



# BUILDING ROOTS

enables people to create socially cohesive communities.  
We envision vibrant, resilient neighbourhoods...

in collaboration with you.

## 2021 IMPACT



***"I have always flourished and genuinely enjoyed the true sensibilities of happiness that my efforts as a volunteer have bestowed upon me; working and serving others - Remarkable"***

-Craig, Community Leader

# Land Acknowledgement

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Building Roots acknowledges that the sacred land in which we operate is situated on the traditional territories of the **Wendat, Haudenosaunee, the Anishinabeg**, and the **Mississaugas of the Credit**.

This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Anishinabeg and Haudenosaunee allied nations to peaceably share and care for the lands around the Great Lakes. We recognize the many Nations of Indigenous People who live on this land currently, have spent time here, and the ancestors who have hunted and gathered on this land known as Turtle Island.

We recognize Indigenous folks are disproportionately impacted by interconnected systems of ongoing colonialism, violence, displacement, and food insecurity.

We are committed to creating safer spaces in which accessibility and belonging are centered, while enabling dignified food options, access to information, and vibrant arts, recreation, and educational resources.

We advocate using Indigenous-led resources & visiting the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation website at [www.NCTR.CA](http://www.NCTR.CA).

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# INTRODUCTION

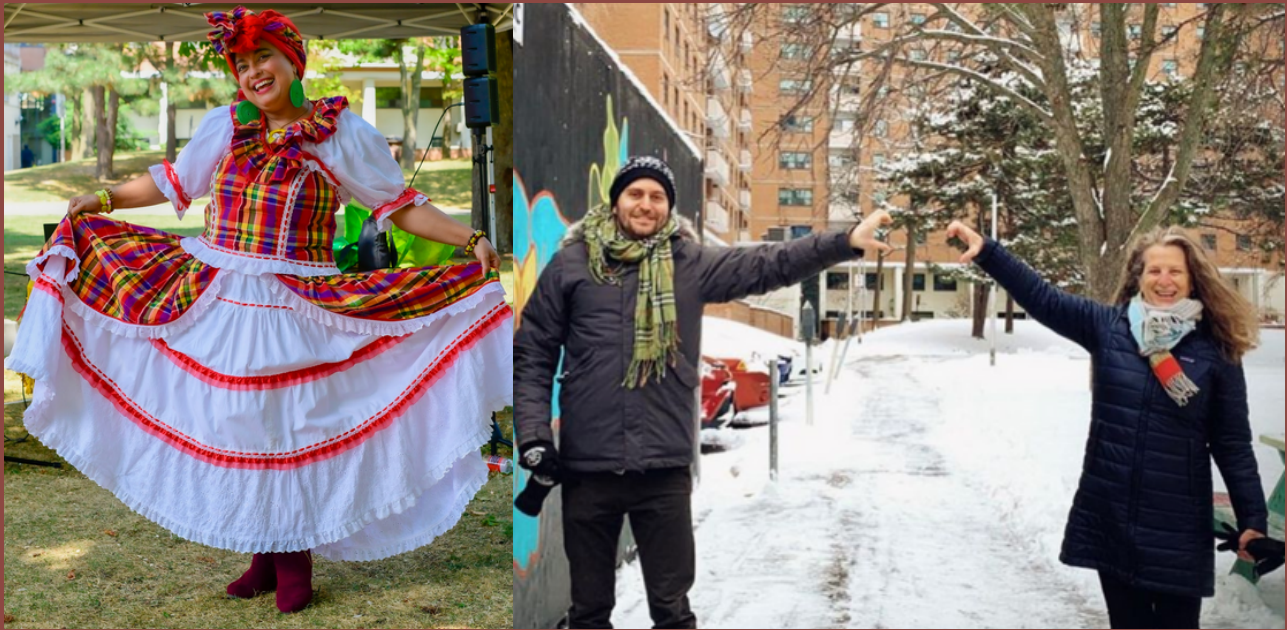


Photo by Lisa Kates

In 2021, more than ever, we witnessed how inadequate **food systems** are a by-product of greater social issues. Without addressing the need to heal our roots, **together**, we know we cannot address these issues. Continuing to shift our focus – which has become even more glaring during the COVID-19 pandemic – we delve deeper into building resources for **social cohesion**, while **co-creating** tools with the community.

In 2021, this led us to innovative projects that provide further opportunity for **food access**, **meaningful engagement**, and **community collaboration** built on **mutual trust**, **self-respect**, and **dignity**. We did this through access to **healthy food options**, **access to critical information and resources**, and **enabling opportunities for arts, education, and recreation for kids and families**.

Working from a place of abundance and **whole community organizing**, we began to ask ourselves what **community healing** truly looks like. It looks like a community coming together, **enabling vibrancy, reliance, and social cohesion**. COVID-19 brought with it wicked challenges, and through participating in, and bearing witness to the Moss Park and Downtown East community, we saw a community come together to take care of one another. Our 2021 Impact tells the story of **collaboration, recovery, participation, connection, and healing**.



# FROM OUR TEAM

We have witnessed momentous collaboration and innovation throughout 2021. We know we cannot move backward to a pre-pandemic 'normal' that is harmful for the most vulnerable in the community. We believe demonstrations of community care can pave a pathway forward into 2022 and beyond. This will take further creativity, dialogue, and advocacy. We have heard heartwarming feedback that our team is community-minded, grounded within the community, and approachable. This echoes through our mission, goals, programs, outreach, and results. We're overjoyed to share this with you!

*"[Building Roots] get sh\*t done! I love the responsiveness and flexibility of their initiatives.*

*I also feel like they have many staff who are problem solvers. Also very very important is how community-engaged they remain. The pay-what-you-can market has always been such a value to our clients as well."*

**-Nadia, Diabetes Education Program, Regent Park Community Health Centre**

Our **goals** are to:

- Create connections and relationships among neighbors
- Increase the use of public spaces through community events
- Enable community members to take part in new volunteer opportunities and leadership roles
- Increased access to fresh, diverse, and affordable foods
- Enable environments for learning new skills and information
- Engage new community initiatives, organizations, volunteers and resources to participate in community

Photo by Adrian Jay Olivares



We have made a difference through our **collaboration**, here's how:

# HIGHLIGHTS- BY THE #S



## 12 Community Leaders

contributing directly to neighbourhood goals, challenges, changes, and projects, while enabling leadership and capacity-building

## 4000+ Food Bags

distributed from our delivery program in support of folks unable to leave their homes

## 60+ kinds of Fruits, Veggies, Herbs, and Pollinator Plants

grown with love and care by our Urban Farm participants this harvest season

## 14,500 Fruit and Veggie Bags

distributed through our Moss Park Market, offered pay-what-you-can to community members every Saturday year-round

## 70+ Partnerships and Collaborations

connecting on creative, accessible, and community-led programming in downtown east

## 100+ Unhoused Neighbours Supported

through outreach, advocacy, and essential supplies such as food and sleeping bags

## 34 Paid Performances

by local artists and performers at our Summer Saturdays

## 278,000 Reached

through our social media channels with pertinent updates, community resources, and information

## 387 Folks Vaccinated

through our booking efforts, direct outreach door-to-door, through the market, and public outreach

## \$90,000 in In-Kind Donations

from urban farms, partners, local businesses, chefs, restaurateurs, and community friends



# COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

In 2021, our programs addressed three pillars which we identified as most important alongside the community in Moss Park: urgent access to **dignified food options**, access to **pertinent information** on COVID-19 and community resources, and access to **educational, recreational, and essential** materials. Here's a deeper look:

## MOSS PARK MARKET

Our Market strives to be a low barrier, accessible, visible, and vibrant hub for dignified food options, as well as arts, recreation, and outreach. It provides consistent support for over 750+ community members every Saturday, year round. Our produce is from local suppliers, urban farms and small farms outside the City. We provide produce, eggs, farm produce, non-perishables (from partners), and bread. The market is a place that enables volunteer and leadership opportunities within the community, and plenty of collaborative opportunity for organizations and local businesses alike.

## URBAN FARM AT ASHBRIDGE STATE

Our Urban Farm at Ashbridge Estate is centered around building community, agricultural and food education, and well-being of its participants. It also produces food for the Moss Park Market, just 2km away. In 2021, it saw over 12 core participants, a collegial and initiative-rich, skills-rich crew, seven distinct centres for growing, and 20 weeks of harvest!

## FOOD DELIVERY

Our Food Delivery Program originated in March 2020 out of necessity (COVID-19 health and safety) and increased visibility and vulnerability around food insecurity in Moss Park at Downtown Toronto East. We deliver fresh produce to folks who may not otherwise have access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food options. The program focuses on making food accessible to seniors, folks with mobility and emotional barriers, and folks who are in isolation.

## BOOKSHARE

Our BookShare is a novel program designed to increase access to books, educational and recreational materials for residents who may not otherwise be able to access them. It also helps to support folks who may be experiencing increased isolation. We source books for all ages, and offer numerous genres, ensuring folks can keep the books afterwards and share them with neighbours and friends.

Photo by Maylynn Quan





# EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMS

*"It was a well-needed tonic, I was happy to be a part of such a positive and necessary community initiative.*

**"-DJ medicineman, Performer, Summer Saturdays**

## SUMMER SATURDAYS

The pandemic disproportionately affects some industries, the performing arts being one of them. This means paid opportunities for artists to perform have been scarce, and the ability to consume art has been minimized. Our Summer Saturdays are committed to providing unique opportunities for paid performances of various mediums, which you could find outside the Moss Park Market each Saturday throughout the summer. Summer Saturdays enable animation in Moss Park, with goals to increase the use of public space and community events, while connecting neighbours.

## DO IT TOGETHER

Our Do it Together program focuses on exposure to skills and interests, promoting agency, and opportunity for co-facilitation among peers. It provides an important venue for folks to come together to learn more about food, environment, climate, and household level production in a social setting. In 2021 as in the year before, our workshops were held virtually.

## OPERA MAKERS

In Partnership with Canadian Opera Company (CoC) and Youth Enrichment Academy (YEA!), The Opera Makers program aims to make opera more accessible to communities, and provides meaningful learning opportunities that explore every element of the art form; from storytelling and composition, to singing and performance. Participants create their performance, rooted in the spirit of co-creation, telling the stories of their own communities. In 2021, youth enrolled in YEA! co-created "Dreaming up Change!" both co-writing and performing the piece, which you can still enjoy [here](#).



# OUTREACH

## UNHOUSED SUPPORT

Collaborating closely with Encampment Support Network (ESN) in Moss Park, we seek to support the unhoused residents of Moss Park through advocacy initiatives which you can learn more about [here](#), access to essential supplies (sleeping bags, blankets), food, access to information, and connection to the larger Building Roots community and programming.

## COMMUNITY LEADERS & COFFEE AND CONVERSATIONS

Our Community Leaders Program provides important paid work to community members in Moss Park and Toronto Community Housing, enabling residents to contribute directly to neighbourhood goals, while encouraging leadership and capacity building. In fall of 2021, we launched Coffee and Conversations to deepen this long-standing program, providing complimentary coffee and a snacks every Saturday outside the Moss Park Market. It is geared towards creating accessible spaces for Downtown East community members to connect, while promoting low barrier leadership opportunities (peer-to-peer).

## MOSS PARK COALITION

The Moss Park Coalition is a community-led partnership with Toronto Community Benefits Network, Regent Park Association, and The Bridge, Corktown Association. It aims to empower Moss Park residents with resources and information about Moss Park developments that may impact their lives. The Coalition aims to engage community members through direct outreach, meetings, and skill-building, to further facilitate dialogue and conversation. It involves community members in larger community consults and planning. For more on such developments and how to get involved, click [here](#).

*"Participating in the Community Leaders Program makes me feel less isolated, connected to neighbours, and part of community." -Community Leader*

## VACCINE OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

In partnership with the United Way of Greater Toronto and multiple partner agencies, with the support of paid community leaders, the Vaccine Outreach and Engagement Program aims to raise awareness about vaccination. In 2021, we were able to disseminate information, outreach within Moss Park and Downtown Toronto East both at community hubs and door-to-door, ensuring those who are most vulnerable, including seniors, folks with health barriers, and BIPOC, have equitable access to vaccines through information, bookings, and partner clinic support. With this, we supported the vaccination of 4000+ folks through partnering clinics. We distributed 5000 masks and 500 gloves to community and partners.



# FRIENDS

We can only further our reach, deepen our care, and build social cohesion with friends in the community. A heartfelt thank-you to our community care partners, contributors, and volunteers who supported alongside us through the Moss Park Market, Urban Farm at Ashbridge Estate, outreach, advocacy, and more!

## 70+ COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

We expanded and collaborated with numerous creative, innovative, and caring partners in Toronto to deepen our community care, create accessible programming, and enable resilient neighbourhoods, including:

Houselink, Canadian Opera Company, Regent Park CHC, Sojourn House, Central Neighbourhood House, John Inness, Kindness Kitchen, Moss Park Overdose Prevention Site, Encampment Support Network, JamaicanEats, Youth Enrichment Academy, The Bridge, Neighbourhood Food Hub, Works in Progress, Grandmothers to Grandmothers, Adda Blooms, Timeless Collective, Fred Victor, The 519, FoodShare, Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network, Ontario Heritage Trust, Mess Hall, Canadian Women in Food, Toronto Community Housing, Unity Health, Community Nutrition, Community Matters Toronto, Sanctuary, Dixon Hall, and more!

## 15+ CARING CONTRIBUTORS

We graciously received donations from new and established friends, supporting our efforts at Moss Park Market and Ashbridge Estate Urban Farm, including:

Second Harvest, Seeds of Hope, X (Ryerson) Urban Farm, Ozery Bakery, Project Food Chain, Le Dolci, Dundas Park Kitchen, Lora and Friends, PurpleHouseTo, Jocelyn's Soil Booster, Maple Cottage, Not Far from the Tree, Lazy Daisy Cafe, Friends of Allan Gardens, Animal Liberation Kitchen, Tiffinday, and more!

## 80+ INVALUABLE VOLUNTEERS

We are so thankful to have connected with over 80+ volunteers through our programming at Moss Park Market, the Urban Farm at Ashbridge Estate, and in our outreach work. Volunteers enable us to connect deeply and meaningfully with folks in the community.



*"In the face of COVID-19, volunteering became a beacon of light and hope. What we gave to the earth was returned bountifully."*

**- Dom, Volunteer**



# THE RESPONSE

"For myself, everything at Building Roots is helpful for my family, I am thankful for all of you, working all the time to **connect** me to services and provide **affordable food**. It is so helpful for me."

**-Breshna, Community Member**

"Building Roots' Mission of **community sustainability** and **empowerment** is very important to us."

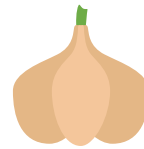
**-Sarah, Manager, Community Partnerships & Programs, Canadian Opera Company**

"I grew up in the area and heard about some of the work [Building Roots] is leading. Building Roots has **enabled a new and deeper point of connection** in the community, to share more about Community Benefits, and collectively address the impacts of transit and development, and identify new partnerships/solutions to ensure **community well-being**."

**-Kumsa, Toronto Community Benefits Network**

"I've truly enjoyed getting to know everyone and have appreciated their stories, words of wisdom, and kindness. Building Roots rebuilt my faith in humanity. Thank you for letting me be a part of the team."

**-Volunteer**



## 100% of our Partners

surveyed are interested in collaborating with us again in the future

## 100% of Community leaders

surveyed reported learning new skills or information through their participation in the program

## 90% of Volunteers

surveyed said volunteering with us in 2021 helped them to foster new connections and make new friends

## 83% of Youth

surveyed about our Opera Makers program feel inspired or motivated to continue avenues explored in the program

## 100% of Performers

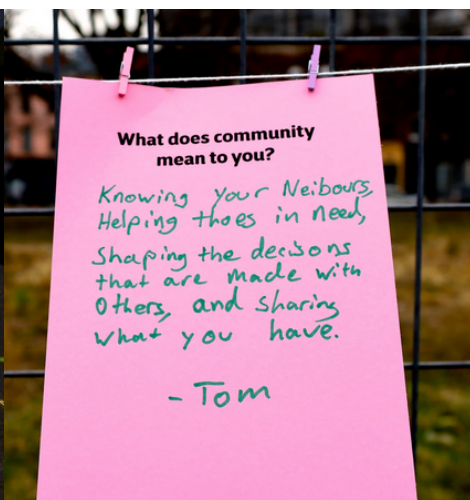
surveyed said they would participate in Summer Saturdays again

## 100% of our Donors and Funders

surveyed said they would like to support us again in the future

## 100% of Community Members

surveyed reported increased access to dignified food options through our programming this year

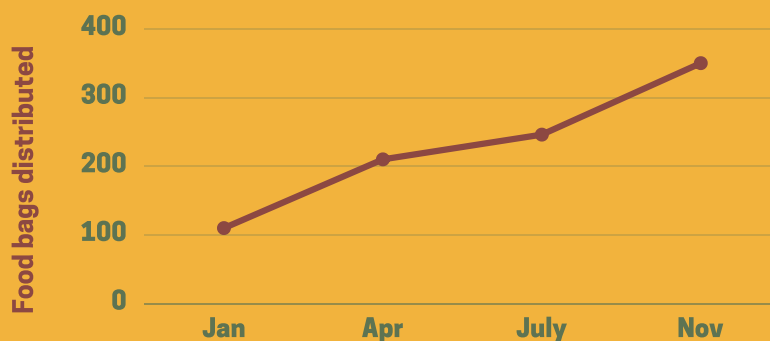


# THE RESPONSE X2

## WHY WE NEED THE MOSS PARK MARKET

*"I come to Moss Park Market every Saturday and they are very generous, they provide fresh fruits and vegetables. A lot of people come here and they are such good people. God Bless."*

**-Community Member**



**3X**  
growth of Moss  
Park Market  
through 2021

750+ community members every Saturday through 2021

1450+ fruit and vegetable bags distributed in 2021

50+ volunteers through our Market operations

Dozens of partner collaborations enabling leadership, social cohesion, and community care

Consistent support for increased food access in Toronto

Open year round

*"It's so gratifying and rare to find an organization that fundamentally trusts community members, and tries to give them whatever they request - instead of policing them or micromanaging what's given out. I think that trusting atmosphere is really special for volunteers and community members alike."*

**- Melissa, Volunteer**



**90% of  
community  
members**

**Reported participating in Building Roots'  
programs improved their mental health this year  
\*many attributed this to consistent support and  
knowing they had access to healthy food options**

In 2021, our **volunteers** used these words to describe participating with us:

**fulfilling, impactful, warm, fun, conscious, welcoming, hopeful,  
connection, joyful, rewarding, community, supportive!**

# MEDIA & ACADEMIA

## IN THE MEDIA

We are thankful to collaborate with media outlets and communication experts to support telling important and diverse stories this past year, some of which you can learn about here:

- "Moss Park plans revealed in downtown segment of Ontario Line." Emma Johnston-Wheeler. The Bridge. July 2021.
- "Dare 2 Care: Building Roots, Community Partners & Paramount Fine Foods." CBC News. July 2021.
- "Charities to Help People Close to Home." The Agenda with Steve Paikin. November 2021.

For more, visit our [blog at buildingroots.ca](https://blog.atbuildingroots.ca) or [YouTube at Building Roots TO](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8)

## IN ACADEMIA

We are proud to be able to collaborate with students from multiple universities through on-the-ground experiences, experiential learning, and reports with the community:

- BookShare. Stewardship by Emily, Lo, Ethan, Vickie. University of Toronto.
- "In Times of Change." CJRU and Building Roots. November 2021.
- "Community Food Resources." George Brown.
- "Community- Based Service-Learning Placement." Ava Abraham and Kevin Zhang. University of Toronto. In partnership with FoodShare. May 2021.
- Allan Gardens. Prof Leslie Campbell, June Komisar. 2016. Last two years, stewardship by Komisar, Nasr, Friends of Allan Gardens, Diana Teal and Derek Barber, Edible Allan Gardens Project. Contributions to Moss Park Market.
- Ryerson Urban Farm. Arlene Throness. Contributions to Moss Park Market.





# FUNDERS + DONORS

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Every single contribution has breathed life into our COVID-19 relief programs which focus on community members who may be experiencing the highest vulnerability to the negative impacts of the pandemic, including unserved seniors, children, and families.

Thank you for your funding and donations, we could not do this without you.

P & L Odette Foundation

Balsam Foundation

Marion Ethel & Frederick John Kamm  
Foundation

Sprott Foundation

MEH Foundation

City of Toronto Economic & Culture

Government of Canada

Ozery Bakery

Echo Foundation

United Way of Greater Toronto

Mackenzie Investments

Lewis Cohen Family Foundation

Mazon Canada

Dillon Consulting

Greenrock Charitable Trust

Green Sanderson Family Foundation

Anonymous Donor

Harvey Kalles Employees and  
Charitable Foundation

Ontario Realtor Care Foundation

Grandmothers Partnering with Africa

CUPE 3903

Youth Employment Services

LiUNA Local 183

Charities Aid Foundation of Canada

Sinking Ships Productions

The 519- City of Toronto

We'd like to also express gratitude for each and every individual donation we received in 2021, which went directly into our programming areas and allowed us to support and work with the community more closely.

# 2022 AND BEYOND

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"When new grassroots groups want to make things happen, I refer them to your website, to see what you do. Multiple times I've done that. YOU are the model I use for smaller and grassroots organizations with real scalability"

**-City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam**

2021 was filled with grief and gratitude, setbacks and strides, heartache and healing, and everything in-between. We are so thankful to everybody who collaborated alongside us, echoing our community-grounded and community-led approach. Thank you to those who funded our projects, volunteered, donated material goods, and advocated relentlessly beside us and the communities we work with. Our goal of vibrant and resilient neighbourhoods is achieved by the capacities and skills of the community. It is all our collaboration that enables greater social cohesion, deepening our efforts of community care. Our efforts to enable social cohesion will continue into 2022 and beyond, while we work together to sustainably pursue programs and services in Moss Park and Downtown Toronto East. Some of these programs may have garnered greater attention and support during the pandemic, but we know they are important and integral far beyond the confines of COVID-19. We thank you for your support in advocating for stronger and more equitable systems of care.

Thank you for collaborating with us.

This is **OUR** impact.



## Connect with Us!

Follow us @BuildingRootsTO on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) to stay connected and go to [www.buildingroots.ca](http://www.buildingroots.ca) to learn how you can Get Involved.



## Donate

[buildingroots.ca/donate](http://buildingroots.ca/donate)

Growing Neighbourhoods Foundation  
Charitable number: 734726680RR0001  
You will receive a tax receipt for your donation.

**We are committed to enabling people to create socially cohesive communities. We envision vibrant, resilient neighbourhoods, together!**