



**FRESH  
ROOTS**

**IMPACT REPORT  
2021**





# Letter from the ED & Board

It's always interesting to decide what factoids and numbers we share in this report to convey the work we do and why it matters. The impact beyond the metrics is what we want you to feel and appreciate. The true effects of Fresh Roots' work are not found in the number of participants or the number of carrots we grow and sell—they are felt in the lasting experiences and stories of learning that our kids, youth and summer staff carry with them for life.

These experiences turn into conversations with their peers and parents, and impact their choices at the grocery store, their career path, or how they engage in their communities. We tell these stories on our website's blog, often in the voices of the youth themselves as they reflect on what they have learned and value most during their participation in our programs. They speak of their growth in confidence and the ableness they now recognize in themselves.

Since joining Fresh Roots in late 2019, I have come to understand that—at its core—Fresh Roots is about creating opportunities for kids to develop personal agency, and build enduring relationships with people, places and food. We have learned the most important ingredient for growth and personal development is through ongoing, trust-based engagement where youth reflect on their own learning.

We are currently focused on adjusting programs to cultivate continuing relationships between students and teachers. One example is our Year on the Farm program, where classes visit a Fresh Roots schoolyard farm once a month throughout the school year, experiencing all seasons. Another example is our Camp Counselor in Training program, which we piloted in 2021. We invited summer SOYL youth participants to apply to participate in a one week training and camp counselor work experience program. As we head into summer 2022, we are now hiring two of these trainees to be part of our summer camp team!

This same principle holds true for how we work internally with our staff team as well as our many partners. We have invested time and resources into ensuring Fresh Roots is a healthy and diverse workplace where employees are valued and can

stretch and grow. We are proud to report we had 13 summer employees return in 2021. This included two SOYL mentors who moved into facilitator roles and three SOYL alumni who took on junior positions.

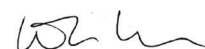
As we look ahead to 2022 and beyond, our team is stronger than ever, and focused on maximizing programming opportunities and quality of engagement on the sites we steward. We continue to strengthen and deepen relationships with community partners, including school districts and neighbourhood houses, as we find ways to better understand, reflect and support the diverse voices in the communities we serve. To this end, we continue to work on increasing our own cultural competency. Our board of directors and staff team are currently in a process led by an external consultant aimed at exploring how Fresh Roots can better foster an anti-oppression and anti-racist lens throughout our work internally and externally within community. We know we cannot work to evolve food and education systems without also addressing racism, discrimination and systemic barriers that disproportionately impact people of colour and Indigenous populations.

The vision of an organization is often seen as an end goal, a time when the work we do is no longer needed by our community. But there will always be a need for people to make connections, to build relationships, to teach and learn, and to grow and share food. Like the cycle of seasons we are so tied to in farming, the work of Fresh Roots goes on, and like the roots of the plants we tend, only deepens from season to season and year to year.

Alexa Pitoulis  
Executive Director



Matt Breech  
Board Chair  
on behalf of the  
Fresh Roots Board of  
Directors (Scott, Tracy,  
Heather and Karn)



# Our Learning Goals

The core of our work is fostering healthy relationships with food, with land and waters, and with community, in our participants and ourselves. Our learning goals all support those essential relationships. As in everything, these relationships are interconnected and reflect one another!

## To have a healthy relationship with food...

**We make informed food choices, make healthy delicious food, and become active food citizens. That might look like:**

- Understanding that there is no one “right” way to eat and that different people have different needs.
- Planning and preparing a delicious meal that meets the needs of my community.
- Seeing the barriers to accessing nutritious and culturally appropriate foods that exist in my community and beyond, and working with others to overcome those barriers.

## To have a healthy relationship with land and waters...

**We acknowledge that land and waters support us, we Support land and waters, and honor Indigenous relationships to land and water. That might look like:**

- Caring for the farm by planting, tending to, or harvesting foods, or doing other farm chores.
- Developing and expressing gratitude to the Indigenous peoples, of Canada, and around the world, who have built strong, healthy relationships with land and waters since time immemorial.
- Learning from local Elders and Knowledge Keepers about how we can build good relationships with land.
- Keeping the water, air, and soil clean and healthy for the wellbeing of the plants and animals on the farm.

## To have a healthy relationship with Community...

**We feel the power of community, know that people make our food, and celebrate food and culture. That might look like:**

- Knowing that while my individual actions are important, that large-scale change requires large-scale solutions.
- Understanding that the food system is powered by people, and that many of these people face low wages and poor working conditions.
- Exploring delicious foods that people eat in my own and other cultures, and showing respect when trying new things.

# OUR IMPACT

**10+ acres**  
Land Stewarded

**42,060**  
Nutritious Meals Served  
\*including LunchLAB Feeding Programs

**23,282**  
Learning Hours

**180+**  
Crop Varieties

**1,444**  
Weekly CSA Veggie Box  
Shares Produced

**\$75,184**  
Schoolyard Grown Produce  
Sold to Community





## Our Vision

Our vision is Good Food for All, which is realized when youth have the skills, capacity, and will to act as food citizens and land stewards, to grow and share healthy food for themselves, their families, and the planet.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to cultivate educational farms and programs where students dig in to meaningful connections with land, food, and each other, inspiring communities to build just food systems.

## Why We Do It

We create and cultivate spaces where youth can be outside, learn and share new skills, connect with peers and adult role models, and spend time away from screens. Young people who have access to ample quantities of nutritious food are healthier and better able to learn.

The benefits to youth of getting their hands dirty growing, preparing and sharing food are countless and powerful. Providing space for youth to be themselves, learn, and grow builds confidence, resilience, a sense of place and justice, and social connection growing food for citizens of today and tomorrow.

“

SOYL made me realize that whatever I end up doing, I need to have some way of connecting to the Earth and the land we are coming from—you can't really accomplish any sort of justice without including ecosystems, because everything is connected.

— SOYL Youth 2021, Vancouver

“

With the state of the world today, specifically climate change, we need to find ways to be resourceful and knowledgeable of our food sources. Students need to learn how to treat our earth so that we may reap the rewards of its gifts. This program inspires students to learn and enjoy all aspects of where their food comes from and the delight of tasting it.

— Gaye Dalla-Zanna, Grade 7 Teacher, Farm Observers Program

“

We loved picking up our veggies every week through the CSA Veggie Box program. The Fresh Roots team at the Italian Cultural Centre market were always friendly, fun to talk with and super knowledgeable. The diversity of produce was amazing and increases every year!

— CSA Veggie Box Member, 2021

“

...Everybody has days where they're good and bad. And everybody has days with less work and more work. So it's kind of a work experience, and also a community experience in the way that everybody eventually helps each other.

— Cameron Zahn, SOYL Participant Delta, Age 16





# PROGRAMS

## Good Food

As we tackled year two of the COVID-19 pandemic, our community continued to look to Fresh Roots to provide local, sustainable and diverse alternatives to traditional grocery store produce offerings. This included over 180 crop varieties grown on 10 plus acres of land located in three school districts!

For the second year in a row, we hosted community pop-up markets with our partners at Suwa'lkh School in Coquitlam, Delta Farm Roots Mini School in Delta and the Italian Cultural Centre in East Vancouver. Both the Vancouver and Delta farms offered CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Veggie Boxes for a total of 1,444 individual shares produced throughout the growing season. At Norquay Park—aka Fresh Roots HQ—new translated interpretive signage was added to the Sharing Garden, providing additional information about crops on offer. Neighbours helped themselves to herbs, berries and a variety of greens and tubers. And every Saturday throughout the summer, we continued selling our ultra-local produce all grown within 7km at the Riley Park Vancouver Farmers Market.

More SOYL youth than ever devoted their time to food production while developing pre-employment skills at the market and on the farms. They saw the full cycle of farm to table activities, all while earning a modest stipend for their work.

Our farm team worked hard across all four sites through unpredictable conditions, from heat waves to heavy rains to crop failure to theft. Through it all, we donated 1400lbs of produce to local neighbourhood houses and food security organizations.

## Farming Practices

Holistic land stewardship is at the heart of our growing philosophy. We view the schoolyard farms we steward as living ecosystems that are balanced and healthy as a result of management practices that support all life—right down to the microbes in the soil.

### Our practices are:

- Organic farming
- Low/No till
- Integrated pest management
- Culturally diverse crops
- Physical accessibility
- Education
- Biodiversity

**4 weekly community markets located in Vancouver, Coquitlam and Delta**



**280+ community market hours**

**77 CSA veggie box subscribers**



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# PROGRAMS

## Experiential Learning

2021 was truly a growth year for Experiential Learning! We used our learnings from 2020 to expand our all-outdoor, COVID-conscious programming. **Camp Fresh Roots** more than doubled the number of campers from 2020, and we expanded our program offerings at Suwa'lkh School in Coquitlam (Kwikwetlem). Our summer staff came from a wide range of backgrounds and brought diverse experiences to the team—we had staff from the neighbourhood, across Canada and as far away as Ecuador!

During our summer workshops, we visited **20 different day camps** across the city, bringing samples of farm veggies and engaging, hands-on activities to nearly **400 non-Fresh Roots campers**.

We were delighted to have local elementary classes visit the farm in the spring and fall. Having a field trip within walking distance of school was so important for students. For the 2021-2022 school year, we have expanded our popular year-round programs to include a five-visit **Farm Observers** program for grades 4-7, along with our eight-visit **A Year on the Farm** program for grades K-3.

2021 was also the launch of our Counsellor in Training (CIT) program. This program provides an opportunity for SOYL (Sustainable Opportunities for Youth Leadership) participants to further develop their leadership skills by working with kids, and sparking inspiration for potential careers in teaching. Together, seven SOYL youth contributed **188 hours** teaching

campers about urban agriculture, leading games and crafts and sharing their energy and compassion. Over half of the Counsellors in Training expressed interest in pursuing future jobs and experiences in education. This new program deepens the relationship between SOYL and Experiential Learning programs, and lays groundwork for youth's leadership skills.

Looking forward, we are working to not only expand but deepen our roots in the community. That means engaging kids and families from the neighbourhood, ensuring they feel welcome on the sometimes-hidden schoolyard farms. We'll do this through forming meaningful and lasting relationships with community centres and neighbourhood houses.

One of the most rewarding elements of experiential learning is seeing the impact of extended time on the farm. The confidence, pride, knowledge and leadership skills gained really shows that time on the farm is time well spent.



**60 Farm programs, including field Trips, field classes, and teacher-led farm visits**

**12,000 Learning hours**



**286 Camp Fresh Roots campers**







# PROGRAMS

## SUWA'LKH

Suwa'lkh ('New Beginnings' in the Hul'qumi'num language) School is an alternative educational program based on Indigenous ways of knowing. It's a very unique site, with a garden (the Suwa'lkh Medicine Garden), orchard and Healing Forest. In partnership with Suwa'lkh and School District 43, Fresh Roots aims to work with youth, staff and knowledge keepers to build community connections to the land. We do this by:

### The removal of invasive species:

Fresh Roots youth spend a lot of time removing Himalayan blackberries, Japanese knotweed, English ivy, Morning Glory, and English Holly from the school area. Once we have removed and disposed of these plants, we grow native plants in their place (including four medicines sacred to Indigenous people: Tobacco, Sage, Sweetgrass and Cedar).

### Having a native plant nursery

Native plants thrive in the protection of our nursery, and once they've grown strong enough, we reintroduce them to our forest: in 2021, we planted thimbleberry, Sitka spruce and dune willow to replace invasive species. We also share the native plants by giving them to field trip classes (who then transplant them into their school gardens) and by selling them on our website and at our weekly market.

### Hosting a market

This is our second year doing the Suwa'lkh school market, which happens weekly from May to October. Fresh Roots youth help to harvest the vegetables, set up the site and run the market (including acting as salespeople and cashiers).



### Healing Forest & Salmon Stream

When students need a break, they can take a walk through the Healing Forest and hear the birds chirping, water flowing through the stream and wind blowing through the trees. In the fall, they can even observe the salmon spawning.



### Smokey the Dog

Smokey is Suwa'lkh's PADS (Pacific Assistance Service Dogs ) dog. He is a therapy dog that supports the students, and he's a sucker for carrots, especially if they are fresh from the garden.



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# PROGRAMS

## Youth Empowerment

### SOYL (Sustainable Opportunities for Youth Leadership)

SOYL ran in all three schoolyard farm locations in 2022: Suwa'lkh School in Coquitlam, Farm Roots Mini School in Delta, and Vancouver Technical Secondary School in East Vancouver. Each farm site is unique, which allowed youth to explore different aspects of the food system and their community.

At Delta, we were lucky to have Nathan “Kaanaax Kuwoox” Wilson, Indigenous Educator and Cultural Enhancement Facilitator, visit the program to share his heritage, culture and knowledge through leading a variety of workshops including storytelling and long house building. In Vancouver, youth visited local urban beehives to learn about pollination.

Youth in Suwa'lkh removed invasive species from the 7-acre Healing forest, and created educational signage through a science communication workshop to encourage visitors to engage with the space. At all three sites, SOYL youth brought energy and enthusiasm to the farm and contributed to the community.

### Community Eats

After a year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to continue our Community Eats program in collaboration with LunchLAB and Growing Chefs. We hired 3 Chef Educators to lead youth in preparing twice weekly nutritious meals for their peers and community members, integrating ingredients grown on the schoolyard farms. Chef Educators also led youth in their annual canning social enterprise, canning jam and relish with branding designed by SOYL youth and sold alongside veggies at the market.

## Education

Our Leadership and Food Systems workshop series was delivered across sites. Facilitators brought their expertise and passions to expand workshop topics like:

Food Systems Mapping	Digital Storytelling
Anti-Oppression	Long House Building
Food Marketing	Diversity in Leadership
Food Literacy, Racial & Food Justice	Your Future and Job Prep
	Science Communication

Youth also engaged in critical conversations about where their food comes from and shared that knowledge with customers at market.

**65 youth (more participants than ever before)**



**9 facilitators led the program, 3 of whom were former SOYL program participants**

**4 junior positions were created, providing a new opportunity for former SOYL youth to continue growing and be employed by Fresh Roots**





# PROGRAMS

## LunchLAB

**OUR VISION:** To transform school food, transform food education and to use food as a catalyst for positive systemic change.

LunchLAB is an innovative, educational school meal program that normally has Chef Educators working in schools with kids and youth to safely help them grow, cook, and share meals with their peers, and to take home to their families. As the pandemic stretched through 2021, we adapted the program to continue engaging with students in schools as well as to support families facing food insecurity.

**In winter and spring of 2021** LunchLAB Chef Educator Natasha Sawyer supported students at Total Education High School. Working directly with the classroom teacher, Chef Tasha coordinated a menu plan and food supplies for the school. She then **Zoomed into the class once per week for two sessions each day.** Chef led the class in preparing a dish for them to eat and take home in addition to offering food literacy learnings throughout the program.

Although the program was unable to run in schools, we found another way to have LunchLAB Chef Educator TJ Conwi working to support families. Through winter 2021, **Chef TJ turned recovered food surplus into 1500+ nutritious meals** per week for several Vancouver Downtown Eastside organizations.

After a year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to continue our LunchLAB Community Eats program in collaboration with Growing Chefs. We hired three Chef Educators to lead SOYL youth participants in **preparing twice weekly nutritious**

**meals for their peers and community members throughout the 6-week summer program,** integrating ingredients grown on the schoolyard farms.

In October, **LunchLAB was back up and running at Total Education** and plans were underway for the program to re-start and grow at Lord Roberts Elementary School and beyond in 2022.



In 2021, the re-elected federal Liberal party included a commitment of \$1 billion over 5 years towards the creation of a national school food program in their election platform. December 16, 2021 was a historic moment for school food in Canada as the federal government released the mandate letters to members of the cabinet, marking the first-ever inclusion of a commitment to develop a National School Food Policy and work towards a national school nutritious meal program. In BC, there is multi partisan support for school food and BC Ministers of Education and Agriculture, Food and Fisheries have also been directed to 'create more local school meal programs in partnership with school districts.'



**— BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food**



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# DONORS

## Grants and Partnerships



We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

## Family Foundations and Individual Donors

### \$5000-\$15000

Duke Family Charitable Fund  
The Zaplatynsky Family  
Solara Foundation  
Peter Blitz  
Boag Foundation  
Solara Foundation  
GMR Foundation

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## Supporters — Schoolyard Harvest Dinner 2021

We are so grateful for the generous support of growers, sponsors, media and the entire community who came together to support this event.



Hemlock  
Cafe Ético  
2 Guys With Knives  
Hives for Humanity  
Baaad Anna's Yarn Store  
33 Acres Brewing Company  
Italian Cultural Centre  
Backyard Eden  
Backcountry Brewing  
Coho Commissary  
Kula Kitchen  
Academie Duello  
Granville Island Broom Company  
Flourist  
Kurtis Kolt  
Leavenly Goods  
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William Azaroff  
Winnie Kwan



# FINANCIALS

## Revenue

Foundations	\$38,500	4%
Government	\$702,472	65%
Private Donors	\$105,433	10%
Program Revenue	\$92,251	9%
Food Sales	\$79,651	7%
Schoolyard Harvest Dinner	\$63,694	6%
Other	\$660	0%
	<b>Total: \$1,082,662</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Expenses

Youth Empowerment	\$377,315	32%
Experiential Learning	\$198,488	17%
Good Food	\$330,040	28%
LunchLAB	\$72,956	6%
Fundraising	\$86,623	7%
Admin	\$96,234	8%
	<b>Total: \$1,161,656</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Get Involved

Support kids and youth learning, leading and growing on schoolyard farms and in the community.

Donate  
Volunteer

Attend Our Events  
Host a Fundraising Event



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# OUR TEAM

## Board of Directors

Matt Breech  
Karn Manhas  
Tracy London  
Heather Kelsall  
Scott Hughes

## All Seasons Staff

Alexa Pitoulis  
Camille Flanjak  
Caroline Manuel  
Galen Taylor Jones  
Gray Oron  
Kat Vriesema-Magnuson  
Tathali Urueta-Ortiz  
Vivian Cheung  
Charlotte Hewson

## Seasonal Staff

### Good Food

Piper Kenney  
Isobel Kinash  
Nicolas Cabal  
Mia Fajeau  
Jack Edgar  
Jaimie Rosenwirth

### Youth Empowerment

Nicole Bruce  
Yu-Chen Lim  
Jeannie Zhong  
Lucy Hoang  
Harveen Sandhu  
Ashiana Sunderji  
Diane Huang  
Anna Leckie  
Megan Sutherland

## Experiential Learning

Andrea Lucy  
Molly Goodfellow  
Marije Stryker  
Annelies Yates  
Carolina (Lina) Diaz  
Natalie Hamilton  
Kristen McLester  
Johannah (Hannah) Garampil

## Summer Watering Program

Michelle Aason  
Billy Guan  
Olivia Evans

## LunchLAB Staff

Chef Tasha Sawyer  
Chef TJ Conwi  
Cameron MacDonald  
Nicola Henderson







2021

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Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society is a  
registered charity: 844249680RR0001



Growing food.  
Growing communities.