




A BETTER LIFE
FOUNDATION

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UPWARD
KITCHENS


2024 SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT



IMPACT & PURPOSE

Operating out of our shared home at Save On Meats, Upward Mobility Kitchens & A Better Life Foundation have been driving the message that food is a right – not a privilege for well over a decade. We believe in the fundamental necessity of dignified, consistent and delicious meals as an essential part of lifting up our community.

Since we began in 2012, we've provided well over 5 million meals to folks living in the Downtown Eastside – and like the neon pigs that have been flying over Hastings Street since 1957 – we plan on continuing to be a part of this community for years to come.

Our Daily Meal Program is the driving force of our operation and we care deeply about how it's received. Our meals are chef-driven, prepared by a team of professionals that also represents the community we serve – the majority of our staff either live or have lived in the DTES.

We care deeply about the people we serve and consider them family at our kitchen table.





Everybody understands the necessity of food as fuel, we've all been hungry. But its impact on our overall health, identity and well-being is just as critical.

Increases in food security are directly related to improved health - both physical and mental. Malnourished people are prone to many other health complications that compound our already strained medical system.

People who are fed are more peaceful. Statistics show that supportive housing buildings with food programs have less calls to first responders and less reported incidents of domestic disputes, violence and vandalism. Fed people are happy people.

When marginalized populations have access to additional resources it frees up time, capacity and resources to enrich other aspects of their lives like attending medical appointments and other social supports, increased attendance at employment and educational programs, etc. Food helps people rise to their own potential.

The social connectivity of food helps break down barriers where people share stories, culture and companionship. We gather around food to congregate and everyone deserves to be a part of that experience.



As of June 2024, our staff self-identified as:

88%

belonging to an underrepresented social group

61%

having a disability

55%

having lived in poverty

27%

having a history of addiction

STAFFING

It's important that our meals meet and exceed expectations of quality, deliciousness and nutrition. It is equally important that they are made by folks who are empathetic to the circumstances of the people they serve.

We foster a supportive working environment and endeavour to create opportunities for people in our community.

IMPACT STATISTICS

2024

422,271	TOTAL DAILY MEAL PROGRAM	2,799,680
162,531	TOTAL FOOD RECOVERY MEALS	464,501
46,565 kg	TOTAL KG FOOD RECOVERED	160,607 kg
116,487 kg	TOTAL KG OF CO ² SAVED	297,512 kg
78	TOTAL PLENTY OF PLATES EVENTS	257
7,090	TOTAL PLENTY OF PLATES MEALS	68,761
6,471 h	TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS	22,453 h
13,501	TOTAL TOKEN WINDOW MEALS	137,656
605,393	TOTAL MEALS SERVED OVERALL	5,161,916

TO DATE

Partnership has been essential to our impact of providing

5,161,916

HEART-DRIVEN MEALS

Upward Mobility currently holds contracts with:



A Better Life Foundation has donated meals to dozens of community, cultural and housing groups & allies.



A BETTER LIFE
FOUNDATION

DAILY MEAL PROGRAM SCHEDULE

February 2025

Please check allergens for any dietary sensitivities and consume your meal within 2 days of its delivery. ENJOY!
For questions or feedback regarding meals, please contact: info@abetterlifefoundation.ca

BIRTHDAY
CAKE DAY!



HAPPY
BIRTHDAY!

We want to celebrate & honour all the Birthdays in February. Please Enjoy this cake & know it comes with our sincerest wishes for a great year ahead.

Saturday February 1						
Beef Ratatouille with Zucchini & Parmesan Risotto						
Sunday February 2	Monday February 3	Tuesday February 4	Wednesday February 5	Thursday February 6	Friday February 7	Saturday February 8
Wok Fired Beef & Broccoli with Jasmine Rice	Classic Shepherd's Pie on Creamy Russet Mash	Creamy Chicken Fricassee with Wild Rice & Fresh Parsley	Creamy Mushroom, Snap Pea & Beef Stroganoff	Crispy Chicken Thighs on Russet Potato Mash with Butter Corn & Veg	Local Roast Beef with Baked Potatoes, Gravy & Veg	Chicken & Mushroom Alfredo on Penne
Sunday February 9	Monday February 10	Tuesday February 11	Wednesday February 12	Thursday February 13	Friday February 14	Saturday February 15
Ukrainian Beef & Cabbage Roll Bowl with Local Veg	Teriyaki Chicken on Rice	Fresh Garlic Pesto Chicken with Sautéed Veg on Penne	Hand Ground Swedish Meatballs with Creamy Gravy & Snap Peas	Korean Marinated Steak Bulgogi with Sautéed Veg	Baked Chicken Parmigiana with Penne & House Marinara	Classic Shepherd's Pie on Creamy Russet Mash
Sunday February 16	Monday February 17	Tuesday February 18	Wednesday February 19	Thursday February 20	Friday February 21	Saturday February 22
Meatball Rigatoni with Rich Tomato Sauce & Fresh Basil	Lucky Number #43 - Special Fried Rice with Spring Rolls & Sweet Plum Sauce	Chicken & Mushroom Alfredo on Penne	Wok Fired Beef & Broccoli with Jasmine Rice	Meatloaf on Buttermilk Mash with Roast Peas & Carrots	Roast Chicken with French Onion Sauce & Garlic Mashed Potatoes	Teriyaki Chicken on Rice
Sunday February 23	Monday February 24	Tuesday February 25	Wednesday February 26	Thursday February 27	Friday February 28	
Creamy Mushroom, Snap Pea & Beef Stroganoff	Korean Marinated Steak Bulgogi with Sautéed Veg	Fresh Garlic Pesto Chicken with Sautéed Veg on Penne	Roasted Vegetable & Beef Stew with Fresh Baked Bannock	Classic Sweet & Sour Chicken Balls with Chunked Pineapple Rice	"Deluxe Pizza" Mac & Cheese Casserole	

FOOD SENSITIVITIES:



COCONUT



DAIRY



GLUTEN



EGGS



MUSHROOM



NUTS



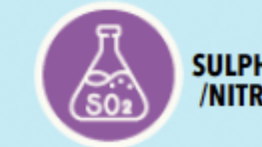
SEAFOOD



SESAME



SOY



SULPHITES
/NITRITES



GREEN SQUARES INDICATE
A VEGETARIAN MEAL



FOOD BUILDS CONNECTION

There are solutions to bring food security to our communities, but they are challenging and require public support. The best way to cultivate these solutions is by building empathy, destroying division and taking care of each other.

Plenty of Plates was designed to celebrate community over food. Volunteers join us in our commercial kitchen, prepare a chef driven 3 course meal which they then serve to guests from our meal programs.

Being face to face in service in an uplifted, safe and warm restaurant environment attacks bias and stigma head on showing a different perspective of the personalities in our community. They see the hope, joy and humour of the people we serve and feel empowered to help us build a stronger city - together.

EVERY MEMBER OF OUR DAILY MEAL PROGRAM RECEIVES:

INVITES TO PLENTY OF PLATES

Plenty of Plates is a completely complimentary, 3 course, restaurant-style dinner hosted at Save On Meats multiple times per week.

Sharing this evening of connection and celebration of community over food with our partners is very important and we love sharing this special experience.

BIRTHDAY CAKE

Food has the ability to make people feel special - to be seen. On the 1st of each month, we send each resident in every building an individual portion of birthday cake to celebrate those born that month.

SURVEYS

Our meals consistently receive outstanding feedback and get better every year.

A major factor in that improvement is listening to the needs and preferences of our community through our annual survey.

We incentivize tenants to participate and aggregate the feedback to make data-informed adaptations of our recipes and offerings.

RECOVERY HAMPERS

Recognizing that many folks enjoy the agency of cooking, we will send regular hampers of ingredients to buildings as available.

TOKENS

Our meals are robust and filling, but it's still just one meal per day and often tenants are hungry beyond what we're able to provide.

RECOVERY PROGRAM

Over 60% of the food grown and produced in Canada finds itself in the waste stream, all while one in five families are food insecure. Not only is this a tremendous waste of a much needed resource, but food waste also contributes approximately 77.65 million tonnes of CO₂ or about 11% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions every year.

We partner with grocery stores, urban farms and food producers to reclaim perfectly good food and divert from the waste stream and use the ingredients to produce wonderfully delicious meals.

Because of the spontaneity of the ingredients, we have a whole team dedicated to making meals entirely out of these donations. Our team of experienced chefs and volunteers are able to produce an average of 300 meals every day!



**MORE THAN
60% OF FOOD
PRODUCED IN
CANADA
ENDS UP IN
THE LANDFILL**



YOUTH & FAMILY FOCUSSED MEAL PROGRAM

Food insecurity makes it nearly impossible to break the cycle of poverty. That's why we focus on giving the next generation a positive relationship with food, starting with our **Youth & Family Meal Program**—providing **150 meals every day** to the women and children at the **Budzey Building** which houses women lead families in Downtown Eastside.

Raising kids is tough—doing it in the Downtown Eastside is even harder. Our meal program isn't just about sustenance; **it's about stability, resilience, and fostering a positive relationship with food.** Along with providing nutritious meals, we integrate **food literacy**—helping families build confidence in cooking, nutrition, and meal planning. By ensuring access to healthy food and the knowledge to

make the most of it, we empower parents to **focus on thriving, not just surviving, even in an environment where resources are scarce.**

Research shows that food security leads to **better academic performance, attendance, and long-term health.** Youth with reliable access to nutritious meals are more likely to succeed in school, gain meaningful employment, and experience improved mental well-being.

Food is more than fuel—it's a **foundation for a stronger, healthier future.** Providing meals is just the start. To build real food security, we need to get **upstream of the issue** and invest in long-term solutions that empower families and break the cycle of poverty.

HERE'S SOME
HIGHLIGHTS:

They share with us that these meals offer a sense of security knowing that there will be food available for themselves and their families if for whatever reason they are not able to provide it themselves.

85%

said they share these meals with their immediate family

77%

answered that the grocery store was where the majority of their food comes from

71%

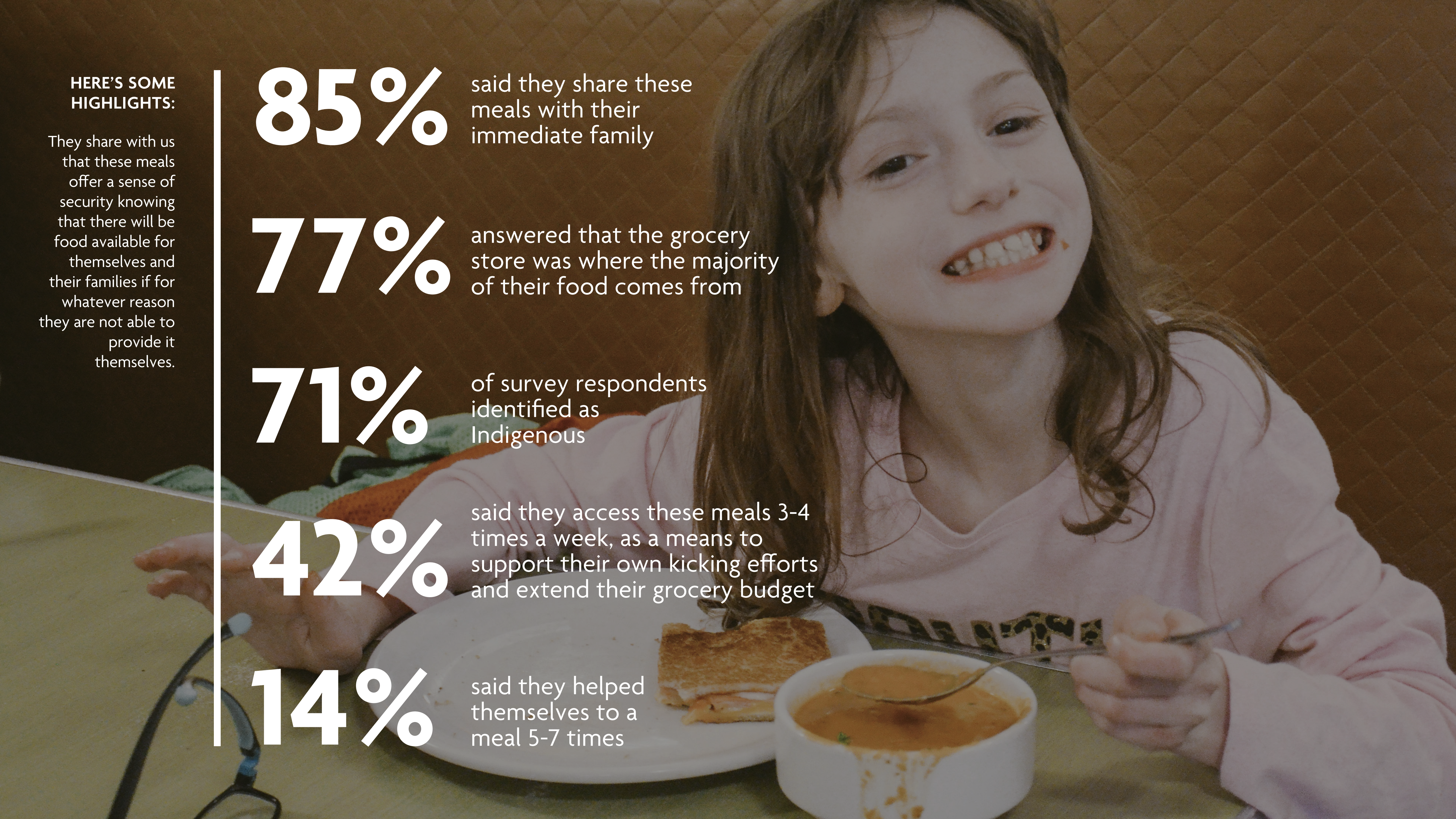
of survey respondents identified as Indigenous

42%

said they access these meals 3-4 times a week, as a means to support their own kicking efforts and extend their grocery budget

14%

said they helped themselves to a meal 5-7 times





CHEF'S CAMP

We do more than provide meals—we invite neighbourhood youth into our kitchen to **learn, cook, and build confidence**. Our food literacy classes introduce new ingredients, teach essential cooking skills, and **foster a positive, hands-on relationship with food**.

Cooking is more than just a skill—it's **independence, health, and a pathway to self-sufficiency**. Studies show that kids who learn to cook develop better eating habits, leading to healthier choices into adulthood. In BC, where **22% of children face food insecurity**, these skills can change lives.

Many youth in our community rely on **instant noodles and canned goods**, not because they aren't cared for, but because the resources and confidence to cook aren't there. In our kitchen, they get to **play, learn, and taste their way toward a healthier future**.



It is our hope that everyone in our community has access to dignified food that they thoroughly enjoy.

We are proud to play a significant role towards that goal, but understand that there is a long way to go before we can consider our community food secure.

Every partnership we forge is a significant step towards making a stronger, healthier and more resilient community.



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