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Territory Acknowledgement

The Campus Community Garden begins all events, workshops, board meetings, and more with unrehearsed territory acknowledgments dedicated to the Lekwungen (Songhees and Esquimalt nations) and WSANEC peoples. Respect to Indigenous land rights, history, and continued relationships with the land we work on and live in is intrinsic to our work and goals, and feels all the more literal when using that land and soil to grow food. We center our beliefs and values in decolonization, and understand that the recognition of capitalist, colonial systems and the harm they perpetuate is only the first step in a constant journey of un-learning, education, and action. Honoring traditional food growth systems, agricultural knowledge, and joining local and global Indigenous activism and solidarity efforts are just a few of the ways we align ourselves as a community garden with Indigenous rights.

CCG Team

May 2022 – May 2023

Coordinator: Syd Welsh
Assistant Coordinator: Jen Chanette (starting August 2022)
Outreach Officer: Jen Chanette □ Juls Macdonell (Sept. 2022)
Site Officers: Lyndsay Silvestre, Jack Wittur (starting Oct. 2022)
Work Study: Cade (fall 2022)
Summary & Highlights
For 2022-2023, the garden maintained popular annual events such as the Harvest Party and Spring Social. Work parties continued weekly with volunteer attendees. In the summer the garden hosted Victoria’s Youth Poet Laureate Eli Mushumanski for a poetry and writing event, an Edible Flower Stroll in collaboration with Society for Students with a Disability, a Beekeeping workshop with our beekeeper Barry (of Barry’s Bees), a Grow Your Own Food workshop with Vic Compost Ed, and a Nut Trees workshop hosted by Nick Montgomery, a UVic ES professor and co-founder of a nut tree nursery on Denman Island.

CCG Harvest Party
The president of the Live Music Club Dilly provided some lovely acoustic musical enchantment to a sunny, warm evening where plot renters and students alike carved pumpkins, enjoyed some snacks, raced zucchinis, and painted! We love the chill vibes of our harvest parties!

CCG Spring Social 2023
The Spring Social, held at the end of every winter semester, is one of our annual events. This year, we collaborated with the Live Music Club for the first time, whose president Dilly performed at our Harvest Party in September 2022. With their help, we had a line-up of a couple student bands and followed with an open mic featuring a mix of solo performers and poetry. There was also some crafting, colouring, and painting, as well as approximately six student and local vendors selling handmade crafts. Community Cabbage also provided one of their free food ‘serves’ and had a huge lineup! Turnout was ~70 or more and the most people long-term staff had ever seen in the garden at once, despite a chilly, rainy day.
Community Relationships
Many of CCG’s relationships are within the UVic community, but some are outside.

Community Cabbage: a UVic club whose president Shannon has twice served on the garden board. We love their food dives, tireless work in cooking, organizing, and logistical prowess, all with the incredible benefit of simply feeding people! We love hosting their serves at the garden because it aligns with our values of providing free food, breaking down barriers, circumventing capitalist systems, and because it helps introduce a lot of students to the garden.

Environmental Studies: ES tutorials have long been coming to the garden for tours in the beginning of each semester, and long may they continue. After every tour, we usually nab a couple new regular faces for work parties or board members 😊

Vic Compost Ed: An incredible bastion in the local community and the only resource for compost know-how! Claire from Compost Ed is helping us finalize our plans for the Compost Toilet, slated to be finished or near completion by the end of 2023. Kayla hosts many of their workshops and hosted our Grow Your Own Food workshop.

The Live Music Club: Although Dilly had performed at the garden before, the 2023 Spring Social marked the beginning of a new relationship with the LMC which came with a marked increase in engagement and student awareness of the garden. We think the plants like the music; so do we.

Barry the Beekeeper: Barry is a career apiarist who has been keeping bees in our beehives for several years. He does a free workshop for us every year in the fall, which is always popular.

Society for Students with a Disability: Our Edible Flower stroll wasn’t the first collab with SSD and won’t be the last. Making the garden as accessible as possible is a constant battle, and creative events like these are not only educational but also fosters community and long-term relationships.

Craig: Craig is a local garden celebrity and part of Uni 101, which as a group, rents a plot at the garden. Craig and Tracy are two of our most hardworking volunteers who help to maintain our organic compost and also assist staff in watering the garden throughout the summer. Craig shows up to every tabling event to help spread the good word, and his disarming charisma and humour goes a long way in bringing in shy or nervous students to the table! We love Craig!

By The Numbers
Due to the loss of a work laptop (which also resulted in the loss of this original report draft), specific numbers are difficult to acquire from 2022. After 2020, there was a marked decrease in engagement in work parties and events in general, however social events in 2022-2023 saw an incredible increase in attendance, likely thanks to club collaboration. Work parties consistently had 1-4 attendees, with some as many as 8, particularly after ES tutorials and tours, and consisted of a mix of regular attendees and new attendees who became regulars. With consistent weekly work parties and an average of 2 attendees and 2 hours per week, the garden enjoyed about 48 volunteer hours per semester.
Demographics
Our plots are rented out to a mix of undergraduate, graduate students, and staff and faculty. Our waitlist is a majority undergraduate students and staff, with graduate students having the least engagement, however it should be noted that several grad students did come by to ask questions, which included interviewing Lyndsay and Juls casually in the garden for information to relay to the Grad Students Society. Of our regular volunteers, Craig is not a student but is involved with Uni 101, and the others are largely undergraduate students. Our board is comprised mostly of full-time students with one faculty. Attendees to events are by-and-large undergraduates.

Social Media
Instagram engagement went up in 2022-2023, and Facebook engagement went down. Instagram’s app is easy to use, follow, and engage with by students, and is a primary tool of UVic, UVSS, and other advocacy/affiliate groups as well as student clubs, making it an expected place for the garden to hold presence. After Juls was hired as Outreach Officer in fall of 2022, approximately 500 followers were added by the following summer, following an increase in stories, sharing, and regular work party advertising.

There was a steady trickle in new subscribers to our Mailchimp newsletter, which went out largely irregularly. At the beginning of 2023, Juls began a regular plot renter email called “The Dirt” which received positive feedback regarding plot renter and staff communication. The garden did create a “Threads” account purely for the cross-posting of Instagram content, but does not actively engage there otherwise.

Year-to-Year
Despite a lower engagement in 2022-2023 than average, compared to 2021-2022, there was an increase in work study, workshop, and events participation, especially due to the relaxation of protocols surrounding COVID-19. The Spring Social in particular marked a drastic change in how many people the garden can really accommodate – and how fun it is.

Challenges
Staff capacity was the main challenge in 2022-2023, with a variety of factors at play including work-life-balance, school workloads, and multiple staff being in the last or second-last year of their program. Incoming staff may have struggled with a relaxed structure, a largely-absent board (many of whom were also in their last year), and outdated training manuals. Balancing the importance of office work while still keeping a garden alive and functioning to its fullest capacity is difficult; tying into this, in general, staff hours were low for 2022-2023. Less food was donated than we would have liked to the foodbank, and we held less workshops than we usually prefer.

Looking Forward
May 2023, and the summer that followed, marked a particular shift in the garden. Lyndsay, at that point a site-officer, had been on leave for the winter semester, leaving Jack, our other site officer, and Syd, to deal with the garden largely on their own, with help from Juls and Jen with work parties and planning the Spring Social. When Lyndsay came back from leave, Jen and Jack left for the summer, and Syd resigned shortly after, leaving Lyndsay and Juls – and soon,
new site officer Kate – to look after the garden. Thanks to Jack's fantastic preparation in the winter months, we got straight to work harvesting, brainstorming, and preparing for the new school year, the results of which can be seen in our 2023-2024 report. 😊

Our reflections from the 2022-2023 year in particular led us to create a theme of engagement for the following year; as new(ish) staff, we had seen the pictures and email threads from a garden long past which saw constant student engagement and attention, an active and involved board, and generally happy, energetic community. Part of creating better engagement meant updating several systems and the creation of new ones, like regular plot renter emails (The Dirt), more regular newsletters, more Instagram sharing and uplifting of other local events (who often share ours in return), and a reimagining of our plot renter system in order to make hellish spreadsheets more accessible.

Because it was the beginning of summer, April and May 2023 were focused largely on work parties, food growing for the food bank, spring cleaning the shed, organizing, and preparing for a busy few months of fresh produce!

**Compost Toilet**
Communication for the ongoing Compost Toilet was scarce. This isn't particularly strange as the plan has been in place since as early as 2015, but we're hoping for 2023-24 to have it much more seriously underway again, and this should come with regular meetings, better organizational practices, and setting concrete (haha) dates for each step along the way.

**Farm Stand Fixing**
The farm stand was damaged in a storm previously and has been a constant on our to-do lists to fix so that we can wheel it outside the garden and give away fresh produce and herbs to students as part of events or just for fun. It remains on our to-do list for 2023-2024, but requires some know-how due to the nature of how heavy it is and the limited capabilities of bike wheels.

**Conclusion**
2022-2023 was all-in-all a wonderful year for the garden marked by lovely new long-term staff (Juls and Jack), the continuation and improvement of annual events like the Harvest Party and Spring Social, several successful workshops, and the continuation of educational, practical work parties. Student engagement was up this year particularly thanks to Instagram and tabling events like Club Days and SEXPO, but we’re excited to do even more in 2023-2024 with an increase in staff capacity.