



IMPACT REPORT

2023



Our mission is to develop and deliver programs that increase food growing and food security for people of Tofino and surrounding communities.

We share a vision of thriving and resilient coastal communities with access to an abundance of healthy local food and an awareness of what can be grown and harvested.

The Tofino Community Food Initiative conducts its programs on the ancestral, unceded territories of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations. We acknowledge that many of the practices we draw on and teach are not traditional to this place, yet Indigenous people have expertly altered the soils and forests to improve food growing capacity since time immemorial. With colonization, Indigenous people lost access to the land on which we live and work. The TCFI is committed to cultural inclusion and reconciliation, and to stewarding the land on which we are guests.

Activity Snapshot

12

Weekly School Programs

5

Community Events

3

Seasonal Workshops

1

Four-Day Learn-to-Garden Workshop

A message from our board of directors

In 2023 we tried new things and were also confronted with new challenges. The spring started with excitement as we launched our Growing West Coast Gardeners Program to inspire and educate new gardeners. The program was conceived by H  l  ne Descoteaux, TCFI administrator, and Cindy Hutchison, past board member, as a project for the course, Thriving Non-profits. Cindy and current board members Dan and Leah created the curriculum and the support materials for the course, which we ran for 11 participants over four full days between April and October. Participants and instructors were enthusiastic about the success of the program, which we hope to continue to offer on a fee-for-service basis. Projects like this, in which we generate income from within the organization, will help us broaden our fundraising options beyond grants and donations to keep our non-profit thriving!

The school garden got off to a great start, with keen gardeners in the school classes, the after-school program, and the intergenerational program planting and tending gardens in the metal troughs, lower garden, food forest, and greenhouse. The dry spring meant a lot more watering for the students, but they were keen to play with water and enthusiastically used hoses and watering cans to keep their plant babies alive. Unfortunately, the drought continued over the summer and watering restrictions that prohibited even the watering of food made it very tough for our summer garden volunteers. The drought provided bittersweet teaching moments—heat-loving plants such as figs and grapes loved it, but many other plants suffered. Undeterred, the returning students in the fall made the best of what survived and planted anew, just as gardeners do! The board has been busy making plans for improved water catchment & storage - stay tuned!

TCFI is a small organization, but it's a tough and resilient one. I'd like to give a shout-out to our part-time staff who worked under some challenging conditions in 2023—Paula Robertson, the school garden coordinator; Beatriz Lema, program coordinator; and H  l  ne Descoteaux, TCFI administrator. The board, our volunteers, and west coast communities are so thankful for the work you do. In 2023 we also welcomed Katie Miles, a very talented gardener and advocate for food security, who is taking over as administrator as H  l  ne transitions to a career in Chinese medicine. Katie will also coordinate our workshops and events. A big welcome, as well, to Julia Burkart who joined the TCFI board.

This report highlights our 2023 programs and showcases the many ways community members can be involved in the work we do, from volunteering at garden work bees or events, to saving and sharing seeds, opening your gardens for others to learn, and making donations of all sizes. We're proud of what we were able to accomplish this year and look forward to another year of great community programs in 2024.

See you in the garden,



Adrienne Mason, TCFI Board Chair

School Garden Program + Intergenerational Garden Club



garden snacks

In 2023, Paula Robertson, our garden coordinator, worked closely with the school administration and educators to deliver a comprehensive program of in-class and in-garden activities for **10 classes**. As well, she offered **two after-school programs** and ran a successful intergenerational program, with seniors working alongside children in the classroom and garden. In the **Sowing Seeds Across Generations** program, student and senior pairs participated in gardening-themed activities, like calendula salve and bird feeders, followed by a nutritional snack, often from the school garden.

Throughout the year, students were hands-on learners in all aspects of planning, growing, and preparing food. This included learning about **winter sowing and lasagna gardening**, as well as how to seed, tend, weed, and fertilize with compost tea. Our young gardeners also learned how to properly harvest and clean the food they grew and spent some time in the kitchen learning how to prepare and preserve produce. This included making soup, veggies sandwiches, salads, and herbal teas, and also preparing jams, applesauce, and fruit leather. We were able to **contribute produce to school lunches** from time to time and the children were proud to see their berries and rhubarb used in desserts, and potatoes, garlic, onions, herbs, kale and other greens used in salads or soups. This year, we made sure that every student, and every teacher, sampled **strawberries, peas, kale, and herbs** fresh from the garden.

A "mushroom tower" was an exciting addition to the program in 2023. The expert, Colin Steven, introduced the inoculated logs and students were amazed to see the mushrooms flourish. A highlight in the food forest was a spiral "**jewel garden**" of edible flowers planted by students and elders. The spiral even managed to survive for most of the summer drought.

This highly successful program is administered and funded entirely by the TCFI and is supported through grants and **donations**. In 2023 TCFI raised \$38,000 to make this rich, hands-on program happen. We are pleased to offer this program for the benefit of Tofino students and teachers, SD70, and the community, but we can't do it alone. If you can offer financial support to **help this program continue**, or are willing to volunteer your time and energy, please get in touch.

150+ Student, elder, and school staff participants



Little Green Thumbs

Growing West Coast Gardeners

TCFI has done a lot – but we’d never done this before! In 2023 we launched a four-day (24 hours total) **learn-to-grow workshop**, called Growing West Coast Gardeners. The series was designed to support beginner gardeners in how to plan, start, and maintain a garden throughout the growing season. Students were introduced to the “**west coast trifecta**”—greens, peas, and garlic—among other crops.

prepping beds



Our first year was very successful and filled up quickly with **11 participants** from throughout the region, from Ahousaht to Macoah. We were grateful to use the house at načiqs (Monks Point) and volunteers spent a few very wet afternoons digging out the old garden beds so that students could **rejuvenate and plant** them as part of the course.

Programming included **4 full-day** (2 days in spring, 1 in summer, 1 in early fall) in-person **learning modules**, a summer solstice gathering, a mid-season online Q&A, and an online discussion group to support gardeners throughout the growing season. Thank you to the District of Tofino and Vancouver Island Health Authority for supporting the pilot project, allowing us to offer the course at a highly subsidized fee.

Feedback from participants:

“I never grew anything, it was never my interest. I had just got laid off from my long-time job when I signed up for this course and it was **life changing**. I’ve been so proud of my container garden and we saved so much money on food this summer!”

– Anonymous, age 43.

“[GWCG] far surpassed the amount of **knowledge** I thought I would gain. The teachers are incredible and have lots of experience, and I grew so much that I was able to sell produce to my neighbours.”

–Emily, age 30

A participant's happy garden



In the Community + Collaborations

Throughout the year we hosted 3 free workshops and 5 events. We launched the year with our ever-popular Seedy Saturday in March. Along with the seed swap, demos, and other activities, we shared a series of films with the support of West Coast N.E.S.T. Even with snow on the ground, the event drew over **120 people**. During the summer we held two **sold-out edible garden tours** (in Tofino and Ucluelet), and in fall, a **Harvest Celebration** with soup from **Chef Nick** made with **TUCG** squash, and an apple pie competition won by a young student! Huge thanks to **Daylight** for donating staff time to help us with set up and tear down!

Workshops included container gardening, making cloches (at the beautiful Wya Community Garden) & hot water bath canning, which gave participants ideas on preserving food for winter. We ended the year with **Festive Food Forest Decorating**, the **Tofino Winter Market** and our friends at **Hotel Zed** hosting a pancakes with Santa fundraiser for TCFI. Throughout the year, we offered seasonal growing tips through social media & our monthly newsletter, which has almost 500 subscribers. We added a feature in which long-time local gardeners shared their gardens and growing tips. We also collaborated with Andi Wardrop in Ucluelet to create a **beautiful video** showcasing the Intergenerational Garden Club. Over **40 volunteers** came to our Work Bees in the school garden.

In summer we held a very fun garden flash tattoo pop-up at **Space Tattoos** in Ucluelet! Appointments were sold out within minutes of opening and happy participants came away with **fabulous tattoos of their favourite veggies**. We're grateful to long-time supporter **Gaia Grocery** who sponsored a seedling sale fundraiser and helped us raise \$500 by offering our school garden produce to customers during summer at their lovely store full of tasty treats.

Thank you to **350+** participants in our work bees and events: We're better together!



Tattoo flash



Harvest Festival




Festive Food Forest Decorating




Edible Garden Tours



We Grow Together

Watch our new Intergenerational  Garden Club video

Become our Partner 

Cloche building workshop with Connie Kuramoto



Our Team

Board of Directors

- Leah Austin
- Julia Burkart
- Adrienne Mason
- Josie Osborne
- Dan Price-Francis
- Todd Evalina

Staff

- Hélène Descoteaux, Administrator
- Beatriz Lema, Program Coordinator
- Katie Miles, Administrator/Program coordinator(incoming)
- Paula Robertson, School Garden Coordinator



Carrots that survived the summer drought



Thank you

for your contributions to our mission & the community's transformation.

Community partnerships are not just valuable – they are vital. Thank you to all our donors, volunteers and partners!

Major Partners

Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
All One Fund
Clayoquot Biosphere Trust / Eat West Coast
District of Tofino
Gaia Grocery
Government of Canada
Hotel Zed
Tofino Co-op
Tofino Saltwater Classic
Vancouver Island Health Authority
Wickaninnish Community School
Wickaninnish PAC
Tofino Brewing Company
OCN Garden Center

Community Partners

Blue Crush Concierge
Buckerfield's
FarmFolk CityFolk
Farm to School BC / PHABC
Rhino Coffee
Tofino-Ucluelet Culinary Guild
Tofino Time
Space Tattoos
Tuff City Radio
Wickaninnish Community School Society
Wolf in the Fog
West Coast Nest
Daylight
Chef Ron + Chef Nick
Tofino Garden Retreat

Individual Donors

Alannah Radburn
Emelie Comtois
Emily Ballard
Heather Hendry
Jacqueline Fraser
Madelaine Clerk
Margaret Eady
Rebecca Hurwitz
Dan & Jenn Price-Francis
Sara Sloman
John Wynne

Heather McGregor
Kevin & Naomi Bruce
Ross Reid
Sam Anderson
Sarah Butterworth
Satsuko VanAntwerp
Steve Price-Francis
Tracy Rawa
Mackenzie Coombe
Todd Evalina
Adrienne Mason



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