

Grandview Woodland Food Connection 2018 Highlights

It has been a busy year, but then again, when is it not. There are so many interesting and important projects to get involved in and it is hard to say no to many of them. Of note, 2018 saw the continual rising cost of housing offsetting much of the valuable work we are doing with many households that continue to struggle with food access. Wages and benefits simply are not keeping pace with rising food prices and living expenses. On a positive note, we completed a year of public consultation and the recently completed master plan for the new Britannia Community Centre inclusive of a much expanded food hub and food programming.

So here are our top 10 highlights for 2018. It was hard to narrow down the many positive projects that we were involved in, so we threw in an extra highlight just for fun.

Wild Minds

Year three of our summer Wild Minds project brought 14 youth together to explore, learn, play, and work in the beautiful Strathcona and Cottonwood Community garden in Vancouver's Strathcona neighbourhood. This program partnership with Environmental Youth Alliance is certainly a highlight of the year with its focus on supporting youth immersion and connection with urban wilderness. Along with hands on skill building work, youth helped nurture and re-wild a beautiful community garden space, transforming it into a more diverse ecosystem. The success of the program is most evident in the youth's enthusiasm for learning and working.



FoodFit

With a two year grant from Community Food Centres Canada and a partnership with Reach Community Health Centre, we have been able to offer this popular health and wellness program to over 40 participants so far focusing on physical activity and healthy eating. Based on motivational change theory, participants are well supported in this structured program to improve their health. As part of the 13 week program, participants track their walking steps and fruit and vegetable intake along with learning many valuable healthy eating tips and recipes.

Grandview Woodland Community Seed Library

Our new seed library provides community members with access at no cost to seeds and resources on gardening and seed saving. Members of the seed library can borrow seeds for their garden and are encouraged to collect seeds from their plants and deposit them in the seed library to help provide for other library users. We also ran several seed saving workshops this year and now expanding our collection to include native plant seeds. The Library collection will be available at various events such as seed swaps and workshops throughout the year.



Syrian Dinner Fundraiser

This very successful fundraiser raised over \$4,000 to help support the Grandview-Woodland Refugee Initiative to bring a Syrian family to safety in Vancouver. Fabulous Syrian food was prepared by mother and daughter Hayat Shabo and Carmen Aldakhlallah who themselves are recent refugees living in our community. Big thank you to everyone who pitched it make this a great community dinner.

Britannia School Honey Bees

Two honey bee hives arrived in the Britannia School Garden this year with the help of professional beekeeper and Britannia English teacher Ashley Macleod. The bees are a fantastic addition to our school gardens to both help pollinate as well as provide a rich learning experience. Ashley ran a summer bee school where a few students were able to learn all about beekeeping. Further to this, Ashley has developed an environmental literacy curriculum, inclusive of various bee texts as part of her creative writing class. Students will integrate in-class reading and writing with hands-on beekeeping instruction all geared towards increasing environmental stewardship amongst youth while increasing literacy, communication skills and fostering a deepened understanding of themselves and others locally and globally.



Farm to School

The Grandview Woodland Food Connection was pleased to host a very successful Farm to School Year End Celebration at Britannia. Roughly 120 teachers, students and community organizations gathered for workshops, networking, awards, and an awesome dinner. It was so great to meet so many amazing people committed and passionate about school gardening and healthy foods in schools



Wild Salmon Caravan

We were honored to again help organize and participate in the Indigenous led Wild Salmon Caravan, hosting many planning meetings, supporting logistics, and arts build activities for the Vancouver WSC parade, which ran along Granville. The GWFC commissioned the building of a new bike float made by artist Giles Chin who created of a beautiful mermaid float, which was a parade highlight. The WSC was a beautiful expression of grassroots art and social action in an effort to raise awareness of the need to protect wild salmon and support Indigenous food sovereignty.



Corn Festival

As always, the Fiesta del Maiz (Corn Festival) at Britannia Community Centre is a yearly highlight, bringing together about 800 community members from all backgrounds to celebrate Latin American culture and all foods corn. Organized by the Canada El Salvador Action Network with support from the GWFC, this festival has a very authentic, grassroots, community building, cultural sharing, and family vibe. The Fiesta del Maiz and all its uniqueness brings a small taste of Latin America to East Van.



East Vancouver School Garden Learning Circles

Our work is most rewarding and enjoyable when we are building new connections. With this in mind, we were happy to help organize the School Garden Learning Circles in partnership with Farm to School where we had an opportunity to connect with other school garden teachers and leaders, tour their gardens and learn from each other what we are doing in our respective gardens. One very positive outcome in working together was the hiring and sharing of two summer students who helped water and maintain a number of school gardens over the summer.



Food Skills Workshops

2018 was a good year for food workshops. 15 workshops were held on a range of topics from seed saving, native plant walks, healthy fats and oils to Syrian and Latin American cooking. A record number of 158 community residents participated.

Community Food Centres Canada Food Summit

The GWFC was thrilled to join food organizations from across Canada to share stories and successes in our work. Most organizations are “Good Food Organization” affiliates, united under a common set of principals, which are helping to shape a more dignified, responsive, successful, and systems changing community food model. It’s really great to have this growing community of learning across Canada and the many resources available to help improve our work locally.

