

# Grandview Woodland Food Connection Year End Report

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# Introduction

The Grandview Woodland Food Connection (GWFC) is pleased to present this report highlighting our food security achievements to date and future directions. This report will show that Britannia Community Centre is far richer for hosting the GWFC. The enormous energy and passion that people have around food security has provided the GWFC many wonderful opportunities to create projects that have engaged hundreds of community members and built new and creative partnerships that will last long into the future.

Britannia has identified food security as an important area of work. Britannia recognizes - like affordable housing and accessible daycare - that healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate, and sustainably produced food is a basic human right for all community members. Especially in our current recession, with on-going cuts to our social safety net, with the growing threat of climate change, and the increasing health impacts of poor quality food, the work of community food security is ever more important.

We know that Grandview Woodlands has high rates of poverty despite growing affluence. A 2007 B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority survey of 26 communities across B.C ranked Grandview Woodland as having the highest rate of self reported food insecurity, at 21.9% of the population. In response, the GWFC is working to address community member's food security needs through a broad community development approach and diversity of initiatives. These include community gardening, community potlucks, nutrition and cooking workshops, food festivals, sharing of knowledge and resources, and supporting leadership development which are all helping to improve the long term health in our community.

This approach meets the first key goal and direction in Britannia's 2008 – 2013 strategic plan – ***DIRECT WORK AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT***. The GWFC's work is firmly grounded in a way that addresses issues identified by the community, is inclusive, collaborative, action-oriented, and builds upon the community's skills and strengths. Many of our projects are hands-on and empowering, providing new





skills and knowledge which are the foundation of community capacity building.

We also see that the GWFC's very successful projects are the result of diverse community involvement and collaboration. Project partnering is a vital part of community development and addresses Britannia's second goal – **PARTNERSHIP WORK**. This success is in part, due to the flexibility and adaptability within the GWFC to build a program that addresses a range of community needs not only within Britannia but also in the wider community. We have also seen increasing success connecting with many harder to reach community members.

Britannia Community Centre is showing itself as a leader by supporting the Grandview Woodland Food Connection in building a program that is moving beyond basic food provision and charity to a community capacity building model. Already, over the course of the past 20 months, the achievements of the GWFC have contributed to improving community member's lives in many ways by:

- **taking steps towards the long-term goal of building a just and sustainable food system for all in Grandview Woodlands and ensuring that everyone has access to healthy, affordable, and personally acceptable food**
- **building connections among diverse members of the community that reduce barriers that can contribute to social isolation**
- **strengthening the social fabric of the community by providing creative opportunities to participate in community life in an empowering, accessible way**
- **supporting individual skill building through hands-on food projects while also building knowledge and awareness of food issues and local food resources**
- **providing a venue where community members are encouraged to contribute and share existing skills and knowledge**
- **mentoring volunteer and leadership development through collaborative and communicative role modeling**

# Grandview Woodland Food Connection History

The Grandview Woodland Food Connection is a neighbourhood organization. The seed of the organization was planted at the first Stone Soup Festival back in 1995 where food security awareness in the community began. Finally in 2004, following a Britannia held Community Food Forum, the need for a community food organizer was identified and the Grandview Woodland Food Connection came to life.

The Grandview Woodland Food Connection developed its mission as:

***Supporting and promoting an accessible, just, and sustainable food system for Grandview Woodland and which seeks to address social concerns of isolation, health, and economic well-being. The GWFC works to build community capacity through sustainable leadership development and support around grassroots initiatives to address food security issues***

The GWFC is now firmly rooted in Britannia Community Centre and fortunate to have Britannia as a host organization in providing a range of supports and resources. The GWFC operates under the responsibility and leadership of the Britannia Arts and Culture Coordinator. and is supported by an active advisory committee. In many ways, the GWFC represents Britannia in all its food and community development work.

The Advisory Committee received their first grant for the Connecting the Dots Project. This project worked to determine the food related needs and resources of the community through a community food mapping process. The result was a comprehensive and important community food map used by community members as a tool for accessing their food security needs. The map was also translated into Spanish.

In 2008, the Committee secured a second grant through Vancouver Coastal Health's Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) to hire a part time community organizer for the GWFC. This grant and a subsequent extension, along with along with a Healthy Living Alliance grant, currently provides for core funding until spring 2011, providing a degree of stability



and time to develop a longer-term sustainability plan.

Four principal activity areas define the scope of work of the GWFC. These are summarized in this report.

- 1. Networking that Establishes Lasting Relationships and Partnerships**
- 2. Increasing Opportunities for Community Members to Engage in Food Projects**
- 3. Education that Builds Knowledge about Food Issues**
- 4. Growing into the Future**

# Networking that Establishes Lasting Relationships and Partnerships.

The GWFC is creating a broad network of residents and community groups to share information and build relationships. As the network grows so too does the success of the various food initiatives undertaken. We can more effectively share resources and skills, learn about our community, build social capital, better solve problems, and get the work done.

Working with diverse communities fosters increased socio-economic and cultural inclusion. This means reaching out to residents who experience challenges to participating in community life, working in partnerships to reducing barriers to participation, and providing empowering and creative opportunities for them to access food security initiatives. This very important relationship building also helps to identify and communicate needs from a diversity of perspectives.

Networking is essential in meeting Britannia's principals of ***collaboration, communication, effectiveness, equity, facilitation, inclusion, involvement, neighbourliness, quality, responsibility, and sustainability.***

- **Building an Engaged Food Network**

The network currently has 470 members including residents, service providers, and housing organizations. Communication within the network is done through the monthly GWFC E-newsletter and BLOG which are widely regarded as valuable resources in the community pulling together the many food related community events, workshops, jobs, volunteer opportunities, article of interests and more.

- **Building Community Partnerships**

Relationship building and networking are shaping strong partnerships that encourage and enable people and organizations to work together to address community food security, ensure broad participation, and foster stronger connections between Britannia and the community.





Through outreach, community presentations, attending dozens of community meetings, project collaboration, and active support of other groups, the GWFC is actively promoting the values and principals of Britannia Community Centre. The GWFC is working within multiple levels, including grassroots planning with community based groups on through to municipal and regional agencies helping to support and assist in policy development. The GWFC has worked with 33 groups including:

- **BC Housing**
- **Canadian Mental Health Association**
- **Kiwassa Neighbourhood House**
- **Little Mountain Neighbourhood House**
- **Reach Community Health Centre**
- **Multicultural Family Centre**
- **Lion's Den Seniors Centre**
- **Haley Place Women's Housing**
- **Canadian El Salvador Action Network**
- **Vancouver Community Agriculture Network**
- **Environmental Youth Alliance**
- **Vancouver Native Health**
- **Quest**
- **Food Bank – Fresh Choice Kitchens**
- **Grandview Woodlands Mental Health Team**
- **Disabled Independent Gardeners Association**
- **Britannia Library**
- **Britannia Latin American Youth Project**
- **Britannia Art Gallery**
- **Canadian Diabetes Association**
- **Promoting Action Together Towards Health (PATH)**
- **City of Vancouver**
- **Vancouver Fruit Tree Project**



*“The author talks that were held in the library during the 2009 Stone Soup Festival were, by far, our best attended adult programs. Fun and informative programs about food security topics are clearly something that this community values. Ian has helped us broaden food literacy in our library.” - Kate Lowe Librarian, Britannia Branch*



- **Slow Food Vancouver**
  - **City of Vancouver Cold Weather Shelter Program**
  - **Roundhouse Community Centre**
  - **Hastings Community Centre**
  - **Promoting Healthy Options on the Drive (PHOOD)**
  - **Healthy Living Alliance**
  - **Vancouver Food Policy Council**
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- **Building a Community Food Resource Data and Inventory Base**



The GWFC is filling a critical gap as a community connector helping groups and individuals access and share important information, supports, and resources through a food resource database and resource library.

The GWFC has connected with 147 groups in the neighbourhood and city, who make up the GWFC Resource Data Base. The list includes housing providers, neighbourhood houses, mental health services, community centres, multicultural organizations, seniors centres, youth groups, childcare programs, non profit food related groups, churches, emergency food provision agencies, community kitchen groups, community garden groups, community artists, community nutritionists, government organizations, Aboriginal groups, business associations, academic institutions, and immigrant services.

Approximately 100 community members have contacted the GWFC for information.





- **Community Potlucks**

Informal community potlucks embrace the principal of neighbourliness and are open to the entire community. Many lower income and some in off the street come to access free food, but perhaps most important, are the important social connections among strangers that are made and providing a relaxed space to talk about food issues in the community.

***Building trust takes time. The GWFC has run a couple of food workshops with residents in BC Housing who have mental health concerns. These residents tend to live more isolated lives and are less comfortable in unfamiliar public spaces so it was thrilling to see three of these residents finally came to one of our potlucks. Kevin, who also has a serious interest in photography also volunteered to photo-document the GWFC's projects.***



# Increasing Opportunities for Community Members to Engage in Capacity Building

The GWFC is increasing opportunities for residents to participate in a range of food security initiatives such as canning and food preserving workshops, community gardening, and cooking programs. These initiatives focus on skill, leadership, and relationship building and are important projects that are increasing the community resident's knowledge of and ability to access, grow, cook, and eat healthy low cost food.

The focus is on creating learning opportunities that are hands-on, engaging, support lifestyle changes, and are empowering for the individual. Particular effort is made to reduce potential barriers to participation and reach out to isolated residents. This includes holding workshops at or near where people live, providing free or very low cost workshops, translating publicity materials into multiple languages, ensuring representation in planning processes, creating projects of special appeal to various cultures, and providing easy and fun ways of participating.

- **Community Gardening**

- A. Pandora Park Community Garden**

**Partners:** GWFC, Vancouver Community Agriculture Network, Disabled Independent Gardeners Association, Vancouver Native Health, Environmental Youth Alliance, MLA Shane Simpson Constituency Office, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House

The Pandora Park Community Garden is very exciting and one of the GWFC's largest projects. Located in a low income, medium density neighbourhood, the 10,000 sq ft community garden is situated in a gorgeous setting with spectacular views of the mountains. 66 plots are allocated with another 40 people on the waitlist. This project was endorsed by 20 community groups and has strived to include a diversity of community members and is providing 4 First Nations garden plots, 6 community group plots, and 4 wheelchair accessible plots.

This garden will now provide opportunities for the GWFC to organize organic gardening and other community gardening workshops for the Grandview



***“Ian’s contribution and commitment to the Pandora Park Community Garden can’t be overstated - it would not have happened without him. From the beginning, he has given his expertise respectfully not only in gardening, but in organizing processes, inclusiveness, building community and constructive listening, to name a few.” -Carol Wood***



Woodland North community. A small communal space will feature a small fruit tree orchard, composting area, and beehive. Members of the garden, along with the GWFC are also organizing a design competition for the building of the garden shed, creating a fun and unique opportunity for community engagement. BCIT architecture student mentors will be available to help community members submit design ideas.



***Krista is a young single mother. When she approached Kiwassa, who in turn approached GWFC to help Krista set up a community garden in Pandora Park, GWFC jumped on the opportunity. Krista had no experience with setting up a garden and was shy to take leadership but together, along with her 4 year old daughter, we leafleted the surrounding apartments and homes and organized the first Pandora Park meeting. The garden now has over 100 interested gardeners and Krista is a Pandora Park Community Garden Board Director.***

## **B. Kiwassa Youth Garden**

**Partners:** GWFC, BC Housing, Environmental Youth Alliance, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, City of Vancouver Green Streets

This small garden of 7 plots is located next to Chimo Terrace, A BC Housing building on Wall St. and is a part of the City of Vancouver Green Streets program upon which land the garden sits. Previously it was a vacant site littered with garbage but is now a very special garden for low-income children to learn about and grow their own food. Kiwassa Neighbourhood House runs the children's garden program through their Chimo childcare program.



## **C. Grandview Terrace Garden**

**Partners:** GWFC, BC Housing, Canadian Mental Health Association



The new patio garden that has been built at this BC Housing site is run as a food growing program by the Canadian Mental Health Association for people living in the building with mental illness. Approximately 10 participants are involved in this program. A second larger garden at Grandview Terrace will see 12 new garden plots built this coming spring to serve families.

***Bryan has been an amazing volunteer. He signed up as a Britannia volunteer with an interest in food. He is now working with GWFC and first helped build the Kiwassa Youth Garden at Chimo Terrace. We had to clear a lot of debris and brush from the area. Bryan helped for many hours, then helped another day to spread an enormous pile of compost. Enjoying the physical labour, Bryan is also a keen volunteer with the Pandora Park project and though he does not live near the park nor plans to have a garden plot, he is a full member of the construction committee.***



## • Food Workshops

**Partners:** GWFC, BC Housing, Haley Place Social Housing, Hastings Community Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association, Lion's Den Seniors Centre, Multicultural Family Centre, Britannia Latin American Youth Project, Healthy Planet Kitchens, Britannia Art Gallery

The Grandview Woodland Food Connection has expanded the cooking program at Britannia and organized 14 basic food preparation and preserving workshops building skills toward improved dietary choices, food literacy, and proficiency in food preparation. These workshops have proven to be very successful and mostly always full. Equally exciting are the number of new volunteers who are keen to help teach cooking workshops both at Britannia and in the community. With this increasing capacity the GWFC is planning many more food workshops in the coming year.



These workshops are demonstrating accessibility in addressing food security in many ways: the workshops require limited time commitment; they are readily organized in a range of settings, using kitchens out in the community; workshops can concentrate on locally available and seasonal food that may provide affordable food choices; can be designed to teach culturally appropriate food preparation, drawing on existing food preserving knowledge in the community; and are providing a venue for leadership development and training for sustainability.

Post workshop evaluations have confirmed their success and generated interest for more, including for a wider variety of food preparing workshops.

### **A. Food Preserving**

Food preservation is becoming a lost art, that was, in the past, an important means to ensure food security through the winter months. Today, food preservation, including canning and fermentation knowledge is being revived and can provide multiple opportunities to lower food costs and improve nutrition.

To date, the GWFC has organized:

- 12 food preserving workshops including sauerkraut, kimchee, and canning. 5 were held as part of Britannia Sat Series programming and 7 no cost workshops held in the community.
- Engaged 99 participants, many of whom identify as low income.

### **B. Cooking workshops**

Interest in cooking classes is also very high and we plan to expand this program engaging new volunteers interested in teaching cooking classes in the new year.

- Breadmaking and Healthy Eating on a Tight Budget as part of the





Stone Soup Do-It- Yourself Day. 23 participants.

- Cooking with Care Workshops – Lunch Box, Vegetarian Protein Sources, Bulking on a Budget, and Sauerkraut scheduled
- **Buen Provecho!**

**Partners:** GWFC, Multicultural Family Centre, Britannia Art Gallery, Britannia Latin American Project

Buen Provecho! brought newcomer Latin American youth with Latin American elders in a mutual learning about their traditional foods. Elders from the Multicultural Family Centre Latin American Seniors group were invited to share and teach their favorite food recipes and food stories as part of a regular Latin American youth cooking group. Recipes and stories were published in a cookbook and translated into English and Spanish.

Additional funds were accessed to create a photo-documentation of Buen Provecho! and exhibited in the Britannia Art Gallery exhibition that was held in conjunction with Stone Soup 2009.

Buen Provecho! was considered a very successful project and received rave reviews from all participants and the public. The enormous success of the project was evident in the high level of engagement of both the 14 youth and 11 elders who participated in the project.



*“Working with Ian on Buen Provecho! has been a great eye opener for the Latin American Youth in learning about food security through volunteering, storytelling, and intergenerational cooking. The project helped bridge the gap between the youth and the seniors and it was huge success.” - Anntuaneth Figuero*

*The first time the youth and the elders in the Buen Provecho! Project met each other was a special event. We met on a Sat afternoon. The youth brought and prepared the food. It was very moving to see how very respectful the youth were to the elders. Though the two groups were strangers, all 12 of the youth greeted all the elders, sat and talked with them, and served the elders their food. We played games and sang songs. These youth had a special respect for their elders and some talked much missed their grandparents who they had left behind in their home countries.*

# Education that Builds Knowledge about Food Issues

Knowledge and interest about local food security is growing and the GWFC is filling a previous gap in the community by helping to create a myriad of new educational opportunities in food security. Increasingly, a food security focus that provides for affordable, quality, dignified food, and capacity building aspects is being imbedded into new and existing community programs. Food Security is now a prominent issue in our community.

The GWFC is helping support Britannia's goal of building Britannia as *“a centre for social action and a place where community members come together to discuss and solve local and neighbourhood issues and to celebrate successes”*.

The GWFC is supporting community education in the following ways:

- **E-newsletter and Blog**

The GWFC serves as an important information hub, providing food and project information for the community through its monthly E-newsletter and Blog updates.

- **Stone Soup Spring Festival**

The Stone Soup Festival is one of Britannia's most loved celebrations in the community. Stone Soup 2009 was recognized as one of the best ever with greater focus on expanding educational programming as well as building inclusion by engaging community members who do not normally attend.

Showcasing innovative projects and engaging diverse community members in this event recognizes the enormous amount of untapped interest, skills, and resources that exist to be shared with the wider public. The GWFC is working to ensure that hard to reach communities are involved in Stone Soup and in a way that honors the contributions and knowledge of those communities. In 2009, Stone Soup saw:





- 24 **community tables**, some new to Stone Soup, who provided food resources and information
- 12 **artists** who were selected because they were working closely with the theme of recycled materials, environmental issues and food
- **Special presentations** with both a food and arts focus including Food Security for the Faint of Heart, Backyard Chickens, UBC Farm, Miscellaneous Productions, the Buen Provecho! gallery exhibit and book launch, the Lost and Found Puppet Co., and the CoZy Project
- **Fiesta de las Madres**, co-organized with the Multicultural Family Centre, brought a new community, many of whom are Latin American newcomers to Canada, to Stone Soup as well as introducing Stone Soup participants to the Latin American culture. The GWFC was able to help organize feeding of over 500 people at the fiesta.



### • **Stone Soup Fall Gathering**

Stone Soup expanded this past fall and was organized as an educational event. This gathering coincided with World Food Day and was created in conjunction with the citywide Sustenance: Feasting on Art and Culture Festival centered at the Roundhouse Community Centre.

- **DIY Food Day** focused on cooking workshops including breadmaking, canning, fermentation, and cooking on a tight budget. All the workshops were full with 46 people participating.
- **Food Justice Forum** was a co-organized with PHOOD (Promoting Healthy Options on the Drive) to address issues of accessibility and the cost of food. Two speakers, an organic farmer and food justice advocate spoke to over 50 people in the LRC.
- **Thanksgiving Community Potluck** saw our largest gathering yet with 30 community members attending.







- **Politics of Food Film Festival** was held over two days in the Britannia High School Auditorium. 20 films were screened on a range of topics including farm worker rights, nutrition, urban agriculture, and globalization. Approximately 500 people attended and the film festival was given rave reviews from audience members.
- **Author Talk and Book Launch** with Dania Matiation on her new book “Food Swings: A Users Guide to Dealing with the Call of Food” was held in the library.
- **Promoting Healthy Options on the Drive (PHOOD)**

**Partners:** GWFC, Vancouver Coastal Health, Reach Health Clinic

PHOOD came together to address the increasing numbers of fast food outlets are a growing health concern, particularly for youth. PHOOD organized meetings with the owners to push for healthy food options, held a fast food mapping exercise at the Commercial Drive Car Free Day, and organized the Stone Soup Food Justice Forum. PHOOD is currently planning a series of community dialogues to build awareness around healthy food options.

- **Corn Festival**

**Partners:** GWFC, Canadian El Salvador Action Network

The Corn Festival has been an annual event in the Vancouver Latin American community for many years. The GWFC helped to facilitate bringing this event to Britannia for the first time with the expressed intent on reaching out to non-Latin American community members and of linking between north and the south countries the various food security issues related to corn. The festival with its music, dancing, food vendors, and educational tables was very successful and built new relationships between Britannia and the Spanish speaking community.





- **Britannia School Food Security / Aquaponics Project**

**Partners:** GWFC, Britannia High School

Opportunities to work with the Britannia schools to develop food security programs within the school curriculum and learning are now opening up. Recently, the GWFC prepared a food security programs outline to help Britannia schools move ahead in this area. A new aquaponics project as part of the Britannia Water Fest is involving 9 high school students in research projects and is also providing an opportunity to talk about expanding school food security programming.

- **Garden Tour and Potluck Discussion**

**Partners:** GWFC, Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, Vancouver Native Health

The GWFC helped organize an East Vancouver community garden tour and potluck discussion as part of an Enhancing Physical Activity grant. This project focused on engaging new immigrant and Aboriginal community members with a focus on exploring barriers to participation for these communities. 15 community members participated in this event.

- **Britannia Walking Maps**

**Partners:** GWFC, PATH (Promoting Action Together Towards Health), Britannia Adult Recreation, Canadian Diabetes Association

The Britannia Walking Map Launch event included a community art walk and health fair. The event responded to an urgent need to help address increasing levels of obesity, diabetes, and other forms of chronic disease in our community by supporting walking. The event linked healthy activity and healthy eating.

Adults 35 - 55 yrs were targeted and 50 people participated in the actual

# Growing into the Future

The Grandview Woodland Food Connection continues to build its capacity as an organization, try innovative projects, expand our profile in the community, and build a network. It feels as if we have so much growing to do. But as this report has shown, the GWFC has achieved much. We also see terrific opportunities to grow programs and to address anti-poverty in new and creative ways that will improve the overall health of the community through a more integrated approach.

In particular, the GWFC is now working to align its program with the Vancouver Food Policy Council's New City Market and Neighbourhood Food Precincts proposal embraced by the current City Council and food security networks around the city. This proposal would see Britannia becoming an integrated food hub in the neighbourhood, inclusive of the full continuum of food security programs from basic food provision like the Britannia Cap-C program to skill building initiatives like community kitchens, on-site food gardening, composting, greenhouses, teaching through the Britannia school, etc., through to value added social enterprise opportunities in food processing and distribution, food markets, and other food amenities that could also provide new revenue generation. Such integration could also improve coordination and food cost savings within current childcare, seniors, youth, recreation and all programming where healthy eating becomes an even greater focus.

It is apparent that organizing around food is a powerful approach to community building. Food is a universal right and awareness about healthy eating, food justice, and environmental issues is driving a huge movement that is pushing for expanded urban agriculture along with new and innovative local responses that can provide for healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods. We are now seeing that the right to an accessible and dignified food system is increasingly embedded in everyday language and institutional thinking as people everywhere wake up to the importance of taking care of our food system and our vulnerable community members. It is certainly an exciting and energetic time to be working in food security.





The Grandview Woodland Food Connection is proving to be a successful organization that is receiving considerable praise for its work, thanks in part to the tremendous support that is provided by Britannia. With its strong leadership, a competent advisory committee, its growing base of volunteers, its collaborative projects that are engaging diverse community members, with projects that respond to a clear need in the community, and that reflect community values and culture, the GWFC, is in a very strong position to see even greater success in the future.

