



## Neighbourhood Small Grants

# Building Community, One Project at a Time: 70 Neighbourhood Small Grants in 2024

### CELEBRATING WHERE WE LIVE

This year, hundreds of neighbours came together through 70 community-led projects, strengthening connections, sparking creativity, and making the South Okanagan-Similkameen a more inclusive, welcoming, and sustainable place to live.

Residents organized block parties, cultural celebrations, and social gatherings, like the Finnerty Rd Multicultural Block Party, Kyalami Community Carnival, and Lights Out Naramata. Others focused on wellness and accessibility, from the Similkameen 5K Fun Run/Walk to the Dementia Friendly Naramata Social and the Loss Group in Keremeos.

Gardening and sustainability flourished with projects like the N'tamqen Garden in the Lower Similkameen, Inclusive Community Gardens, The Little Seed Library, and several hands-on workshops.

Supporting initiatives such as the Tea Creek screening in Oliver, the Fancy Dance screening at the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, and groups to learn about Indigenous-Specific Racism and Indigenous Reconciliation created spaces for meaningful conversations, reflection, deepening understanding and relationships.

From social impact projects like the Anarchist Mountain Community Quilt, Ponderosa Place's Give Back, and the Tree Social & Art Installation to hands-on community efforts like the Kenyon Park Clean-Up and the Seeds to Salsa food demonstration in Summerland, each initiative showcased the unique spirit and shared commitment of community and belonging in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

These grassroots projects highlight the power of small grants - proving that when neighbours come together, big things happen. **Be inspired by and enjoy the stories featured in the newsletter.**



Hedley Outhouse Race

The Neighbourhood Small Grants program is grateful to listen, grow, and build relationships on the sacred and unceded homelands of the Syilx Peoples. We honour the reciprocity of these lands and the communities who continue to care for them.

## THE GREAT HEDLEY OUTHOUSE RACES: Speed, Laughter, and Community Fun!

From little boys to big boys, from little girls to moms and grandmas, the Outhouse Races were our neighbourhood event that brought joy to families.

The Outhouse Races were developed by a Hedley resident almost thirty years ago. We resurrected this event as an opportunity for family members of all ages to enjoy.



The outhouses were wild and zany, and the teams were just as fun!

With names like **The Tornados**, **The Daly Dump**, and **The Aussies**, racers were ready to roll. Our races took place on the Saturdays of the long weekends throughout the summer, bringing plenty of excitement to the community.

Many grandchildren visiting for the weekend got to reconnect with their grandparents and cousins, making the event even more special.

We ran three timed races, with prizes for first, second, and third place—including a roll of toilet paper, a cash prize, and a classic favourite: a pouch of gold nugget bubble gum candy!

The final races of the season in September had a special touch, with prizes of beautifully crafted miniature outhouses made by a local artisan. But the real highlight was seeing families reconnect and share in the fun.

One unforgettable moment featured a grandma racing to the finish line, pushing the outhouse while her granddaughter, riding inside, cheered, "**Go Grandma, go!**" Meanwhile, a proud grandpa-grandson duo, thrilled with their win, are already busy designing new outhouses for next summer's races.

To wrap up the season, we held a community barbecue on September 1, where racers and spectators enjoyed hot dogs, burgers, and plenty of laughter.

The renewed relationships and connections were a priceless victory for everyone involved.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to our general store, Hedley Country Market, for providing candied treats for the children; to our local artisan, Ken Knutson, for donating the miniature wooden outhouse prizes; to the Community Foundation for the grant that covered our expenses; and last but not least, to the families in our neighbourhood for their enthusiastic participation.





## A TGIF COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Thanks to a Neighbourhood Small Grant, Princeton neighbours hosted TGIF—**Thank Goodness It's Free**, a fun, alcohol-free mocktail party in the town square.

Over 300 people, including several families, came out to enjoy tasty drinks, great food, and printed recipes to take home. With extra support from local sponsors, the event was a big success, creating a welcoming space for everyone.

More than just a party, TGIF got people talking, meeting new friends, and celebrating together. It was a great reminder that community events don't need alcohol to be fun—they just need good people, good vibes, and something tasty to share!



## ZUMBA UNDER K MOUNTAIN

**I wasn't sure how many people would show up.** The idea started small—a free Zumba class in the park—just a fun way to get people moving. Thanks to a NSG, I could offer an honorarium to a local instructor, water out to the participants, and making it accessible to everyone by holding it in the park.

The morning of the class, the sun was already heating up, I worried it keep people away. But as I set up the speaker people started arriving all ready to dance!

We kicked off with an upbeat Latin music, and soon, laughter and energy filled the park. Some curious passersbys and families stopped to watch. The instructor's enthusiasm was contagious, and despite the heat, no one wanted to stop.



After an hour of dancing and plenty of water breaks, people lingered, chatting and stretching in the shade. That's when I heard it—the same question, over and over:

**"When's the next class?"**

I hadn't planned for more, but their excitement sparked something in me. I started researching Zumba training, and by the fall, I was leading a weekly Zumba series at the local rec centre, giving our community a way to stay active and connected all winter long.

That one hot Sunday morning in the park turned into something bigger than I had ever imagined—a movement, in every sense of the word.

## LEARNING THROUGH PLAY TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION IN SUMMERLAND

A group gathered at the Summerland Library for an afternoon of learning, reflection, and connection through the **Truth in Truth and Reconciliation Educational Board Game**.

The immersive game provided a unique and powerful way to explore Canada's history of colonization and the ongoing impacts on Indigenous Peoples. Participants took on the role of Indigenous players navigating the challenges of colonial policies, systemic oppression, and cultural loss, all while striving to collect four Eagle Feathers—symbols of Land, Language, Culture, and Identity.

The journey around Turtle Island was both eye-opening and emotional, as players encountered Truth and Consequence Cards, which highlighted historical events and policies that shaped Indigenous experiences.



## CONNECTING IN THE HEAT A Tulameen Gathering

Despite the scorching heat, our community came together for a wonderful afternoon filled with laughter, good food, and new friendships.

A delicious lunch fueled lively Tulameen trivia, while some braved a game of cornhole—though most opted for shade and great conversation. New residents were welcomed, stories were shared, and connections grew stronger.

Kids played together, neighbours who had only exchanged waves finally got to chat, and long-time residents reminisced about Tulameen's history.

The event sparked a sense of belonging, reminding us how important it is to gather, celebrate, and support one another. Thanks to the generous NSG, we hosted an event that truly brought people together—heat and all!

## BLOCK PARTY TO COMMUNITY ACTION

What started as a casual conversation at our Pineview Estates block party turned into a full neighbourhood project! After realizing how costly it would be to hire landscapers, Council pitched in for rock, a neighbour offered discounted equipment use, and volunteers stepped up.

A sign-up sheet brought in 10 new helpers, including a volunteer who fixed our entrance lighting. For once, it was the whole community coming out to help with the work!

The next day, we planted colourful perennials, ran new irrigation, and even discovered a leak that needed fixing. Thanks to our NSG grant and neighbour support, our entrance got a beautiful refresh!





## LANEWAYS PLANTING & CELEBRATION: Growing Community Together

On a sunny Saturday in September, 22 Naramata neighbours - including a few from Penticton—gathered for the Laneways Planting and Celebration. The event welcomed anyone interested in touring the laneways, learning about the project, or helping to plant in areas already started.

The morning included a guided tour for newcomers, a planting demonstration, and a celebration with treats from a local coffee shop and refreshing lavender lemonade. The Village Motel generously offered its outdoor BBQ area as a gathering space, creating a welcoming spot for conversation and connection.

Guests took home plant guides, and door prizes of flower bulbs and gardening tools added to the excitement. Many attendees lingered past the scheduled time, sharing ideas and building friendships around the shared goal of beautifying our laneways.

A huge thank you to the Community Foundation for the NSG, which helped turn this project into a meaningful community event, recognizing volunteers and fostering a shared passion for creating vibrant public spaces.



## LIGHTS OUT NARAMATA A Celebration of the Super Harvest Moon

On September 22, as the Super Harvest Moon rose over Naramata, our community gathered at Manitou Park for Lights Out Naramata & BBQ—an evening of stargazing, connection, and light pollution awareness. Residents were encouraged to turn off their lights, letting the night sky shine.

Five astronomers from the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada set up telescopes, binoculars, and peepscopes, guiding attendees in exploring the stars. Guests could name a star and share a fact about it for a chance to win a door prize.

Beyond wonder, this event promoted Naramata's goal of becoming a Dark Sky Community, ensuring future generations can wish upon a star. Resources on reducing light pollution at home were shared, making the evening both inspiring and educational.

For one night, Naramata dimmed its lights, bringing neighbours together to celebrate the magic of the night sky and our role in protecting it.



## REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SEEDS TO SALSA IN SUMMERLAND

With support from the Neighbourhood Small Grants program, we committed to hosting a Salsa Garden Block Party—a celebration of fresh food and community.

On August 18, with vegetables ripe and ready (supplied from a farmer in Keremeos), we gathered at Carcajou Fruit's summer kitchen. The stars of the event were the seasonal guest workers from Mexico. They took charge, roasting, boiling, and blending with skill and confidence, creating seven different types of salsa.

Under the guidance of our Salsa Boss, I learned that salsa is far more than the jars on Canadian grocery shelves. In Mexico, food is a cornerstone of community, and neighbours regularly come together by the hundreds to cook, share meals, and celebrate.

Our small block party was nothing compared to their traditional feasts, but the joy of cooking, learning, and connecting was just as meaningful. Inspired by this experience, we're already planning another Salsa Garden Party next summer!



### A NIGHT TO CELEBRATE Free Spirits Society's Social

In October, Free Spirits Society opened our gathering to the public, welcoming guests from Osoyoos, Oliver, and even Princeton for a fancy black-and-white-themed evening of laughter, conversation, and Social Bingo!

We met in Osoyoos, where at 6 PM, we enjoyed beautifully plated meals—the presentation alone had everyone in awe!

After dinner, we played Social Bingo, where guests mingled to find someone who had been to Europe, someone wearing a hat, or someone who loves shrimp. The draw prize table made for some quick wins, clearing out in no time!

For the next hour, we savoured raspberry peach mocktails, laughed, and shared stories. Some of the most powerful moments came when guests shared about their lives, bringing both tears and deep connections.

This night was a celebration of sobriety, resilience, and real, meaningful conversations. It was a reminder of the strength of the human spirit—and proof that a sober life can be joyful, fulfilling, and full of community.

Thank you to the NSG committee for this opportunity to gather, celebrate, and uplift one another. This is what true connection looks like.



Permission to share photos



## STEWART PLACE FIESTA

We had 30 neighbours come together for a fantastic day of food, fun, and connection. We feasted on a taco bar, along with watermelon and ice cream, kept everyone happy while new and longtime residents got to know each other.

One of the highlights was welcoming George, a former resident of over 40 years, who returned just for the party. At 95, he even played a game of cornhole with a teen neighbour! As he left, he promised, **“See you at next year’s party!”**

Thanks to funding support, everyone could join in, making this a truly inclusive and special gathering.



## HERITAGE GARDEN PARTY

“Our Heritage Home Garden Party and Info Session attracted over 50 attendees, with more than 30 expressing interest in protecting Penticton’s heritage buildings by leaving their contact details.

Motivated by concern over the loss of heritage buildings, our group aimed to inform residents about preservation resources, including Heritage BC and the City of Penticton’s Planning Department. The event also created an opportunity for neighbours to connect, **share their passion for local heritage, and build a sense of community around preserving Penticton’s history.**

We hosted two speakers: local historian Randy Manuel, who shared Penticton’s history, and Blake Laven, the City’s Director of Development Services, who discussed federal and provincial Heritage Registers, listing processes, protections, and the distinctions between covenants and bylaws.

Neighbours enjoyed teatime treats, informative handouts from Heritage BC, and resources about the Okanagan Historical Society.

We deeply appreciate the support of the Neighbourhood Small Grant, the City of Penticton, and the South Okanagan Similkameen Community Foundation for making this community-building event possible.”



## PENTICTON AVENUE Our Seed Library

Our little seed library is a sidewalk accessible cabinet where people can borrow seeds, and donate the seeds from that plant back to the library, or donate seeds from their own collection to share with others.

The focus will be on Indigenous seeds, drought tolerant seeds, and invasive plant education. We will also have seeds to grow fruit, vegetables, and herbs. Because of The NSG program, I was able to make this project come to life. I built the library myself with help from the woodworking department at the high school. I used reclaimed materials from ReStore, and was able to use the rest of the budget on bulk seeds, prizes, and snacks for the grand opening.

Our climate in Penticton is classified as semi-arid, and according to [makewaterwork.ca](http://makewaterwork.ca)

- **There is less water available per person in the Okanagan than anywhere else in Canada**
- **The Okanagan has one of the highest rates of water use per person in Canada**
- **The second largest use of water in the Okanagan is used on our household lawns & gardens**

Penticton is the fourth driest city in Canada with 346.0mm (13.62") of annual precipitation. Our top priority is native and xeric friendly seeds, but growing food is also important to us.

Sourcing and germinating native perennial seeds can be overwhelming if you're a beginner, so the library is now a community hub for us to figure it out together. I delivered flyers for the grand opening the old fashioned way by going door-to-door. The opening drew many people from the neighbourhood, and most of them brought their own seed donations to add to the library. Despite the cool early November weather, we had a fantastic turnout

Thank you, City of Penticton and the Community Foundation, the students, and local business in helping turn this idea into a reality.







## **SIMILKAMEEN 5K FUN RUN/WALK** **Community, Connection, & Cause**

A huge thank you to everyone involved in the Neighbourhood Small Grants program for supporting our event. Your contribution made a big impact, and we're so excited to share the success of our **first ever Similkameen 5K Fun Run/Walk!**

Originally, we planned a community bike ride through Cawston and Keremeos, but at a local meeting, someone suggested a Fun Run along the trail instead. The idea took off, and with enthusiastic support, the event was born!

On April 21, about 100 participants joined us for a scenic 5K loop, either running or walking along the beautiful trail. Thanks to the NSG, we were able to provide healthy snacks, spread the word, and cover essential supplies to make it a fantastic experience for all. Generous contributions from other sponsors made it a truly community-driven event.

Beyond fitness and fun, the Fun Run helped raise awareness and funds for the Similkameen Starfish Pack program.

**The success of this event has inspired us to start planning for next April already!**

Thank you again for your support—you helped make a real difference!



### **About NSG:**

Neighbourhood Small Grants program is co-funded by CFSOS and the Vancouver Foundation and delivered by CFSOS in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. The City of Penticton is also a funding partner, supporting resident-led projects.

As a province-wide initiative, NSG empowers neighbours to create stronger, more connected communities through small, grassroots projects. For more information contact CFSOS at [kimenglish@cfsos.net](mailto:kimenglish@cfsos.net)

