



Social Impact

Where you bank makes a difference.

First Credit Union is a values-based financial cooperative driven by a vision to build financially healthy communities. We use a triple bottom line approach to help develop socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable communities. That's why we return approximately 1/3 our net profits to our members and communities through impact initiatives. Every dollar you borrow and every cent you deposit supports donations, sponsorships, scholarships and community programming.

Here are just some of the ways your membership had an impact in 2021:



\$30,500

Awarded in post-secondary scholarships



Sixty-three

non-profit leaders attended free governance & leadership workshops



\$50,000

In donations to local non-profit organizations



86 tonnes

of GHG emissions offset through Great Bear Rainforest carbon credits



Four

Electric car charging stations installed at our Powell River (Joyce) location



\$7,500

In sponsorships to send youth to co-operative leadership camps

Building resilient, thriving communities.

In 2021 the COVID 19 pandemic was still impacting our communities. While the economic, social and health impacts have been an extreme hardship for many, there have also been examples of deep resilience. Below are just a few examples of the organizations First Credit Union was proud to support over the past year. These impact stories highlight the spirit of our communities and demonstrate what can be achieved when we work together.



Community Resilience THRIVES on Bowen Island

In recent years the impacts of climate change, combined with a global pandemic, have created a sense of instability that is new and uncomfortable for many B.C. residents. Out of the shadows, inspiring stories of community resilience and innovation have sprouted.

In 2021 a group of Bowen Islanders founded THRIVE an unincorporated group dedicated to promoting community resiliency through food security. One of the key critical issues the group has been looking at is food security and what's emerging around climate change in terms of access to farmland, access to resources and supply chains. In partnership with Kwantlen Polytechnic University, THRIVE sought funding to support a feasibility study for community-owned commercial greenhouses on the island.

"It could not have happened without First Credit Union because they were one of the first in" said THRIVE Co-Founder David Adams. "We're very grateful because their vote of confidence really did provide the stepping stone we needed to build the rest of the momentum to reach our target."

THRIVE successfully raised \$23,000 from corporate donors, and an additional \$12,000 from community members and the project is at an exciting juncture. "We have some potential solutions that are emerging, and a number of different directions we could go in," David says. "It is giving us some very tangible ways of addressing the crucial issue of food resiliency and food security."



Healthy Food Builds Community in Cumberland

Since the Cumberland Farmers' Market was born in 2016, they have been facilitating a nutrition coupon program for residents of their community, in partnership with Cumberland Community School Society (CCSS). The program provides \$20 per week in coupons to low-income individuals, giving people a bit of extra money for food, and the coupons can only be spent at the market on whole foods.

In 2021 a total of \$9,400 in funding was provided to the coupon program by First Credit Union and the Village of Cumberland. These funds enabled the organization to distribute coupons to 154 participants over a 13-week period.

Twila Skinner, General Manager of the Comox Valley Farmers' Market Association, says involving several key community players has been a vital part of the program's success. "We have lots of people in the community who want to help and having different levels of support makes it more of a community program because it's lots of stakeholders, so it spreads it out and grows." Three years of support from First Credit Union has meant that more participants have been able to benefit from the program, Twila continues. "The guaranteed funds from First Credit Union have given us a leg up and helped us to know that we can continue the program."

Access to nutritious food is just one of the positive impacts of the program. It also helps to support the market and local vendors, bringing a steady stream of traffic through the venue and making it a valuable place for community gatherings in the warmer months. At the end of the day the work is all about removing barriers so everyone in community can thrive.



A Rainbow of Hope in the Comox Valley

When you don't have a safe place to sleep at night not much else seems very important. Yet precarious housing is a fact of life for many LGBTQ2S+ youth in the Comox Valley.

LGBTQ2S+ youth are two-to-three times more likely to be homeless than their peers, says Grant Shilling, outreach worker for Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society. To address this issue, in 2021 Dawn to Dawn embarked on the Rainbow House project, which will provide safe and stable transitional housing and services for at-risk, marginalized youth.

Sabel Grange is a peer support worker with Rainbow House. "The way that I view Rainbow House," she says, "is as a place where young, marginalized folks can come and just have a stable space to be... so we can help them go forward and be the amazing individuals that they are."

Dawn to Dawn is partnering on Rainbow House, also known as Wagalus Gukw, with K'omoks First Nation. This is significant because the Indigenous population is over-represented in the homeless population on Vancouver Island, including in the LGBTQ2S+ youth community.

Partnerships like this one, as well as support from organizations like the Comox Valley Pride Society, and funding from businesses like First Credit Union are incredibly important to the project, Grant says.



Building Connection with the Texada Seniors Housing Society

Community is connection. It's where the people we love live. So, what happens if we are forced to leave our community as we age because there is nowhere suitable for us to live? It's a problem that Cathy Brown and her team at the Texada Island Non-Profit Seniors Housing Society (TINSHS) started looking at in 2019.

"Most people on Texada Island live in their own houses, and most of those houses aren't really elder friendly," Cathy explains. "There are lots of stairs, they're on acreages...The more we looked into it, the more we discovered how great the need was."

In 2020 and 2021 Cathy attended the leadership and governance training offered through First Credit Union's Non-Profit Thriving series.

“All of the training that First Credit Union has put in front of us has been very helpful...The information and assistance we have received has been key for us in putting together our plans, in the development of the organization, and the board itself.”

First Credit Union also provided TINSHS with a \$2,500 donation in 2021 to support a strategic planning process, which has been a vital part of the development of the society and its plan, Cathy continues.

“The strategic plan has been key because it’s given us a document that explains the project clearly to funders and potential land donors.”

Their next step is to do a formal needs assessment and a proper feasibility study. This will help TINSHS secure land for the project, and the funding they will need to build. The number of local organizations, businesses and individuals that have shown interest in and support for the initiative is really encouraging, Cathy says.

“It’s nice to start to see us reconnecting,” she smiles.