

Annual General Meeting Report July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

The Gathering Place

Our Mission Statement

To provide a hot meal in a warm environment to those in need, while building a healthier community.

Our Vision

To provide excellent service in a compassionate, inclusive and safe environment, while leading our community in food security initiatives.



A Message from the Acting Chair

Since March of 2020 the service provided by the volunteers, employees and managers at the Gathering Place has been challenging and demanding. The year started out similar to many other years. The Board of Director's were concerned about maintaining the service provided to our community and the wellbeing of those people in need of food security and comfort. We were concerned about funding opportunities and determining new ways to save money and expand into other opportunities "to provide a hot meal in a warm environment to those in need, while building a healthier community".

Little did we know what the challenges and changes would be from of the COVTD-19 pandemic! By March 2020, most of the planning by the Executive and Board had been replaced with the immediate need to adopt new ways on delivering our services and supporting the vulnerable population about to experience significant change. Other community services that supported vulnerable people with housing, poverty, mental health and substance use were able to transition to virtual care or remote assistance, The Gathering Place was not able to share the same experience.

Our employees, volunteers and managers created new and innovative ways to serve meals, support the vulnerable people who need some social support and most importantly care for themselves and each other in a safe working environment. Our staff and volunteers sacrificed their own time to work modified work schedules, wear protective equipment and deliver meals across the City and region.

By June the Gathering Place was supporting the local sheltering services with meals and snacks to serve the people in need and who were unable to find nutrition and social support. We delivered meals to the shelters and supported the efforts of the local Social Service Administration Board and the Municipality of North Bay. At the same time we provided meals to citizens in need at the Gathering Place. The Board of Directors and the Executive Director would like to thank all employees and volunteers who supported our mission and sacrificed some of their own wellbeing and time to ensure our services continued to help those in need.

Understanding the seriousness of the epidemic and the need to change, we also saw the COVID pandemic as an opportunity to build and grow our services and reputation during the time of urgent need and the lack of other services to fill the community void associated to food insecurity.

Executive Director Chippa and his staff were successful in applying for and accessing funding from the Government of Canada, Provincial government, and Nipissing district Social Services Administration Board, and other private and public charitable sources. It was/is an opportunity

to not only access a larger amount of funding but also grow our services to address the urgent need of providing meals to more people in need.

The new services include a broader distribution of meals across North Bay and now in West Ferris, supporting the shelter systems in North Bay, assisting other municipalities and villages with food security opportunities, helping with community events like the Christmas Meal and buying new tools and equipment to support the work of our people. We agreed to the proposals for the purchases of an additional vehicle, new freezer, outbuildings and fencing. A new outdoor dining area and increased internal security systems were also added to the facility with funding that was received during 2020.

Along with the demands of the COVID pandemic the Board and Executive were challenged with hosting and holding regular meetings in a virtual environment. With the support of the staff at The Gathering Place we were provided with technology, expert assistance and kind and gentle support on how to host and attend a virtual Board meeting. Once again the staff came through to support the Board.

Sadly, in 2020 we said good bye to many respected Board members who have given so much to support the mission and people of The Gathering Place. On behalf of Karrie Lepoudre and the other Board members I would like to thank Chuck Polz, Carol Bridges, Judy Szumik and Sean Wilson for their years of supporting The Gathering Place and giving their time, intelligence and support to the Board and employees of The Gathering Place. Without their support and unrelenting dedication to the mission of TGP we would not have been successfully positioned to beat the challenges and reap the opportunities as we did in 2020.

I would like to especially congratulate and thank Karrie Lepoudre for her unwavering support and commitment to The Gathering Place as a Chair person, Board member, and carpenter, painter, flooring technician, designer and labourer, As you know the "new build" was indeed its own challenge to the Board members and Executive Director. Through all the problems and flaws with the design, build and move Karrie and her team ensured that the move happened and the building was safe and secure for the staff and visitors. She is missed already and we thank her for her work on the Board By-Laws, Executive director job description and review of the governance practices for TGP.

We ended the year with planning for 202I and beyond. The future looks bright for The Gathering place in 2021. The pandemic is now entering another dangerous phase of disease and response. Communities, by ways of laws and regulation, continue to reduce services and restrict the abilities of people to access social supports and rneals in real-time with real need. The need for good governance and an accountable Board continues. The new Board in 2021 will need to look at increasing the support provided to our staff and volunteers who are always

asked to do more in support of our mission during turbulent times. We will need to understand our role and purpose of Board better so that we can ensure the financial security and mission success of TGP during the current epidemic and perhaps the future of financial challenge in a new post-epidemic recovery.

In closing, as the acting Chair person, I look forward to serving on the Board in 2021 and supporting the new Chairperson and Board members. We will be seeking assistance from a trained and experienced person to help the new Board with understanding the roles and relationships of the Board, employees, Executive Director, volunteers and our clients. It is important to get this right. Being a member of the Board of Directors is an enjoyable opportunity for us, and others, to spend our tame in support of the valuable and treasured services delivered by The Gathering place.

Best Regards,

Scott Todd

Acting Chairperson

A Report from the Executive Director

The most difficult thing in looking at a 'fiscal year' of 2019—2020 is that your brain is almost drawn to the last three months of the fiscal year. That was when Covid-19 turned our world upside down. However, it's also important to look at the year as a whole, not just the final three months of it.

The year began with the finishing off of all outstanding work needed to be completed in order to put the building in the place it should be, a fine building with a few scars on it, to give it character. We finished the construction and settled in to work. And work we did!!! Meals were expanded, as we took on an extra meal on Tuesdays, and expanded our Outreach using Lee's Place. More agencies took advantage of the space, to visit, council, conduct flu shot clinics and more. It turned into a real nice asset.

The Food Rescue program, and the continued expansion of it, turned into a real source of pride not only for the agency and its staff and volunteers, but quite a guiding light for the city and the area, as we were able to prove the value in rescuing food that was still usable. When we hit the 'one ton' a week limit, of usable safe food, to have at the kitchen or distribute to a growing list of agencies, it was a tremendous moment for all of us. That 'one ton' a week represents over 50 tons of food, and likely means over a million dollars of usable food that would have gone to the landfill site. It's a great thing for us, but also at times a source of frustration, as we are but one small blip in the radar that is food waste.

Our traditional fundraisers were again successful, as literally hundreds of bowls of soup were slurped down at the annual Soups On event at the Grande. The Venue continued to be wonderful and it was a great event enjoyed by all. And the fact that we won again means just a little bit more. To have the best soup in town two years running is pretty amazing. Meantime, Coldest Night of the Year managed to be successful, surpassing its goal of not only fundraised money but sponsored dollars. Of course, it was likely one of the last 'face to face' events in the city for quite some time.

This past winter we took a chance with the Warming Centre, deciding to save rent money by hosting it at the Gathering Place. As was well documented, we were one of two sites during the winter, the other the Good2Go location on Main Street. This provided us with two places, and more cots available to the homeless population than we'd had in the past. However, the winter was not easy and the constant struggle of "cots out, clean up quick, put down chairs and tables and get meals ready, do laundry, more meals, move tables, clean, put down cots, repeat" did weigh on staff and volunteers as the winter progressed.

And then came Covid.

Obviously, as I've told many, and been clear in the media, this is an event that will be studied in history books in the future. Somewhere, when this is finished, it will likely not mention the complete heroics of the staff of the Gathering Place. But as I have said from the beginning, the efforts put in by the staff were positively heroic.

From the beginning, our backs were to the wall. The first week of the mandated closure resulted in the most significant staffing change, as Kitchen Manager Dave Clarke stepped away and resigned. That left it up to Roxanne, Tiffany, Andrew Grandmond, Grace Weekes, MacKenzie Vermette and myself to shoulder the load. I will never forget Roxanne's simple comment "Hey, we Got This." That became our hashtag from the beginning through to now, #wegotthis.

Covid-19, for the Gathering place, was the perfect storm, as it meant more demand, more meals, providing meals to the low barrier shelter in all its locations and forms, and working with a client base that not only needed food, but needed assurance. Done, for several weeks at least, with no volunteers. Often, our days were spent outside with those we serve as much as inside with those we serve. We were gradually able to bring in more volunteers, while taking on two extra meals, Thursday and Sunday, from church groups that were unable to support them. We also took on an increasing population of people who'd never used our service before, never been in this situation before, and were not only hungry, but scared, shocked and stunned. Rarely did a day go by that we didn't hear 'I don't' know what I'd do if you weren't here'. That kept us going.

The community didn't forget us, although at times we felt like it. Baking, financial donations, 'stuffraising' by individuals and groups, doing what they could to help our folks, was inspirational as well. Grassroots groups like Care Mongers that continued to push families working on school projects to bake, or fundraise, or give simple things to us, turned things around for us. And we cannot underestimate the impact the DNSSAB, United Way and the North Bay Community Foundation played in supporting us. We have managed to get through this crisis, at least initially, in very good shape. That's also thanks to ongoing support and advice and 'get it done' from our board members, many of whom were working within their own restrictions and within their own struggles. It was an overall strong effort to make sure everything was done that could be done for the people we serve. It was an honour to be part of it.

As we move forward, the positives continue. We are already embarking on a Food Outreach program that has taken the city by storm. We have funding to expand this program and hire appropriate staff.

We were also successful in some grants to purchase and upgrade equipment. A provincial grant will also allow us to purchase a refrigerated truck for food outreach, as well as a new walk in fridge/freezer unit. With a bit of luck, there will be money left over in the capital purchasing to finish off with another three-door fridge unit, making it possible to upgrade and revamp the overall look of our kitchen as well. (our plan is to sell the walk-in fridge and give ourselves extra room in the kitchen, which we need). We have put in an offer to purchase the garden. It's a small offer, and at this point it is in the hands of city hall. The plan is to purchase it for a dollar, promoting the fact that we will then pay taxes on it, but from then on, it will be our land to expand on. We are expanding our food outreach to the outlying areas and continuing to look into how we can be more accessible to the population and make our amazing food more available to all. With a vaccine and the potential for a better spring, we can only look towards the future with excitement.

Dennis Chippa

Executive Director

Board of Directors

Karrie Lepoudre - Chair

Scott Tod - Vice Chair

Chuck Poltz - Past Chair

Melanie Maissoneuve - Treasurer

Judy Szumik - Secretery

Carol Bridges

Lee Dreany

Peter Gregory

Brenda Aitchison

Jenn Saile

Sean Wilson

Ken Brown

Staff

Dennis Chippa- Executive Director

Roxanne Denne – Operational Coordinator

Tiffany Fournier- Warming Centre/Good Food Box



 ${\bf Nicole\ Lauzon-Community\ StreetCuts\ Coordinator}$

Garden



Our Volunteers



The Gathering Place has an active roster of over 175 volunteers. Our volunteers help us be able to serve Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner to our neighbours in need in a timely manner and with a genuine smile. Our volunteers not only prep and serve meals but also pick up and deliver Food Rescue, maintain the grounds at our community garden, help with fundraisers and events and play a key role in the many programs we run here at The Gathering Place. We have recruited many new volunteers this year from various community partners and agencies in North Bay. During COVID we reduced our volunteer capacity drastically in order to ensure we were following COVID guidelines.

Programming Update

The Gathering Place runs various different programs throughout the year to better serve and assist our neighbours in need. Some of those programs include:

- Drop in Meals
- Food Rescue
- Community Garden
- Warming Centre
- Summer Survival Kits
- Good Food Box
- Teens for Teens
- Community Streetcuts
- "Lee's Place" Outreach Office
- Social Events
- Reverse Food Drives/Food Outreach

Please note: Many programs were put on a hold March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Until March 2020 we were serving 14 meals a week, 5 breakfast, 5 lunches & 4 dinners. Once the pandemic began Calvary "Dinner Church" was unable to stay open on Thursday nights & the Salvation Army was unable to serve their regular Sunday dinner. With the supports from both Calvary & the Salvation Army, we opened our doors for take-out dinners on Thursday & Sunday evenings.

Breakfast: 9:00 am - 10:00 am Monday - Friday

Lunch: 11:30 am - 1:15 pm Monday - Friday

Dinner: 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday

Statistics

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	TOTAL	Daily AVG
July 2019					
August					
September					
October					
November					
December					
January 2020	911	1588	1072	3571	119
February	668	1291	946	2905	100
March	775	1157	1167	3099	100
April	1459	1903	1732	5094	170
May	1355	1694	1932	4981	161
June	1710	2139	2681	6530	218
TOTAL	15110	21735	26082	62915	







Food Rescue

We have maintained our partnership with the 6 local grocery stores;

- Freshco.
- Mike & Lori's No Frills
- Jeff & Tanis' No Frills
- Orchard's Fresh Food Market
- Parker's Independent
- Giant Tiger Lakeshore

We rescue an average of 12,000 lbs monthly with a grand total of 118,563.4 lbs rescued in 2019. We have at least 20 different agencies, churches and local groups that we distribute food to.

For only the months of December 2019 & January 2020 we rescued food from Food Basics. Food basics traditionally gives to the Salvation Army.

In February 2020 we gained KFC on Algonquin Ave & Lakeshore Dr. as weekly Food Rescue partners.

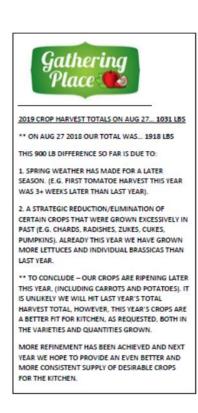




Community Garden

2019 was the ninth consecutive operating season for The Gathering Place Community Garden. We achieved another year of quality community service and food production. This was the fourth year in the current five year property lease with the City of North Bay. Consistent with this vision, the TGP Community Garden exists to fulfill two purposes: 1) To function as a community garden, inclusively welcoming and partnering with community members and organizations, via programming, partnerships, and volunteerism. 2) To enhance local food security by producing healthy food for TGP Community Food Centre, while modeling and teaching sustainable gardening practices for people who wish to "grow their own."

The Garden operated for a full 7 months in 2019 (April 1 through November 1), with extended summer hours to increase community access: Monday thru Friday from 8am to 4:30pm, (summer: Saturdays 11 am – 3 pm, and occasional evenings by request). Garden was well-staffed (1 f/t manager plus 5 garden assistants working various blocks and hours over the season). Several agency partnerships helped create employment and training opportunities.



Green = donated	Orange = underschiever
CROP	CROP TOTAL
Apple	
Basil	22.
Beans	71.
Beets	
Blueberry	2.
Broccoli	11.
Cabbage	184.
Cantaloupe	
Cauliflower	54.
Carrot	2
Celery	8.
Cherry (ground)	
Chives	
Cilantro	0.
Cucumber	66.
Dill	-
Garlic	9.
Garlic Scapes	4
Gooseberries	4
Grapes	
Green Onions	62.
Hascaps	02.
Lettuce	265.
Mint	2.03.
Onions	3.
Oregeno Parsley	0.
Peas	20.
Peppers	17.
Rosemary	
Potatoes	13.
Radishes	15.
Raspberry	
Rhubarb	1.
Sage	
Sorrell	
Spinach	6.1
Squash	27.
Strawberry	20.
Tarragon French	0.
Tomatoes	6
Turnip	
Zucchini	56.
GRAND TOTAL (lbs)	1031.

The Warming Centre

The North Bay Warming Centre is an emergency shelter for those without adequate housing to provide them a safe and warm space in such conditions. Unsheltered persons, especially those living with medical, mental health or addiction issues are even more vulnerable in times of inclement weather. The Warming Centre's purpose is to ensure as best it can that all those who need and want shelter in extreme cold weather have it.

The 2019 – 2020 season of The Warming Centre was operated out of The Gathering Place's dining room at 1181 Cassells Street. We transitioned the dining room each night into a shelter with 10 - 12 cots & at least 2 volunteers on shift at a time. The Warming Centre closed in March 2020 just as COVID began. Below is a chart on the stats for the 2019 – 2020 Warming Centre season.

Month	# of visits	# of guests served	avg. # of guests per night	# Nights Open
December	231	53	7	31
January	436	72	14	31
February	311	66	11	29
March	45	21	8	6
TOTAL	1023	212		

Summer Survival Kits

We received funding from United Way in partnership with the AIDs Committee to make and distribute summer survival kits. We had staff/summer students budget and buy items geared to the homeless population and surviving the summer elements. Items included; sunscreen, hats, water bottles, first aid kits etc. We hope to continue this program into the winter months as well.

Good Food Box



The Good Food Box is a non-profit community initiative that helps individuals and families access **affordable** fresh fruits and vegetables year-round. The program runs like a large buying club. Each month, customers pre-pay \$20 (large) or \$10 (small) for a 'Good Food Box' of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Good Food Box Coordinator uses these deposits to place a bulk order through a local distributor. By taking advantage of quantity discounts and wholesale pricing, the boxes are always below market price! It's a universal program that everyone is encouraged to join!

This year Powassan and South River decided to become distribution sites, expanding the program even farther. They had a tremendous amount of interest and are very appreciative of the program. Unfortunately due to COVID, the program was put to a halt as of April and will resume once safe to do so.

					We	est							
	North	North Bay Matta		awa	Nipissing		Temagami		Powassan		South River		
	small	large	small	large	small	large	small	large	small	large	small	large	TOTAL
Jul-19	5	15	6	24	3	1	2	11					67
Aug-19	12	15	6	18	0	0	2	11	30	33	38	36	201
Sep-19	33	20	7	15	3	1	2	11	18	33	18	25	186
Oct-19	22	19	5	14	1	3	4	13	20	22	19	31	173
Nov-19	30	19	4	10	2	1	3	15	15	37	16	11	163
Dec-19	11	22	2	12	1	5	3	14	19	24	16	6	135
Jan-20	20	15	3	15	4	2	1	10	12	17	5	6	110
Feb-20	24	18	6	12	4	4	2	13	23	31	7	6	150
Mar-20	13	15	3	12	4	3	4	12	20	32	7	3	128



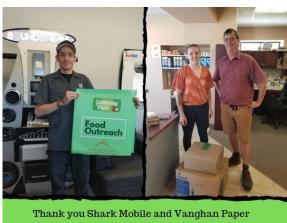


Teens for Teens



With funding from the North Bay Community Foundation, we were able to continue our summer Teen Meal program. Every week during the summer, our dedicated staff, Warren Cutter and Adam Valenti & Nicole Lauzon along with dedicated volunteers, put together over a hundred and fifty bagged lunches, and delivered them Fridays to youth throughout the city, that may not have a chance to have a meal during the summer. We expanded the program by reaching out to low income housing complexes own Lakeshore Drive & McKeown Avenue. We are hoping to continue the program in Summer 2020.





Thank you Shark Mobile and Vanghan Paper Products for your donations to the Gathering Place's Teen Meal Program!!

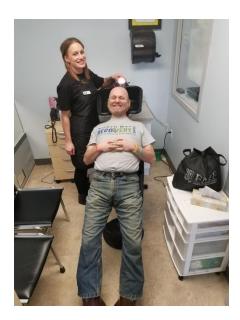
Community StreetCuts





In October 2018 we launched a new program called Community StreetCuts. It was started by one of our Canadore College Social Service Worker students, Nicole Lauzon. Once a month, we get 3-5 hairstylists to volunteer for the event. Guests are offered free haircuts and hair styles on the last Monday of each month 1:30 – 3:30 pm in our dining room.

StreetCuts has been able to serve approximately 20 people each month and make them feel wonderful. Community StreetCuts was put on hold due to COVID in March 2020, Nicole has since resigned but we're hoping to continue the program in some capacity in the near future.





Lee's Place/Outreach Office





Lee's Place outreach office continued to be utilized by 12 different agencies/groups until COVID in March 2020. We are always looking for new partnerships to better serve our neighbours in need. The office currently acts as a resource centre with a phone during the pandemic. Roxanne has been helping guests as best she can still access services. Here is a list of agencies we have a partnership with for our outreach office:

- The AIDs Committee
- The Recovery Home
- The Health Unit
- Canadore Dental Students
- Salvation Army
- Community Crisis Outreach Services (NBRHC)
- Transition House
- Canadore College

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Social Events

We have been able to host various events for the guests. We have a Coffee House once a month, BINGO bi weekly & we have a TV in the dining room to host movie nights & watch cartoons with breakfast etc. It is nice to offer our guests some good clean fun in a safe environment. All events were put on hold due to COVID March 2020.





Reverse Food Drive/Food Outreach

We found there was a gap in the populations we serve and recognized students just weren't coming in. We decided to go to them and do "reverse food drives" at each

Canadore location. We would set up tables at the school and bring up free food, snacks & hygiene supplies for the students. It was a great success and we have decided to do it each semester and all three Canadore College locations. Since March 2020 we have not done a reverse food drive but we have started a new program. The Food Outreach program began once the pandemic started in March 2020. We began packaging & delivering 20- 30 extra meals, each meal for the YMCA shelter. The Food Outreach program is set to expand this summer, stay tuned.



Fundraisers/Events

Coin Boxes



We have 12 donation boxes out in the community at various locations. The boxes were made by Grade 10 St. Joseph Scollard Hall woodshop students. Funds collected monthly totals approximately \$500.



Friday November 8th, 2019 at The Grande Event Centre was our 5th annual Soups On fundraiser. The event hosted over 700 people, selling out of tickets! We made over \$10,000 including sponsorship of tables at the event. We had 17 different soups, including 2 categories; commercial and non-commercial kitchens.



Battalion Game

As a preliminary fundraiser sponsored by Bell Canada to the main Coldest Night event we were able to raise \$2300 and a total of 200 lbs of non-perishable food.







Coldest Night of the Year 2020

Our Coldest Night of the Year Walk, which took place on Saturday February 22rd, 2020 at Algonquin C.S.S, was a huge success. There was such strong support from so many members of our community. This year's fundraiser brought in \$45,000 which couldn't have happened with our amazing sponsors and teams! The 2021 event is set for February 20nd, 2021.





COVID Response



All meals distributed in take-out containers.

ests are ms inside





Distributed hygiene products to guests.