



Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House

2023 Annual General Meeting Report



**Downtown Eastside
Neighbourhood House**

September 20, 2023, at 5:00pm PST 573 E. Hastings St



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REPORT FROM ED AND CHAIR

Dear members,

We recognize that our House resides on the unceded traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and extend our gratitude to its people. We offer a warm welcome to everyone attending this year's AGM of the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House Society.

For the past year, the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House has witnessed many successes and various challenges. In April 2022, we were able to resume regular onsite program delivery after years of disruption due to provincial Covid-19 restrictions. With this, we were able to bring back sit-down, in-person meal service in our Community Drop-In and Family Drop-In programs, serving over 43,000 meals. Staff, volunteers, and community members were excited to rebuild our community after a long period of isolation. We have always understood the significance of offering nutritious food-based programming, but the resumption of in-person participation reminded us of the significance of the DTES NH to harbour and nurture community connection in a non-judgemental space.

This fundamental fact has been expressed by many of our members to be one of the key elements that sustains them in their day to day lives.

We welcomed and said goodbye to many staff this year, including Rory Sutherland who stepped down from the Executive Director role and Maria Gaudin was hired to replace him. Maria had been the Director of Operations and before this role, the Community Drop In program lead. Kaum Kulatilake, returned to the DTES NH and was hired as the Operations Director, and Kelsey Schwab as the Community Drop In program lead. We were very fortunate to have such a smooth succession plan. Sophie Roth transitioned to fulltime as the United Way BC School's Out Coordinator, and returning staff, Mason Chiu replaced Tintin Yang as the Let's Speak Up! Coordinator. We were fortunate to have financial support from H.A.V.E Culinary Training Society for a third year to support 16 Peers to work across many of our programs.

Program and operational highlights since the last AGM include a successful transition of leadership and management of the Urban Farm to the V6A crew and Watari after three wonderful seasons; restarting our Mobile Smoothie Project at partner pop up locations and participating in community events; the significant contribution from Heather Burt on many successful grants in the past year.

REPORT FROM ED AND CHAIR

Including the lululemon Centre for Social Impact “Hear To Be” grant which supports multiple wellness related programs including Saturday Yoga and the Peer Support Worker Program; and an engaging community favourite, the Community Kitchen pilot program.

We thank all our funders, supporters, and donors for their ongoing support of our work at the DTES NH! Furthermore, we are grateful for the program support we receive from various student practicum placements including UBC (Social Work, Education, Urban Ethnography Field School, Land & Food Systems, Nursing, and Pharmacy), VCC (Nursing), KPU (Nursing), and to Columbia College through the externship work program.

As mentioned in last year’s report, we are continuing to work on the various steps leading to our facility renovation, including collaborating with Matt Hessey, our Project Manager, and the architects at Perkins & Will.

We anticipate moving in late spring to a temporary location on the block, with actual renovations of our current space to commence in July of 2024.

We have been informed by BC Housing to expect completion by fall of 2025. Needless to say, we have financial challenges which we are working on mitigating to enable the costs of this renovation, in addition to funding our operations. We continue to work diligently to secure the funds needed. We are most thankful for all the work put into this project thus far by staff and board members and look forward to finalizing the design layout of the new space soon.

Finally, and most significantly, we would like to full heartedly express gratitude to all our community members, volunteers, front line staff, and peer workers, for their devoted commitment and hard work over the years. Without any part of this team, the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House would not be what it is; a vital and nurturing resource in a neighbourhood that remains resilient in the face of many challenging circumstances.



Maria Gaudin
Executive Director



Benita Ho
Chair of DTESNH

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Benita Ho, *Board Chair*
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STAFF

Shaista Alami, Kids Kitchen & Tutoring Program Facilitator
 Arlette Akayezu, Family Programs Coordinator
 Bill Beauregard, COVID Response Coordinator
 Joel Branscombe, Program Assistant
 Greg Brown, Program Assistant
 Mason Chiu, Leadership Development Coordinator
 Rachit Dhingra, Program Assistant
 Tea Rawsthorne Eckmyn, Grants & Communication
 Brittany Garuk, Volunteer Coordinator & LSU! Program Assistant
 Maria Gaudin, Executive Director
 Saeid Kooshki, Program Assistant
 Kaum Kulatilake, Director of Operations & Community Programs
 Sophie Roth, UWBC School's Out Coordinator
 Erin Scarr, Program Assistant
 Kelsey Schwab, Community Drop-In Facilitator
 Rory Sutherland, Outgoing Executive Director
 Devorah Tradburks, Urban Farm Project Manager
 Tintin Yang, Leadership Development Coordinator



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Community Drop-In

Community Drop-In is one of the DTES NH's core programs and upholds our Right to Food Philosophy by serving breakfast and lunch two – three days each week. Our neighbours come for hot oatmeal breakfast on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings. Oatmeal is prepared with raisins or apples and served with coffee or tea. Lunch is prepared by a group of dedicated volunteers at our Tuesday Night Prep Group. This group of volunteers gathers weekly to work with donated food items that we receive from the Greater Vancouver Food Bank, Pro Organics, and Vancouver Food Runners, to cook up nutritionally dense and delicious meals for our community.

In addition to weekly meals, the DTES NH hosted our annual Mid-Winter Feast on January 25, 2023, where over 200 turkey dinners were served to our neighbours. Community Drop-In also participates in outreach events with our Community Partners. At UGM Summer Connect, the CDI team served over 1200 nutritional smoothies.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Community Drop-In

Since Community Drop-In is one of our most front-facing programs that interacts directly with most of our neighbours, the program is well-placed to respond to emergencies in the neighbourhood. Drawing from information from Lets Speak Up!, community member interactions, and program lead awareness of current issues, CDI has responded to extreme weather, natural disasters, and more. During the summer months, CDI increased water bottle distribution, provided a misting station outside the space, and opened doors to serve as a cooling space. During the winter season, the DTES NH provided warm clothes, hand-warmers, and educational resources on how to stay warm in the rain. CDI Program Leads and volunteers distributed city-specific resources on where to access warming/cooling centers, warming/cooling supplies, and much more.

We anticipate increased ability to respond to severe weather in upcoming seasons due to the strong relationships we have built with the City of Vancouver, other granting bodies, and with our community partners. We also look forward to continuing to serve our community by addressing their specific nutritional needs.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Community Fridge & Pantry

In June 2022, we opened our own Community Fridge and Pantry stocked with free food items that can be taken home. Items available range from dried/canned pantry staples, packaged single serve meals, cheese/dairy, to fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs. Food items include fresh produce from the DTES Neighbourhood House Urban Farm, fresh fruit from donations, donated single-serve meals, canned goods, dried goods, etc.

The Community Fridge & Pantry is an open-access space where our neighbours can access meals, snacks, and ingredients for free and it is an initiative aimed towards providing meals and ingredients despite the rising cost of food. Program participants from every program at the DTES Neighbourhood House can access the Community Fridge/Pantry. By March 2023, we have noticed the high demand and enthusiasm for food items that our neighbours can take home and we are looking forward to further expanding this project to respect and support the right to food and choice that the DTES Neighbourhood House holds as a core value.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Community Kitchen Pilot Program

Community kitchen was a 4-month cooking series that shared and celebrated the rich diversity of food heritage represented in the DTES.

Once a week on Friday afternoons, a “community chef” brought the gift of a recipe from their personal and cultural background to share with the group. We crowded into the kitchen to learn the techniques, stories, and secrets of these recipes. After an afternoon of cooking together, we gathered around the table to share a special dinner. Salmon Burgers, Moroccan Lamb Tagine, Dolma, Mantu Dumplings, and Sadza & Stew were just a few of the precious recipes taught by community members throughout the series.

Each session brought together 12-20 participants, many of whom regularly attended and built relationships throughout the program. Participants reflected that they appreciated the access to healthy ingredients and meals, the diversity of exciting recipes, the chance to cook and learn together, and the joy and connection they experienced throughout the sessions. Community kitchen also created a low-barrier income avenue for community members, as community chefs were paid an honorarium for their expertise, effort, time, and the invaluable generosity of sharing part of their cultural food heritage.

We are incredibly grateful to the community chefs who shared and taught these special recipes, and to every single person who joined us on these joyful, nourishing Friday evenings.



Let's Speak Up! (LSU!) is the DTESNH's working group comprised of community members and neighbours with vested interest in implementing change in their neighbourhood. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, several projects, activities, and events were the tangible outcomes of the LSU! group's dedication and time.

The Let's Speak Up! program aims to address power through redistribution of knowledge and skills to its members. While LSU! members are doing work to benefit their community, they are actively practicing and formalizing their skills in communication, writing, program facilitation, meeting structure, etc. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, members of LSU! re-evaluated their mandate and group guidelines. Through re-iterative reflection, the LSU! working group identified the importance of their role in responding to priority issues in the neighborhood. They fine-tuned their process on how to communicate information, how to organize themselves, and how to strategically plan action items that address community issues in timely, appropriate ways. Issues that LSU! contributed to include the Winters Hotel fires, issues in social housing, the wait-list for BC Housing, and Vancouver City planning.

Advocacy and empowerment work conducted in the 2022-2023 fiscal year includes LSU! and OHCW collaboration to advocate to Canada Post to start delivering mail to Hastings 100 block. Our neighbours know first-hand the challenges they experience- especially the challenges they are subjected to by the institutions of oppression and disenfranchisement that dismiss their experiences while actively contributing to perpetuating systems that do harm. LSU! members met consistently with the regional leads of Canada Post and CUPW union, arguing that welfare rights are human rights. By maintaining strong relationships with Canada Post, LSU! and OHCW were able to successfully advocate for mail to be delivered to the 100 block of Hastings.

LSU! members also participated in several workshops that facilitate sharing their skills and knowledge with each other. The group participated in a 4-week anger management workshop where they practiced conflict resolution and de-escalation skills. As a fully self-sufficient working group, the LSU! program also carves out time to celebrate success such as the LSU! Christmas party and summer BBQ.

Let's Speak up!



Family Drop-In program runs on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 3:30-6:30pm, and is a place where caregivers and their children can enjoy a hot meal, explore arts, participate in activities, and interact with caring NH staff and volunteers.

We resumed in-person programming in Spring 2022 and this fiscal year, FDI welcomed many newcomer families to the neighbourhood. Central to the Family Programs is the strong relationships built between FDI staff and participants, and through this, the program has been able respond flexibly to the needs of the community. FDI provides translation support, cross cultural connection, Halal food options, and a wealth of resources and referrals to those who are navigating completely new systems in a new country. As of March 2023, FDI welcomes participants who originate from over 10 countries/nations!

Family Program offered several workshops and activities for caregivers and their children to participate in. Stress and Anger Management, Financial literacy, and other similar workshops were offered for caregivers and activities such as making Halloween crafts, birthday celebrations, and fun snacks were offered to keep the kids busy and engaged during program time.

During the summer, the Neighbourhood House was a community partner of the BC Association of Farmers' Market's Nutrition Coupon Program. 40 families with children and 10 seniors/elders were registered to receive monthly nutritional support through these coupons. From these 50 households, 200 people benefited, and over 100 of those were children. This coming year, the family programs are focusing on more community relationship building both through outreach and further partnerships with organizational partners. We look forward to continuing serving the families in our neighbourhood!

FAMILY DROP-IN



EARLY YEARS DROP-IN

The sister program to Family Drop-In, the Early Years Drop-In (EYDI) program provides a space for caregivers and their young children (age 0-6) to eat a healthy breakfast, play, and participate in activities/workshops together. We are incredibly thankful to Kiwassa Neighbourhood House for the support and partnership in this program.

EYDI is a place for parents and children to come together and connect in community with others. Staff are onsite to provide resources/referrals and facilitate games and activities. As a smaller, more intimate program, the transition back to steady in-person sessions over the last year has been challenging, as the program had settled into a routine during the pandemic with only a handful of regularly attending families. This year, we have been working on outreach, program development, and promoting the program with community partners in order to connect with new families of little ones in the area. Outreach and future community collaboration is the main goal for the program for the coming year.



UWBC SCHOOL'S OUT

We had another amazing and enriching year in our Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House United Way British Columbia School's Out (SO) Program. Three days a week, on Monday, Wednesday, and Sunday, from September to June, the Neighbourhood House provides free, low-barrier, high quality after-school activity programming.

On Mondays, the tutoring program provides one-on-one academic assistance to 10 children over a wide range of subject areas. Healthy snacks are offered, and the kids also participate in group activities such as soccer, or arts and crafts. We are so grateful to the 20+ tutors who volunteered their time and skills to working with kids at the Neighborhood House.

On Wednesdays, 8 creative kids attend Arts Umbrella, a program that facilitates and encourages artistic expression through providing art supplies and art instruction to program participants.

On Sundays, Kids Kitchen, a core NH program, continued to host cooking classes for up to 13 children each week. Participants develop a wide repertoire of cooking and kitchen-safety skills and learn about food-related topics, including nutrition, meal-planning, food-safety, and cultural diversity. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, Kids Kitchen leads facilitated opportunities for kids to explore foods from a variety of cultures, encouraging curiosity, creativity, and culinary inspiration in young minds.

For example, In April, NH Staff member, Shaista led a community Iftar meal at the Neighbourhood House. Children from the School's Out programs assisted with making cards of holiday well wishes. Staff and volunteers welcomed 50 individuals of all ages into the space to share a delicious meal together, and another 100 meals were given out to community members at the door, including the children's cards.

Across all 3 program days, 40 children benefited from accessing these programs and attended over 200 programming hours! We look forward to continuing providing this valuable neighbourhood service of School's out programming.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Urban Farm Programs and Community Initiatives

This year, the DTES Neighbourhood Urban Farm continued to develop as a powerful space for promoting food security and sovereignty in the DTES, for building relationships and community connectivity, for diverse forms learning, and for personal and leadership development and low-barrier income opportunities for community members.

The season saw an increased diversity and frequency of workshops, educational initiatives, community gatherings like the June Block Party hosted with support from the Playwriters Theatre Center, community meals, and healing and talking circles that took place at the garden space. This abundance of community engagement and gatherings owes indescribably to our relationships with community partner organizations, leaders, and Elders in the community.

This year also saw an exciting increase in the number of community groups caretaking and growing at the farm. Plots were cared for by community groups including the SRO Collaborative, DUDES Club, the DTES Women's Center, Kettle Recovery Society, and Hives for Humanity. A fundamental component of this growing season was the expanded and deepened partnership with the V6A crew, a working group of DTES residents who are paid an hourly honorarium for their labour, expertise, traditional knowledge, and leadership at the farm. This was facilitated in partnership with DUDES Club, Watari Counselling, and independent DTES community organizers. The Farm was also supported by a large, committed team of volunteers, with drop-in volunteer sessions happening two afternoons a week and student groups involved throughout the season.

The farm has also continued to expand its reach as a source of diverse, fresh, nutritious food that is distributed to promote food security and sovereignty in the DTES community. Much of this produce came to the Neighbourhood House and was incorporated into meals for Family Drop-In, Community Drop-In, the family grocery hamper program and the Community Fridge and Pantry program. Produce was also shared with participants in our Family Programs through a weekly harvest session where families and children visited the garden to harvest fresh vegetables based on their family size, preferences, and cultural needs.

Throughout the growing season, as the involvement and leadership of the V6A crew continued to grow, it was gradually decided that the farm could best serve the needs and empowerment of the community by transferring the management and leadership to the V6A Crew and Watari Counselling. We intend to stay involved in the mission and activities of the initiative and to grow and evolve our relationship of mutual support with the Astoria Urban Farm.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Grant-Sponsored Wellness Initiatives

Late in 2022, we were very pleased to receive a “Here to Be” grant from the lululemon Centre for Social Impact. The aim of this global funding program is to enhance the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of people whose access to wellness resources is limited or compromised. In the early months of our HTB grant year (which corresponded to the end of our organization’s fiscal year), grant funds supported our core meal programs, nutritional outreach activities, and staffing for Let’s Speak Up! projects. Grant money also went toward the launch of two new wellness-related initiatives: a Peer Support Worker Training Program (PSWP) and a series of Hatha Yoga classes.

Our PSWP follows a curriculum designed by Peer Connect BC under the auspices of the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions. Early in 2023, we began offering weekly PSWP discussion/study sessions, along with a program completion honorarium, to a small but eager cohort of participants. Following this trial run-through of the curriculum, we advertised the program more widely in the DTES community. The response was wonderfully enthusiastic. As of the writing of this report (Summer 2023), our Peer Support Worker Training Program is thriving and has benefitted from the contributions of students from UBC’s Bachelor of Social Work and VCC’s BSc Nursing Programs.

Our pilot series of Saturday afternoon yoga classes, skilfully and gently led by teacher Ayda, was also very successful. We continue to offer weekly classes and have complemented our yoga sessions with workshops on EFT Tapping and Meditation. Although the NH yoga studio (aka our dining hall) isn’t big, the positive energy is abundant. And with our supply of grant-funded mats, blocks, and straps, we’re able to accommodate 10-12 participants, from beginners to experienced yogis.



OUR VOLUNTEERS

"I have been volunteering on Wednesdays for the CDI program since July 2022. Back when I started, the city was just emerging out of the pandemic restrictions. I had moved to the city in March 2020, and didn't really get a chance to meet anyone from the local communities for the first two years. A vague sense of doom and social anxiety had crept in, so I needed to get out and do something about it.

My shifts at the neighborhood house usually consisted of washing dishes and cleaning up. I kept to myself during those first few weeks. But listening in on random conversations and witnessing people come together for meals had a positive impact on my mental health. I now look forward to my Wednesdays because I get to meet my fellow volunteer friends and have some great conversations."

-Shruthi, CDI Wednesday Volunteer

This year we've been lucky to welcome **129 new volunteers** to the DTES Neighbourhood House in addition to a handful of very dedicated long-term volunteers who have been with us for years! Our volunteers support all our programs (from Community Drop-In on Mondays to Kids Kitchen on Sundays), special events such as our Salmon Feast & Dumpling Day and help tremendously with our operations (such as preparing for our upcoming renovation)! As we've continued to develop and improve our Community Fridge, Freezer and Pantry this year, we have new volunteers stepping up to support this project by cleaning and re-stocking regularly throughout the week.

We are grateful to have a volunteer team with a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, and skillsets. With that, we are presenting more accessible volunteer opportunities to DTES residents who want to share their time and talents with the community, while still having screening and orientation practices in place to ensure all volunteers understand and support the DTES Neighbourhood House's mission and values.

Volunteer training & educational materials, as well feedback forms are created and updated regularly, and are informed by the best-practices of volunteer organizations such as United Way. One of our new educational opportunities includes a Q&A series where volunteers can learn from different people who want to share their knowledge and wisdom, such as our former Executive Director. We've also joined a Volunteer Coordination Community of Practice with other neighbourhood houses in the city, which has been a mutually beneficial experience for us to learn and grow together.

SISTERS ORGANIZATIONS | PARTNERS

Aboriginal Front Door

Arts Umbrella

Astoria Urban Farm

Community Coordinated Response Network

Community Impact Real Estate

Crab Park Residents

CUBS UBC

Downtown Eastside Women's Center

Dudes Club

Eastside Works

Exchange Inner City

Farmers Market Coupon Program

Good Food Organizations

Greater Vancouver Food Bank

Hessey Consulting and Architecture

Hives For Humanity

Insite

Japanese Hall
Kettle Recovery Society

Kiwassa Neighbourhood House

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Lookout Society

Mobile Response Team

OHCW

Oppenheimer Park

Peacemeal

Playwriters Theater Centre

Potluck Cafe

Raincity Housing

Ray-Cam Centre

SRO Collaborative

Strathcona Community Centre

Strathcona Elementary School

Studio Print Group

The Lux

UBC Learning Exchange

UGM

University of British Columbia

Vancouver Community College

Vancouver Moving Theatre

Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks

Vancouver Public Library

Vancouver Second Mile Society

VANDU

Washington Community Market

Watari

WISH

Yarrow Society

FUNDERS | DONORS | SUPPORTERS

Alca Consulting

Alexandra Foundation

All of our wonderful volunteers!

BC Farmer's Markets

BC Gaming

BC Housing

Bosa Family Foundation

Canada Helps

Central City Foundation

Charitable Impact Foundation

Choices Market

City of Vancouver

CLICK Foundation

Columbia College

Community Food Centres Canada

Community Impact Real Estate

Ethical Bean

Face the World Foundation

First Nations Health Authority

FoodStash & Jenny Hawkinson

G&F Financial

Government of Canada

Greater Vancouver Food Bank

Hastings Racecourse

HAVE Culinary Training Society

Heather Burt Editing

Investing in Canada's
Infrastructure Program

Investing in Canada's Infrastructure
Program

Johnny Perry

lululemon Centre for Social Impact

Marvin Delorme

Ministry of Children and Family
Development

OXD

Patrick Moore

Perkins & Will

Pro Organics

RIVALtech

SRO Collaborative Society

TD Friends of the Environment

Thought Farmer

Tiny Foundation

United Way British Columbia

University of British Columbia

Vancity Savings Credit Union

Vancouver Coastal Health

Vancouver Foundation Red Hibiscus Fund

Vancouver Food Runners

Whole Kids Foundation



THANK YOU!

Thanks

Do you have any questions?

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