUE



EXPENSES



Nelson Food Cupboard Society, 602 Silica Street, Nelson BC, V1L-4N1 / (250)354-1633 / www.foodcupboard.org