

# Taking Stock

**2021**

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**KIM CUMMINS**



SHELBOURNE  
*Community*  
KITCHEN

## Navigating Immense Change and Coming Out Strong

Last year was quite the wild ride! Our leadership team navigated immense change in 2021 as several large projects, designed to increase efficiency in operations and bolster The Kitchen's capacity, all came to fruition within the same year. It was a huge amount of work, but we came out stronger than ever before. With the rising cost of food and ever increasing demand for support, our team had developed a plan to expand the garden programs. In 2021, we made the leap from one backyard garden to **two exciting new growing sites at Omnivore Acres Farm and St. Luke's Cedar Hill** that would produce more food in their first season than we had grown in our organization's entire existence! We knew the realities of renovations and the move would significantly affect our ability to offer services, but even at the height of construction with no coherent base of operations, we still found creative ways to offer fresh food support for the 870 low income families and individuals we serve. Thanks to the incredible hard work of Pantry Program Coordinator, **Odessa Kelebay**, we distributed **37,575lbs of healthy food** last year. We also shared **nearly 2,000 food plants** with our members to support food growing at home. In the first few months of 2021, before the packing began, our team held a final round of Virtual Cooking Programs at the old house. We then shifted to meal and recipe kit distribution and collaborated on cooking videos until we reopened. Over the course of the year, staff gleaned invaluable insight from our February Pantry Program Survey and a Masters student's capstone research project about diversity and inclusion that would significantly impact program delivery strategies and volunteerism.



Ultimately, the design and renovation of our new location was the greatest challenge of all. With nostalgia for the little bungalow still holding our hearts, designing the next home for the Shelbourne Community Kitchen would require serious finesse. It would also be the largest project we had ever taken on! Enter **Banyan Group Construction** and Construction Manager, **Craig Thomas**, who donated countless hours of his time, secured sponsorships, and streamlined design plans to make our new home a reality. Words cannot express the deep respect and gratitude I have for Board Chair, **Clarice Dillman**, for her tireless dedication and leadership. Clarice's laser focus kept the ship on course, Treasurer **Cathy Flikweert's** financial skill kept the wind in our sails, and all of us rowed like mad. When The Kitchen finally opened our doors at 101-3787 Cedar Hill Rd in September, the greatest reward was to see all of our volunteers and participants in person again. It's true when they say that "**home is where the heart is**". Come visit our new location. I bet you'll agree that while we may have left the bungalow, we took our home with us.

# Our New Home



# Cook

Food Skills Programs not only increase access to nutritious, wholesome food, they create opportunities to share, to learn, and to practice new skills in a supportive environment. Preparing and sharing healthy meals together is central to our work. It is how we strive to bridge the social isolation that often comes with living on low income. Cooking together is how we nurture healthy relationships with our food, with our selves, with the environment, and with the community that surrounds us.

450

Meals Prepared Together

230

Recipe Kits Shared During Renovations

800

Sponsored Meals through Red Cedar Café

Family Programs where everyone cooked together!



In the first three months of 2021, we sponsored 800 meals through Red Cedar Cafe and held our final round of virtual cooking programs before the big move took hold. Popular themes included “Anti-inflammatory Herbs & Spices” (a partnership with Holistic Nutritionist, Jenn Foster), Heart-Healthy Fish, and a Virtual Family Dinner (in collaboration with students from Camosun College Community Youth and Child Studies program).

With limited capacity and no access to a kitchen but an abundance of gorgeous produce arriving from Omnivore Acres, we started assembling and distributing 230 Meal and Recipe Kits during renovations. Each kit had a special focus on seasonal eating, canning or preservation. Themes included everything from pasta primavera and summer couscous salad to fridge pickles, kale chips and apple chutney. In partnership with Carlo Vjandre, owner of the YouTube Channel "Green Onions and Tomatoes", we also began creating cooking videos.

" I have been pulling out my book of recipes over the summer. The pasta salad and red lentil Indian dal are my favs. Here are my pickle pictures! "

-LT, Participant



Summer Recipe Kits included Fridge Pickles!

**Making healthy meals at home is always easier when you have the right tools!** Thanks to our generous donors and the Thrifty Foods Vivo stamp campaign, we held two Kitchen Equipment Giveaways and **shared over 200 brand new chef knives, pots and pans with participants.**

After reopening in our new home, we hosted a hilarious virtual **Family Halloween Night** and a **very special North African Virtual Cooking Program** that was co-facilitated by a practicum student and one of our participants. These two incredible women taught us about Libyan and Moroccan cuisine and prepared their favourite family recipes. **Amidst all the challenges and the move in 2021, we prepared over 450 meals together in community.**

## Looking Forward

Until the commercial kitchen is built and we become a designated Food Premises with Island Health, in-person program opportunities are limited, but if the pandemic and move have taught us anything it is that there is always a way to keep cooking and sharing meals together. In 2022 we plan to conduct a **Food Skills Program Survey** so that we can continue to adapt to changing participant needs and priorities. We plan to shift our focus to **foster more participant-led programs and leadership opportunities** in an effort to encourage cross-collaboration among our membership and showcase the wealth of skills and invaluable experience that our participants have to offer. **The commercial kitchen will create incredible food skills opportunities** including a robust schedule of diverse and accessible programs, food demos and community meals, while opening doors to income generation like social enterprise, fee for service classes and facility rentals.



**Meal Kits**  
Stuffed Acorn Squash  
with Red Lentil Dahl

# Grow

Our Gardens help to supply our other programs with much needed fresh, high-quality produce. They are spaces for learning and places where we reconnect with the land, with ourselves, and with the food we eat. In our Garden Programs, we host food growing workshops, farm gleaning opportunities and strive to offer supplies to promote food growing at home.



Training at the Cedar Hill Garden with Chris Hildreth and Ashley Whelan of TOPSOIL Urban Agriculture

8,010 lbs

Grown in our Gardens

1,876

Food Plants Distributed  
with Get Growing, Victoria!

Bruce Saunders  
Omnivore Acres Garden  
Lead AKA King Kale!

Saying goodbye to our backyard garden at the bungalow was bittersweet but the move actually led to the most incredible Garden Program opportunities in 2021. Over the last two years, our partnership with Jim and Catherine Gowans, owners of Omnivore Acres Farm, was coming into full bloom. Jim and Catherine had been donating eggs and inviting our team out to the farm to pick rhubarb and root vegetables for two seasons. As aging farmers, they were finding it increasingly challenging to find enough labour, so when they learned that we would lose our backyard garden as part of the move, Jim and Catherine Gowans saw an opportunity that could be mutually beneficial and invited us to start growing with them at Omnivore Acres.

"It's been a life savior for us. The price of groceries keeps going up and our pensions don't change so we are both having a hard time buying groceries."

-DG and LG Participants



69.2% of participants surveyed have access to growing space

We developed a land use agreement for our very first farm season collaboration. Led by our beloved volunteer Garden Lead, Bruce Saunders (aka King Kale), we suddenly had access to over 1,200sq ft of prime farmland, raised beds, and a 20ft x 60ft greenhouse! Our collaboration with Omnivore Acres transformed into the most beautiful and productive partnership. **Bruce Saunders did an absolutely outstanding job running this new project and by the end of the year, they harvested 8,010 lbs of produce!** This is more food than we had grown in The Kitchen's entire existence! Legend has it, the secret is chicken poop. At the end of the season, we held a big BBQ at Omnivore Acres to share our sincere gratitude to Bruce Saunders, the Gowans, and all of our hardworking volunteers.

In 2021, another garden project was about to bear fruit. Since 2019, we had been exploring efficient models for urban farming and met **Chris Hildreth, owner of TOPSOIL Innovative Urban Agriculture**. Learning about the TOPSOIL method was wildly inspiring. Using geotextile containers and a few simple strategies, you could achieve high production with minimal labour. With support from Chris, **we planned an urban gardening site that would support food production, and create space for workshops nearby**. Founding Partner Organization, **St. Luke Cedar Hill Anglican Church, generously offered the land** and together we developed a land use agreement for a 70ft x 40ft plot on their property with support from their other tenants. On August 22nd, we installed a 250 geotextile container garden in less than 4 hours. Katie Bodin, became the interim Cedar Hill Garden Lead and her team brought in 600lbs of veggies by November! 2021 was also our second year in partnership with the City of Victoria's **'Get Growing, Victoria!'** initiative. We held two plant distribution days and **shared 1,876 food plants with our members**.

### Looking Forward:

We are honoured to have been invited for a **second season with Omnivore Acres**. The **Cedar Hill Garden** will also be having its first full growing season and our team will be working to secure funding for a sturdy fence and explore opportunities to begin hosting **tours and workshops**. Earlier this year, we conducted a **Garden Program Survey** to gather vital feedback from our participants that would inform crop selection and workshop themes. Also, now that we are settled into our new location, it's **time to get fruit picking again with LifeCycles Project Society!**



Beautiful Morning at  
Omnivore Acres Farm

# Share



**"I love this program. It was helpful for my family when I start during covid 19. I have a big family and we are from Syria. We love fresh vegetables you offer."**

**-2021 Survey Respondent**

678 Adults  
120 Children  
Served

Food Distributed  
**17,044 kg**  
37,575 bs

Grocery Vouchers  
**2,108**

Grocery Visits  
**2.059**

Odessa Kelebay  
Pantry Program  
Coordinator

We had three months of standard operations before the Facility Transition Plan took hold. **After March, our small team had to maintain a delicate balance between offering food support while we juggled the heavy demands of the renovations phase.** As we packed the shelves and fridges, we distributed vouchers (at increased amounts) and put the Grocery Program on pause. By May, it was move time but renovations to our new facility were just getting started. In the four crazy months that followed before Saanich would approve full occupancy, Pantry Program Coordinator, **Odessa Kelebay, built temporary distribution systems, juggled design projects, coordinated volunteers and solved problems like no other.** We didn't have a central base of operations all summer so we borrowed a room at Lutheran Church of the Cross (located above our new home), tethered the office line to our cell phones and ran Pantry operations every Tuesday. We distributed Produce Boost Bags, vouchers, and updates about the move. Produce Boost Bags included eggs, garden produce, and a grain.



Thanks to our incredible volunteer delivery coordinator, Debra Burton, and her team of drivers, no-contact home delivery continued the entire time! Amidst the tremendous upheaval of the move, Odessa and Debra ensured that the Pantry Program continued to provide healthy food to hundreds of our members. **By the end of 2021, we had distributed 2,108 grocery vouchers and the Grocery and Produce Boost Programs were accessed 2,059 times.**

When we weren't juggling the renovations and weekly food distribution days, Odessa and I planned for reintroduction of the Pantry Program once we reopened. Her excellent work on **the February Pantry Program Survey provided us with vital feedback from our members that would inform operations in our new home.** We received some incredible, positive feedback about the program and the vast majority of our services would remain the same. Opportunities for improvement centered around greater offerings of dairy and fresh proteins. While our Grant Writing Team set to work securing additional funding, staff gathered nearly 100 donated whole chickens and frozen salmon filets through our partners to hold a **Summer BBQ Protein Draw.** We also identified through the survey that by adjusting our hours we could better support the growing amount of families and low-income earners accessing services. **When we reopened in September, The Kitchen would be the only organization in Victoria to offer evening hours** and Thursday nights between 3:30pm-6:30pm became one of the busiest days of the week.

### Looking Forward:

Our delivery service was originally established as emergency support during the pandemic however, we recognize that it has become a vital resource for our members. We will be working to **make the delivery service a permanent program.** With support from our incredible volunteers, our goal is to **develop strategies to reduce complex barriers** identified in the 2021 Pantry Program Survey. Explorations will include potential for online ordering systems, expanded hours of operation, and restructuring the Voucher Program to provide greater flexibility. The cost of food continues to climb which creates greater demand for support while reducing the capacity of our organization's food budget. We plan to **broaden partnerships, expand fundraising and invest even further into garden programs as we work to increase our capacity amidst rising food costs and increasing demand for support.**

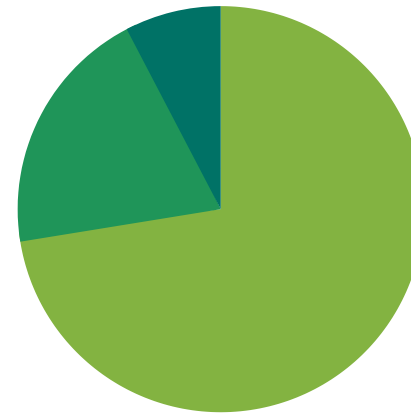
Lisa Processing Kale  
for Produce Boost Bags at  
Omnivore Acres



# Connect

Total Membership: 1,046

With the ongoing pandemic combined with the facility transition and reduced services, keeping communications channels with our members strong was more important than ever before. We involved our members in our branding refresh, gathered vital insight through surveys that would help inform operations once we reopened, shared constant updates to keep everyone in the loop. Participants, volunteers, donors and community partners all helped us pack, move, paint, and set up our new location. While we all loved the little house on Shelbourne Street, it's true when they say that home is where the heart is. After seven long months of renovations, the absolute best part of 2021 was opening our doors at the end of all of it and getting to see our wonderful members again.



870 Participants  
239 Volunteers  
92 Participants who Volunteer

"As a single senior it's a great connection to community." -2021 Survey Respondent

"Wonderful volunteers and even through the pandemic it's such a positive experience."  
-2021 Survey Respondent



Through longstanding partnerships with the University of Victoria's School of Social Work and Camosun College's Community Youth and Child Studies Program, we have the honour of working alongside dynamic, passionate and incredibly talented students every semester. Students gain valuable experiences by applying the concepts they learn in school to projects and direct support roles that make significant impact in our community. In 2021, students facilitated intercultural cooking classes and family food skills programs, designed our 'Kids Corner' and educational resource feature display in our new home, designed tools to support the Translation Project and provided vital support for front line services and events.

**"We need to come together (all generations) to create more programs like this."**

-2021 Survey Respondent

Our community has changed significantly since the pandemic began. More than ever before, we have increasing numbers of refugees and newcomers, as well as people living with chronic illness and disabilities accessing our services. **Systemic racism and discrimination continue to negatively impact equal access to opportunities, having a detrimental effect on income levels and food security for far too many people in our society.**

In 2021 we worked with a Masters Student from Royal Roads University who conducted a research project to gain vital insight and perspective for how we could promote greater diversity and inclusion at The Kitchen. **This vital project continues to resonate with staff and guides projects and operations.** We look forward to carrying these important learnings with us as we revise our next strategic plan in 2022, as we continue to listen with humility and learn with an open heart.

Carmen and Mish  
with Produce Boost Bags  
Summer Semester  
2021



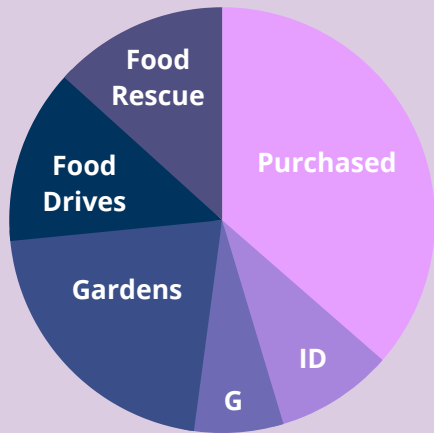
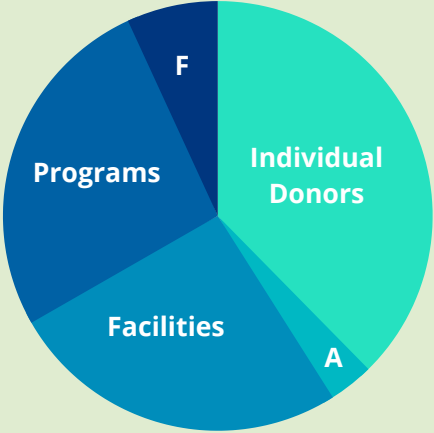
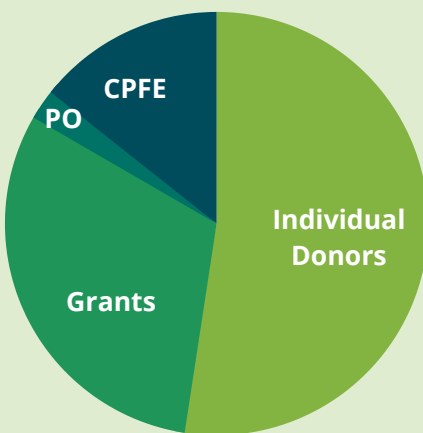
# Financial Snapshot

Fiscal Year 2021 January 1 - December 31

**Revenue**  
\$408,417\*

**Expenses**  
\$316,917

**Food Distributed**  
17,044 kg / 37,575 lbs



41% of all food distributed was grown or donated!

52.4% Individual Donors  
30.9% Grants  
14.3% Community Partners & Fundraising Events (CPFE)  
2.3% Partner Organizations (PO)

37.6% Staffing  
26.4% Programs  
25.7% Facilities  
6.9% Fundraising (F)  
3.4% Administration (A)

36.4% Purchased  
21.3% Gardens  
13.3% Food Drives  
13.3% Food Rescue  
8.9% Individual Donors (ID)  
6.8% Grow-A-Row (G)

\*\$20,000 Dedicated to Phase 2 Renovations



*Thank you*  
**FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

The Kitchen underwent a significant financial crisis in 2021 due to the reduced grant opportunities, expenses related to the renovations and move, as well as permit and supply chain delays. We survived 2021 because of the awe-inspiring contributions made by Banyan Group and all of our phase 1 renovations team, the profound generosity of a very special anonymous donor who made our two matching donation campaigns possible and all the big-hearted donors, volunteers and partners who helped along the way. Thank you for being there for us through thick and thin.