



2014 ANNUAL REPORT

The Year in Review

2014 was another busy year at the Nelson Food Cupboard as the demand for our service continued to grow and our programs evolved to stay apace. Simultaneously, we led two new community wide food security initiatives to great success.

On average, 1,234 customers used the Food Cupboard every month, which is a significant jump from the 2010 – 2013 average of 1,113 customers per month. In 2014, 21% were children, 68% were adults and 11% were seniors. Concurrent with statistics from other social service agencies in Nelson, the growth in demand for our Food Cupboard service supports the argument that poverty continues to be a significant problem in Nelson. While our Food Cupboard is a band-aid service, it is a very important service to this community.

Fortunately, we have been able to keep up with the increased demand on the Food Cupboard due to excellent community support in terms of food and financial donations, creative staff approaches, and support from the customers themselves. They volunteer at the reception desk, pick up food donations, inventory the donations, repackage bulk foods, do recycling runs, assist with gardening work in the summer, help with special events, and more.

Our mission remained focused on offering healthy food, sourcing as much of it locally as possible, meeting customers where they are at – for some we only know their name while others are key team members and share many stories and ideas, and reaching out to the entire community in new ways. Our Harvest Rescue program expanded to include a vegetable gardening component. We led a food security asset mapping and gap analysis project to determine goals and objectives to improve our community's food security in partnership with the City of Nelson. And we hosted 'Chew on This', a challenge to community leaders to eat like a Food Cupboard customer for one week in October to create greater awareness of the challenges people living in poverty face on a daily basis.

Behind the scenes, we rebranded and came up with a new logo and look you will see on all our materials and shifted our fiscal year to November 1 – October 31 to better manage donations during our busy holiday season.

While the work kept us busy, it also offered great learning and social opportunities for all involved. We are proud of our accomplishments and thankful for all the donors and volunteers who make our programs a success.

THE FOOD CUPBOARD



Jenny Erickson, the Front Line Manager, and her dedicated team of volunteers kept the Food Cupboard stocked and the customers happy, while also finding time each week to make grocery boxes for home-bound seniors, adults in rural areas with health and transportation challenges, and the Women's Centre. They also took on seasonal projects, such as making dozens of litres of plum juice in the fall and growing herbs in a planter box outside.



Community Initiatives grant funding from the City of Nelson and Regional Districts E, F, G and H allows us to buy a new commercial freezer that enabled us to take advantage of sales on meat, freeze vast quantities of soft fruit during the harvest season, and more.

Our partnership with the Hume Hotel kitchen continued and brought in \$15,000 worth of prepared foods. These soups, quiches and stews are particularly appreciated by people with limited or no cooking skills – they are varied, delicious and often contain meat.

ACCORDING TO OUR 2014 SURVEY:

96% of respondents said the food they pick up at the Food Cupboard contributes positively to their health,

97% said it is important to them to be able to pick up at least 5 fresh produce items per person each time they use the Food Cupboard

75% of respondents have lived in the Nelson area for 5 years or more, and 61% for 10 years or more

66% of respondents use the Food Cupboard at least once a week.

Customer story

Laverne has been coming to the Food Cupboard for about ten years since she lost her full-time job. Since then, she has only found part-time work. She says that if it weren't for the Food Cupboard, she would be forced to choose between paying the electric bill every month and eating. At the Food Cupboard she can pick up healthy bread and fresh produce she otherwise would not afford.

Laverne is one of our keen weekly volunteers. Every Monday you'll find her counting the bread donation, repackaging the eggs, or filling in at the reception desk. And on Wednesdays she picks up the grocery boxes she delivers to home-bound seniors. She volunteers because she loves the atmosphere here. "Everybody is trying really hard to make sure everybody has food, and it makes me feel good to be a part of that," she says.

HARVEST RESCUE

2014 was not a great year for fruit bounty, but Harvest Rescue Coordinator, Sophie de Pauw made the most of it. In its eighth year, Harvest Rescue continued to glean unwanted fruit from backyard trees in Nelson and the surrounding area, and tried out assisting with ten gardens in town and at nearby farms. The program aimed to support the Food Cupboard's healthy food policies, offer food skills development opportunities to Food Cupboard customers, support our local farmers and gardeners as a way of maintaining our food security, and build community.

One highlight of the program was the revitalization of the vegetable garden at McKim Cottage, a residence for people with mental health challenges. Residents joined Harvest Rescue volunteers tending the gardens, and then used the produce in meals for their fellow residents. One resident articulated the feelings of many when she said, "When I came here and saw the garden, I felt calm and grounded."

Produce was given out through the Nelson Food Cupboard, Bigby Place, ANKORS, the Nelson Women's Centre, Stepping Stones, and the Seniors' Coordinating Society. The Nelson Waldorf School class 2 and Trafalgar Middle School's Food For Life program helped prepare garden beds in the spring and put them back to bed in the fall, and picked, dried and sauced apples that were given out through the Food Cupboard.

PRODUCE HARVESTED:

4,053 lbs. OF FRUIT FROM
TREES IN THE AREA

3,983 lbs. OF FRUIT FROM
NATHALIE'S FRUIT STAND

700 lbs. OF VEGETABLES
FROM PARTNER
GARDENS



"I became involved in with Harvest Rescue in spring of 2014 just in time for planting and happily contributed my time when I could until harvesting. I came to the Food Cupboard in need of assistance as a long medical treatment had left me both physically and financially destitute and was extremely grateful that not only was there food for me, but also a way to repay the Food Cupboard for their generosity by way of donating time to Harvest Rescue. On a personal note the therapeutic value of the exercise and fresh air did me as much good as the food.

On a broader note I was grateful to be able to contribute to, and feel part of the community, and on the most important note the Harvest Rescue program works very well to help build a communal bond between those who have space to donate, those who have time to garden and those in need of food assistance."

CHEW ON THIS... A COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

We hosted this unique and exciting community event in October 2014 to coincide with Homelessness Action Week and World Food Day. The event was designed to help raise awareness around what it is like to have to rely on food banks and other social agencies for food – participants followed strict guidelines and could only eat food they picked up at Nelson’s social services, be invited out for one meal, spend \$20 of their own money, and use five of their pantry staples.

Twenty one people participated included City Councillors; business leaders from the Regional District of the Central Kootenay, the Nelson and District Credit Union, and the Hume Hotel; and individuals representing Interior Health, Rotary and many social service agencies.

The challenge and related conversations highlighted the inadequacies of current provincial allowances for social assistance, disability and minimum wage, and it helped start a conversation in our community around reducing poverty. It included a kick-off lunch at Our Daily Bread and a wind up community dinner at the Nelson United Church at which many participants spoke publicly about their experience.



“... the two things I found somewhat foreign were lack of fresh food (fruit, vegetables & meat) and opening so many cans to prepare a meal. It has made for interesting meals, but has also led to some interesting discoveries: what to do with a can of chick peas?”

“Protein was an issue as I discovered after working in the yard on the weekend & playing hockey left me hungry.”

“I thought I knew what our customers faced because I work at the Food Cupboard and see and talk with them every week, but I didn’t. To experience the hunger, cravings and difficulty with preparing nutritious meals for a whole week touched me emotionally in a way I had not expected. I could relate to the misery and hopelessness that sets in when there is no hope of improvement.”

COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESMENT



THE TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:

Municipal leaders advocate for a strong, local food system at all levels of government and to all audiences.

Form a municipal food council consisting of a City Councillor and a wide variety of stakeholders.

Create a community food centre where food security organizations could share resources and network and be accessible to the public.

Develop municipal policies that support food production, storage and distribution in Nelson.

Develop infrastructure to support farmers and value added businesses.

Increase access to affordable, fresh and healthy food for vulnerable populations.

Improve coordination for strategic investments in food security and food systems priorities.

Create an economic development fund for local agriculture.

In partnership with the City of Nelson, we undertook a food security asset mapping and gap analysis project with funding from BC Healthy Communities and the Osprey Foundation, as well as in kind support from the Kootenay Co-op Grocery Store and Selkirk College.

The project brought together municipal leaders, social service organizations, businesses, health, schools, and community members to review our current level of food security, identify shortcomings and discuss opportunities, to strategize for a more food secure future, and develop networks to work toward our goals. This was done through two community consultations and many phone interviews.

On December 22, 2014 the 50 page report was presented to Council which they then incorporated into their strategic planning.

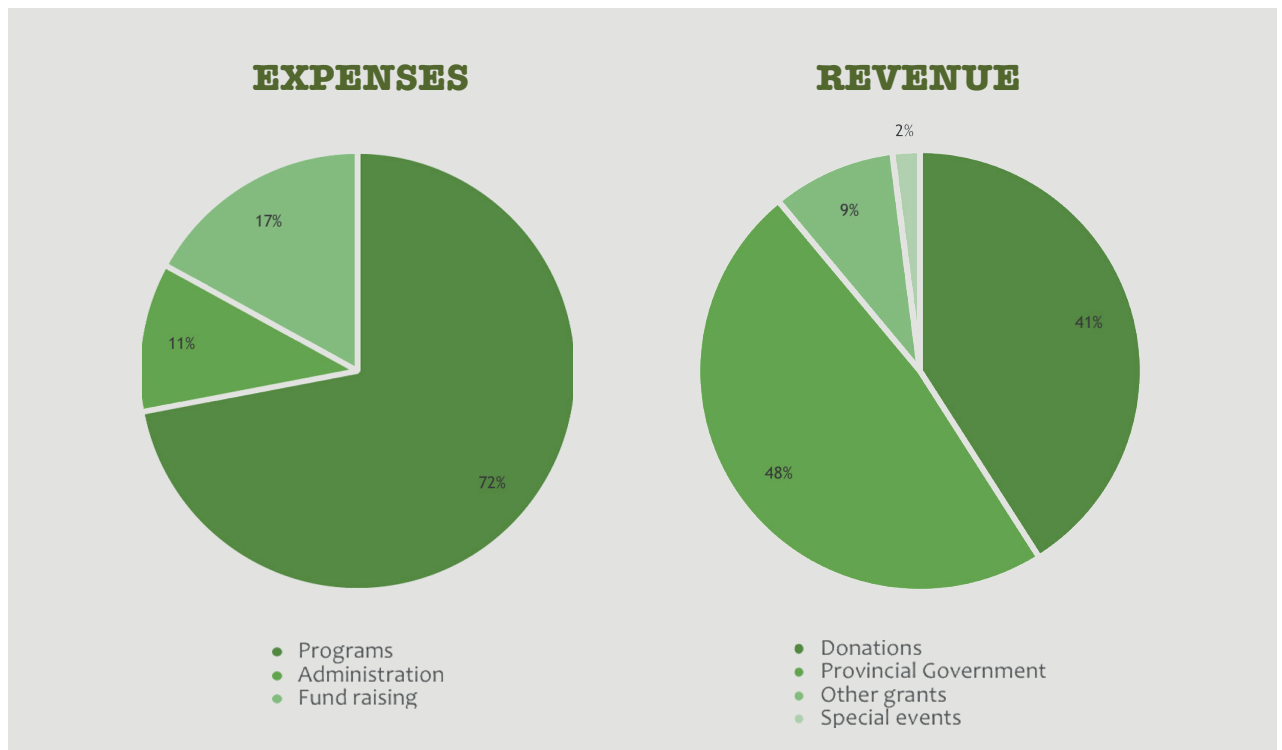
THANK YOU

BC Healthy Communities
City of Nelson
Hume Hotel
Kootenay Co-op Grocery Store
MAZON Canada
Nelson United Church
Osprey Community Foundation
Province of British Columbia
Regional District of the Central Kootenay, areas E & F
Save On Foods

Thank you to all our January – October 2014 contributors

Food and financial donations of all sizes plus more than 2,500 hours of volunteer labour enabled us to contribute to our community food security in many ways. Due to space constrictions, only major donations and grants can be acknowledged here.

Note: We also received \$91,356 worth of food and in-kind donations.



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