



# **Annual General Meeting Report**

**July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022**

## 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 Report from the Executive Director

2021-2022 proved to be a challenging and at times rewarding year for us. Obviously the most important thing remained the day to day work around the pandemic, and then, late in the fiscal year, the re-opening. The constant pivoting between 'are we opening' and 'are we not' was difficult for all, including our volunteers, and of course, as is reflected in the audit, the cost of to go trays continued to rise, increasing our overall costing.

While the re-opening was a wonderful return to some sense of normalcy, it did not come without challenges. First, many of those we serve, and our volunteers, were somewhat reluctant to return to normal life and normal day to day operations. For that reason, we continued to open with something of a hybrid, with both 'dine-in' and 'to go' options, which did manage to allow us to cut down on some of the costs associated with to go meals. We continue to struggle with that increased cost, particularly as the more environmentally friendly containers are more expensive, with no offsetting funding options for them.

As far as numbers go, both our meal numbers and our outreach numbers increased at times, in a cyclical way. We have always dealt with the cyclical nature of the population, but we did not see more dramatic shifts between busy and not busy times. We did notice as the nicer weather began, that many were more willing to use to go meals, which is natural.

Some structural changes of note, we eliminated the picnic tables, the porta potty and the Gazebo from the back behind the facility. While it was invaluable for folks to have during the lockdown, it wasn't necessary as we moved towards re-opening, and became a source of drug use and sometimes criminal activity during our times when we were not open. As well, the removal allowed us to have parking spots back, as the return to normalcy meant a return to fewer parking options in the back and on the streets.

We took possession of a Chevy refrigerated van, to support our Food Outreach program. This was through provincial funding from the Ministry of the Environment, so no cost to us. It did increase our insurance and some of our vehicle costs (we never had any before 2020) but it does serve well with both food rescue and food outreach.

When it comes to our programming, there were few hiccups. Our food rescue program expanded to take in Sobey's, which have become a major supporter, as well as Erb Transport. The Erb Transport relationship was completely unexpected; as they are often finding food items on their trucks they have no place to take them to. So they have been donating them to us, which is great. We also became two day recipients of Cobs bread, which takes care of not only our needs, but the needs of many other food banks, and agencies around the community. Our food rescue program statistics show that not only are we able to be self-sustaining and work towards lowering our costs (I shudder to think what

would have happened had we not had this program) but it is also reducing the city's food waste carbon footprint, which is another plus.

Our Food Outreach continued to expand, as we were able to provide weekly meals to West Nipissing and Mattawa, while also providing meals within our community to support Golden Age Centers, OutLoud, and CMHA. The partnership with CMHA has also expanded to include many of their clients, who we are now offering support to. I feel the outreach, of both food and food rescue, to other parts of the community and other communities, will help us long term develop better relationships in areas we haven't pursued.

The garden was again a source of tremendous produce success and tremendous community support. We took possession and built several raised boxes at the former school on Elmwood, now a Children's Aid drop in, educational location. We received funding from the Community Foundations of Canada to

set the project up, and the relationship was a very positive one. We did offer some drop ins to individuals through the past year, as restrictions eased and it was an outdoor activity, but with the return to normal we hope for a return to those drop ins and relationships we have built in the past.

One of the more 'mixed' programming opportunities was taking on the operation of the city's daytime warming center for two months. This came as a wintery weather and frankly, a lack of preparation by others, set up an emergency. As always, the Gathering Place stepped up. It was a difficult set up as we had no time to prepare, but we managed to get something complete and open for the first week of February, and stayed open daily through mid-March. District of Nipissing Social Services Administration board paid for some staff and other costs and the centre was set up at the old health unit building. It worked but had a lot of headaches, both initially and at the end, where we discovered folks had managed to break in and were using the center after it had closed. For security reasons we decided to close about a week beforehand. It was hoped a more permanent solution to the problem could be found. We continue to wait.

Funding wise, we saw some drop in the number of donations, but were able to get some more significant ones. With Soups On unable to be set up face to face due to Covid, we tried an ordering method, where restaurants had special soup set up the day of, and people could order for pick up or delivery. It wasn't tremendously successful, but it was worth the try.

Coldest was more successful, even though it was a virtual format. We had a much larger intake of teams and donations, most of which were on line, which cut down on our workload considerably. I was able to take the project on my own, as the organization was a bit more streamlined. It does make for a less enjoyable experience but its offset by a shorter, less stressful day of. Overall I have mixed emotions as I enjoyed the more casual approach but at the same time miss the interaction.

One funding note of notes was our first DNSSAB Subsidy. While it was fifty thousand dollars, far less than Scott and I had hoped, it did come with no strings attached and was used for supports with both kitchen staffing and purchasing and outreach. The same applies to funding from United Way and a second smaller allotment from Second Harvest, which went to support the outreach program.

Our staffing was relatively stable; however, we did suffer our first Covid Outbreak. We were down a total of six staff and volunteers for a short time during the winter, but managed to pull off meals and Warming Center with the amazing support of students and our volunteers. Long hours for those of us not infected at the time but we managed to pull it off.

Looking ahead, we will work on the same things we always do, preparing and delivering meals to those who need them, while keeping a close eye on the bottom line. With the support of staff and volunteers and the board, I'm confident this will happen.



## Board of Directors

**Scott Todd**

*Chair*

**Tania Madigan**

*Treasurer*

**Cathy McLeod**

*Secretary*

**Karrie Lepoudre**

*Past Chair*

**Bob Pipe**

**Angel Vibert**

**Lee Dreany**

**Peter Gregory**

**Ken Brown**

**Brenda Aitchison**

**STAFF**

Current	Past
Dennis Chippa- Executive Director	
Alicia Smith – Operations Manager	
Roxanne Denne – Operations Manager	
Tash Bogart – Administrative Assistant	
Joanne Beaulieu - Administrative Assistant	
Tiffany Fournier – Administrative Assistant	
Damian MacSeain - Garden Manager	
Marquis Raymond - Chef	
John Watson – Chef	
Grace Weekes – Cook	
Stephanie McGinn - Cook	
Mackenzie Vermette – Cook	
Annabelle Lamarche – Food Rescue Coordinator	
Jennifer Sheehan – Food Rescue Coordinator	
Genevieve Kiessling - Food Outreach Coordinator	
Vanessa Hull – Food Outreach Support	
Latarah Poeta – Food Outreach Support	
Bailey Irving – Food Outreach Support	
Andrew Smyth – Kitchen Support	
Jeff Benedict – Kitchen Support	
Jackxon Sloan – Garden Support	
Angele Lapointe – Garden Support	
Katherine Loder – Kitchen Support	
Logan Cutter – Dishwasher	
Alwyn Murphy – Kitchen Support	
Khashayar Abbasabadi – Kitchen/Garden Support	
Hunter Rose – Garden Support	
Alexander Aultman – Garden Support	
Benjamin Souriol – Garden Support	
Harper Jeffrey – Garden Support	

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. However, we were able to slowly re-integrate our volunteers into our drop in meal programming as restrictions improved and with us now operating a dine-in function our volunteers have returned.



## Drop-In Meals



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. This continued throughout the year, and we are now operating the Sunday and Thursday meals as part of our regular drop in meals.



**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

#### YE 2021 Meal Stats- June 2021-July 2022

	Breakfast	Daily Avg	Lunch	Daily Avg	Dinner	Daily Avg	Total Meals Served
Jul-21	1800	90	2148	107	2803	175	6751
Aug-21	1400	70	1915	96	2932	183	6247
Sep-21	1721	86	2670	134	3810	238	8201
Oct-21	1689	84	2712	136	3847	240	8248
Nov-21	1120	56	1771	89	2300	144	5191
Dec-21	1000	50	1721	86	2325	145	5046
Jan-22	1124	56	2467	123	2814	176	6405
Feb-22	1028	51	2409	120	2800	175	6237
Mar-22	1638	82	2685	134	3814	238	8137
Apr-22	1368	68	2350	118	3810	238	7528
May-22	2814	141	3114	156	4100	256	10028
Jun-22	2500	125	2945	147	4240	265	9685
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,202</b>		<b>28,907</b>		<b>39,595</b>		<b>87,704.00</b>
2021 Total	17,200		25,906		37,181		<b>80,180</b>

## Food Rescue

## Incoming

Our Food Rescue Program has grown tremendously in the past year. Not only have we partnered with more stores, but we have also connected further with the partnerships we previously established. We currently receive food donations from the following stores:

- FreshCo
- Independent
- Mike and Lori's No Frills
- Jeff and Tanis' No Frills
- Sobeys
- Giant Tiger (Lakeshore)
- Giant Tiger (Algonquin)
- Orchards Fresh Food Market
- Shoppers Drug Mart (Cassells)
- Shoppers Drug Mart (Josephine)
- A&W (Sturgeon Falls)
- ERB Transport
- KFC (Algonquin)
- Cobs Bakery



## Outgoing

With an increase of food rescue coming in, we have also been able to increase our level of distribution to other agencies in our community as well as surrounding communities. This program is unique in that the volume of food we receive allows us to help our clients and other populations. As of now, these are the places we distribute Food Rescue to;

- Mattawa Food Bank
- St. John's Church
- Salvation Army
- Hospice
- St. Brice's Church
- True Self
- Hope Awaits
- Powassan Food Bank
- Bonfield Food Bank
- Callander Food Bank
- Transition House
- Aids Committee
- Crisis Centre
- Lakeshore Missionary

## Statistics

This year, we rescued approximately 200,000 pounds (about 90,718.4 kg) of food. Our partnerships are continuously growing, which allows us to advance in all our programs. It not only allows us to feed the folks coming into our kitchen, but also individuals frequenting other agencies or food banks in

North Bay and surrounding communities. Our Outreach Program also relies on the Food Rescue we are receiving. Supporting each other through programs allows us to save more money and divert food waste in a more efficient manner.

The partnerships we are forming with community grocery stores through this program help us to better serve our community. The connections we have established are always growing and the grocery stores are constantly looking for more ways they can support us. The Food Rescue Program is a perfect example of our community coming together to help each other make a difference. If we can continue to grow these connections and partnerships, the program will benefit and gain further efficiency.

<b>Food Rescue Incoming</b>	<b>Total Lbs</b>	<b>Food Rescue Outgoing</b>	<b>Total Lbs</b>
FreshCo	15,543.00	Mattawa Food Bank	4219.00
Giant Tiger - Algonquin	7,344.50	Open Arms (St. Johns)	2820.00
Giant Tiger - Lakeshore	18,766.30	Salvation Army	3660.00
Independent	46,952.00	Hope Awaits	2380.50
NoFrills - Jeff and Tanis	39,118.00	ACNBA	1396.50
NoFrills - Mike and Lori	62,387.00	Hospice	432.00
Orchards	35,066.50	Lakeshore Missionary	360.00
Sobeys	28,650.00	Justine	323.00
Shoppers - Cassells	3,573.70	Callander Food Bank	160.00
A&W Sturgeon Falls	3,503.00	St. Andrews	217.50
KFC	2,426.00		
Cobbs	7,695.00		
<b>Total</b>	<b>198,425.00</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,968.50</b>

## Food Outreach



2022 was a busy year for the Outreach team. Food demands continue to rise, and the team worked diligently to meet the need. To keep up with the increase in numbers, we hired two more full time staff, to bring the team to 5 members.

On a busy week, on average, there are about 800 meals going out Outreach doors. The following list is a breakdown of where the meals are distributed:

Meals Distributed	Weekly Totals
OutLoud	60
North Shore Senior Apartments	18
Edgewater Apartments	45
Sturgeon Falls Alliance Centre	150
West Nipissing Health Centre	150
Mattawa Food Bank	24
Golden Age	40
Local Deliveries	80
Total	567

This does not take into account the daily community walk ins, as well as the front line workers who stop by to grab food boxes for their clients. On average, there is about 8 orders or community walk-ins every day. Each food bag is put together with a minimum of 4 meals per person, plus available pantry items we have in at the time.

## Agencies Served

- Canadian Mental Health Association
- True Self Victim Services
- Community Counselling Centre
- Metis Nation
- Indigenous Friendship Centre
- Community Living
- OPP Crisis
- Mobile EMS

## Community Garden



2022 was the twelfth consecutive operating season for The Gathering Place (TGP) Community Garden. The garden property continues to be leased from the City of North Bay on an annual basis. In order to protect and plan for the garden over the long term, interest continues in either purchasing the property, or other solutions, like having it re-zoned. This was the third year of operating during the waning Covid-19 pandemic, which saw our garden reopen to the public. Our community garden's objectives continue to fit within TGP's Vision and Values

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

Consistent with this vision, our community garden has always existed to fulfill these 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 & the People

- TGP Garden operated for 7 months in 2021 (April 11 through October 28): Monday thru Friday, (and Saturdays during July and August), usually from 8:30am to 4pm.



### Staffing



- The garden was staffed by 1 f/t manager and 4 garden assistants. Canada Summer Jobs, the Indigenous Friendship Centre (IFC) and the Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO) helped fund these opportunities. It was a good season from a staffing and teamwork perspective.

## **Volunteerism**

- With Covid restrictions softening, numerous volunteer groups visited the garden. Classes from École Algonquin visited the garden in spring and fall assisting once again with significant work, while learning by doing. Our standard waiver was completed by the school administration and filed.
- Other volunteers visited the garden from Community Living, North Bay Regional Health Centre, Women10, the Indigenous Friendship Centre, and Nipissing University.

## **Programs and Partnerships**

- Our partnership with the Children's Aid Society changed this year due to the scheduled construction at the CAS Beauchamp Community Hub, which will eventually see their garden move to a different location onsite. For this reason and the lack of summer school at the site, it was decided to only operate a spring garden. TGP staff led group sessions, providing equipment and supplies to sow seedlings indoors, some of which were transplanted to their garden boxes.
- The Health Unit and MNO delivered a one-day Youth Leadership Day at the garden, involving garden tours, and eco-art workshops.
- In August, the "Clean, Green, Beautiful" campaign shot a video segment at the garden, interviewing the Garden Manager about the garden's purpose, programming and benefits to the community. The full CGB video is still being edited.
- A Nipissing University faculty member approached the Garden Manager to deliver three classes on site as part of their World Agriculture unit. The students were briefed and debriefed during each half day session, when they successfully assisted in tending the garden. A culminating garden design project was presented at NUSU in the autumn.



## **Food Production**

Excepting a wet spring, 2022 was generally a good growing year, with a balance of sunshine and rain. Through methods of succession and inter planting, our plots and boxes this year were again used intensively. Every garden season has its ups and downs. This year was the best apple crop in years, but most of our large tomatoes got blight (bacterial speck) and had to be disposed of.

- New coverings were purchased from Shelter Logic this year for our two greenhouses, which worked well all season.