



# 2023 FINAL REPORT

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CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE



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<b>ABOUT THE YELLOWKNIFE FARMERS MARKET</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2023 HIGHLIGHTS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OCTOBER 2022 TO SEPTEMBER 2023 ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>4</b>
AGM AND BOARD ACTIVITIES	4
CHRISTMAS MARKET	4
VENDOR RECRUITMENT & SUPPORT	4
PUBLICATIONS	4
COLLABORATION WITH RESEARCH INSTITUTE & UNIVERSITY	4
PUBLIC CONSULTATION	5
FOOD SECURITY	5
<b>SUMMER MARKET: JUNE 7 TO SEPTEMBER 13, 2023</b>	<b>5</b>
WILDFIRES	6
SUMMER MARKET HIGHLIGHTS	6
WHEN	7
WHERE	7
WHO	7
HOW	7
ADVERTISING	8
PRODUCTS	8
VENDORS	8
MARKETWURKS	9
FOOD SAFETY	9
ATTENDANCE	9
IMPACT OF THE WEATHER	9
<b>YKFM PROGRAMS</b>	<b>9</b>
MUSIC AT THE MARKET	9
MENTORSHIP PROGRAM PILOT PROJECT: HARVESTERS TABLE AND COMMERCIAL FOOD	
PRODUCTION	10
HARVESTERS TABLE	10
WASTE REDUCTION AND COMPOST PROGRAM	11
10th ANNIVERSARY	13
<b>ECONOMIC IMPACT</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>SOCIAL IMPACT</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>VOLUNTEERS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>GOING FORWARD - 2024</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>THANK YOU</b>	<b>16</b>

## ABOUT THE YELLOWKNIFE FARMERS MARKET

The Yellowknife Farmers Market (YKFM) is a non-profit society that has been in operation since 2013. The objectives of the YKFM are:

- *To facilitate the Yellowknife Farmers Market;*
- *To support food based economic development; and*
- *To support the development of local food systems.*

To achieve the above goals, the YKFM operates a weekly Farmers Market in the summer, runs other Food Security projects, and has previously held an annual Christmas Market in December.

The YKFM is governed by a Board of up to nine directors consisting of Market vendors and supporter members. The operations and activities of the YKFM are conducted by volunteers and contractors.

The YKFM gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the **City of Yellowknife and the Government of the Northwest Territories, notably the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Department of Health and Social Services' Anti-Poverty Fund, NWT Art Council, Inclusion NWT, the Territorial Agri-Food Association and Kavanaugh Bros.**

## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2023 Yellowknife Farmers Market planned for 15 markets this summer. Three markets were cancelled due to a wildfire evacuation order for the City of Yellowknife, and an additional market was added on September 19 to help make up for the missed markets.
- **The YKFM was successful in obtaining grants totaling \$112,073.** The grants helped to finance the operations of the 2023 Yellowknife Farmers Market including the Summer Market, Music at the Market, the Harvesters Table, the Mentorship Program Pilot Project, two Pay It Forward projects and the Compost & Waste Management program.
- Programs run included **Music at the Market, Pay it Forward, Community Table, Harvesters Table and Compost & Waste Management.**

- The YKFM celebrated its 10th anniversary by hosting a number of activities throughout the summer, including a “Saladbration,” family activities to introduce youth to gardening, and sharing the history of the market with patrons.
- The YKFM and Bush Order Provisions shared two mentee positions this summer to fulfil roles at the Harvesters Table at the summer market and Commercial Food Production at Bush Order Provisions.
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## OCTOBER 2022 TO SEPTEMBER 2023 ACTIVITIES

### AGM AND BOARD ACTIVITIES

The AGM for the YKFM was held on November 23, 2022, and 8 board members were elected. The required Financial Statements and the Record of Directors were submitted to NWT Societies Registry and the Yellowknife Farmers Market is in good standing.

The board met monthly and planned the 2022-2023 YKFM activities. This included writing proposals and reports, recruiting vendors and contractors, bookkeeping, and running programming at the summer market.

### CHRISTMAS MARKET

The YKFM decided not to hold a Christmas Market in 2023.

### VENDOR RECRUITMENT & SUPPORT

The YKFM wants to ensure new vendors have the information they need prior to the Market season by opening up dialogue between YKFM staff, board and vendors early in the year. In 2023, the ‘**Vendor Orientation Meeting**’ was held Friday, May 12, from 6-8pm at the Northern United Place auditorium. Approximately 25 of the 45 registered vendors attended the meeting. The meeting presentation was sent out to all the vendors in case they were unable to make the meeting or in case they wanted to review it. Turnout was lower than usual, likely due to the number of returning vendors and holding the orientation on a Friday evening (the only date available to rent the space).

## SUMMER MARKET: JUNE 6 TO SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

### COLLABORATION WITH RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND UNIVERSITIES

Our partners at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University supported a participatory evaluation of our market programs. The intention of this evaluation was to learn

about ways we can improve the YKFM. Over the Spring and Summer, we worked collaboratively with the project lead from the University of Waterloo to develop materials for the evaluation. This summer the project lead and a team of researchers were at the Market asking patrons and community partners about their experiences attending the market and suggestions for improvements. The lead returned this fall to meet with our vendors and market volunteers to understand their perspectives and suggestions for the market.

Questions explored included :

- How can the YKFM improve programming to meet the needs of the community?
- What are the social impacts of the YKFM?
- What value does the YKFM bring to the community?

Data collected during the 2023 market season included surveys, interviews, and a discussion group.

- 115 patron participants in a Rapid Market Assessment
- 29 patron and vendor surveys
- 7 interviews with vendors and community partners
- 8 volunteers participated in a discussion group on the Waste Reduction program

Findings generated 21 recommendations for Market improvement, demonstrate the role the YKFM plays in social inclusion in Yellowknife, highlight opportunities at the market for climate action and describe the market as a community hub that supports community connections, mental health and wellbeing and serves as a place for new businesses to grow. The Board of the YKFM will review the recommendations and include them in its strategic planning for 2024.

## **COVID-19**

As in 2022, the Market was able to return in 2023 without rules on capacity, mask-wearing, and hand-sanitization. The Market still provided hand sanitizer to patrons and had masks available, which were handed out on smoky nights.

In 2023, only \$30 was charged per stall per market day, following the same pricing structure that was in place during the pandemic (as opposed to \$40 in previous years), to financially aid and encourage vendors to return to the market after a tough two years.

## **WILDFIRE EVACUATION ORDER**

On August 16, an evacuation order was issued for the City of Yellowknife and nearby communities of Ndilo, Dettah, and residents who reside along the Ingraham Trail. This evacuation order lasted three weeks, meaning three weeks of the market had to be cancelled: August 22, August 29 and September 5. While the market was cancelled, the YKFM maintained its social media presence, encouraging patrons to continue to support vendors from afar if they were able, and encouraging them to support vendors once everyone was allowed back to the city.

The evacuation order ended on September 6, and the board, market manager, and vendors collaboratively decided to move forward with the scheduled market on September 12, and additionally added one final market on September 19. These markets were well attended despite smoke outdoors and reduced capacity at the market. Music at the Market was not run those two weeks but the Harvesters Table was opened for business. Volunteers and staff observed patrons were happy the market was running, as it gave them a chance to socialize and take a step back toward normalcy after weeks away. Vendors noted they appreciated the YKFM hosting two final markets, giving them a chance to sell.

Given there were only 13 markets in 2023, instead of the typical 15, caution will need to be used in comparing 2023's number to past years.

The summer of 2023 was exceptionally smoky given the wildfire situation, both before and after the wildfire evacuation order. On smoky nights, attendance was lower, in terms of vendors, patrons, and volunteers. Similar to rainy summers, the smoke underscores the need for a safe and dry indoor market location.

## **SUMMER MARKET HIGHLIGHTS**

- The **Music at The Market** program was held in the amphitheatre with a sitting audience. The free live music was scheduled to run for 13 weeks (the first three months) but due to one cancellation due to injury and two cancellations due to the wildfire evacuation order Music at the Market only ran for 10 weeks.
- The **Pay It Forward** program allowed 376 individuals to enjoy a meal at the market.
- The **Community Table**, **Harvesters Table** and **Compost & Waste Management** programs returned this year for the entirety of the season.
- The **Harvesters Table** brought in over 141 kg of produce for total sales of about \$2600 of which the YKFM retained about \$465 as revenues.
- The **Compost & Waste Management** program was successfully run by Linda Bussey, summer student Sanvi Paul, and a number of other student volunteers.
- 22 local organizations planned to use the **Community Tables** to showcase their organization to the patrons of the Market. Some of these organizations were not able to use their allotted time due to the wildfire evacuation order.
- The YKFM celebrated its 10th anniversary by hosting a number of activities throughout the summer. A "Saladbration" was well attended and held during the first NWT Culinary Festival at the end of July.

## **WHEN**

In 2023, the Market was scheduled to run from June 6 through September 12 in Somba K'e Civic Plaza, for a total of 15 weeks every Tuesday night, running from 5:15 PM to 7:15 PM. However, Yellowknife was under an evacuation order from August 16 until September 6, forcing the cancellation of three markets: August 22, August 29 and September 5. An additional market was added on September 19 to help make up for the cancelled markets.

## WHERE

The YKFM rents the Somba K'e Civic Plaza from the City of Yellowknife for \$401.63/day (with the exception of June 27, 2023, which cost less at \$361.46/day) host the weekly Market. In total, for thirteen market dates this season + GST, the cost came to \$4,877.86. Each vendor brought their own tent, table, and chairs. The footprint of the 2023 Market included the pathway extending off 53<sup>rd</sup> street around the curve of the path along Frame Lake trail as well as the section of sidewalk between the corner of 49<sup>th</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and Fireweed Studio (refer to the map at the end of the document).

The City provides picnic tables, cutting the grass, electricity, water fountain, washroom facilities, manages the garbage collection and provides an organic waste dumpster.

## WHO

**Patrons:** 7,900 people came to enjoy the Market, as calculated at point-in-time counts at 5:30pm over thirteen market nights. This averages out to 608 patrons per market. *(7,820 people over fifteen markets in 2022. This averaged out to 521 patrons per market).*

**Vendors:** Total of 45 different vendors, with an average of 24 vendors per week. Of these 45 vendors, 16 were new to the market (and two of these 16 were from Hay River and had to cancel due to wildfire evacuations and highway closures, resulting in them unable to drive to Yellowknife). *(total 46 vendors in 2022, with an average of 22 vendors per week).*

**Music at the Market:** 10 musical performances + Dene Drummers. Performers were scheduled for the first 13 weeks of the market, but due to one last-minute cancellation due to injury and two cancellations due to the wildfire evacuation order in late August Music at the Market only ran for 10 weeks, giving ten musicians and bands a chance to perform. The Dene Drummers also performed at the first market as part of the 10th anniversary celebrations *(17 performers in 2022)*

**Contractors:** 11 roles total (some roles were managed by the same person or shared by two people). 9 on site: Market Manager, Music at the Market Coordinator (plus 12 musicians), Pay it Forward Coordinator, 10th Anniversary Program Coordinator (plus three facilitators for family activities who were paid honorariums), 10th Anniversary Content Coordinator, Waste Reduction Content Coordinator, two Mentees under the Mentorship Program Pilot Project with the Harvesters Table and Bush Order Provisions; two Waste Reduction Coordinators, and 1 off-site professional consultant: Bookkeeper. *(8 total in 2022)*

**Volunteers:** Eight regular volunteers for the waste reduction program (28 individuals volunteered at least once). *(10 regular volunteers in 2022)* An additional three volunteers from Food Rescue Yellowknife attended the market to collect leftover food to redistribute.

**Community Tables:** 22 different local community and public organizations signed up to set up at the Market in 2023 (three had to cancel due to the wildfire evacuation). *(11 in 2022)*

## HOW

Financial support originated mostly from grants from the City of Yellowknife, NWT Arts Council, and GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI). Remaining funds were collected from vendor fees and a sponsorship from Kavanaugh Bros. The Territorial Agri-Food Association also provided in-kind support. Details are provided in the Financial report.

The YKFM benefits from countless hours of volunteer support from its board members and community volunteers such as Food Rescue and the Territorial Agri-Food Association.

## ADVERTISING

In 2023, the YKFM used social media to promote the Market as well as a weekly page in the Yellowknifer newspaper. Advertising funds were also used to promote the market's 10th anniversary as well as the compost and waste management program.

**Social media:** The Market and its initiatives were featured daily on the YKFM Facebook and Instagram pages.

**Yellowknifer newspaper:** A reduced rate of \$100 per week was provided for advertising in the Friday paper. This advertisement included a map of the Market with all of the vendors attending the following Tuesday as well as information on different programs provided each week by the Market Manager. This included reminding the public about the Harvesters Table, the loyalty program and the Music at the Market performers.

**Posters:** Printing and distribution of vendor recruitment and Market start date, as well as new COVID-19 signs throughout the Market.

The total advertising expense was **\$9,410.75 (\$5,657.59 was on 10th Anniversary advertising)**.

## PRODUCTS

All products sold at the Market are locally grown, sourced or made. Products include fresh produce, fish, cheese, jams and preserves, breads and baked goods, fresh meals and snacks, arts, crafts and jewellery and health products.

## VENDORS

A total of 45 vendors *(16 of which were new)* operated at the 2023 Market. Between 11 and 32 vendors were at the Market each week.



<b>YEAR</b>	<b>No. of vendors registered</b>	<b>Average number of vendors at weekly market</b>	<b>Revenue from vendors fees</b>
2019	44	22	\$13,830
2020	20	12	\$2,825
2021	25	15	\$7,960
2022	46	22	\$14,875
<b>2023</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>\$16,040</b>

Vendors are selected based on the quality of their products which should be original and, as much as possible, use local ingredients and components. Since 2016, all vendors (new and old) are asked to fill out an online application and are evaluated by the YKFM Vendor Selection Committee which is composed of board members and the Market Manager.

### **MARKETWURKS**

In 2023, all vendors' applications were processed by a software called "MarketWurks". The software is designed in Canada and is specifically for farmers markets. The software proved to be very useful and will continue to be used in future years. All the vendors data are archived in MarketWurks. Vendor invoicing was completed via Quickbooks.

### **FOOD SAFETY**

All vendors selling food at the Market completed a Food Safety training and obtained a Food Safety certificate, as well as held a temporary or seasonal food establishment permit. The YKFM is thankful to the Environmental Health Officers who supported all the food vendors in providing safe food to the public.

### **ATTENDANCE**

In 2023, approximately 7,900 people attended the Market as calculated at point-in-time counts at 5:30pm on market nights. Since patrons continue to visit the market later into the evening, the actual number of attendees is likely significantly higher. The YKFM is very grateful to the population of Yellowknife who continue to support its market.

There were two fewer markets in 2023 than scheduled due to the wildfire evacuation order.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
2019	8,809
2020	4,404

2021	9,400
2022 (15 markets)	7,820
<b>2023 (13 markets)</b>	<b>7,900</b>

**IMPACT OF THE WEATHER**

Fortunately, in 2023, there were no rainy days at the market – though there were three dates that were significantly smoky! There were also one or two very windy days where a few vendors had to move their stalls to more protected areas but overall the weather was very pleasant for the duration of the 2023 market season and we experienced many hot and sunny days with little wind.

For the past few years, there have been more rainy days than not, which has prompted a discussion on how the YKFM can provide shelter or a contingency venue on such days. Despite the good weather in recent years, the Board will still be taking this topic seriously as there is guaranteed to be rainy market days again in the future.

Another issue this summer was the wildfire smoke, which was a constant presence in Yellowknife throughout most of the summer. Masks leftover from the Covid-19 pandemic were made available to patrons on particularly smoky nights. An indoor shelter space would also be helpful in keeping vendors and patrons healthy during smoky nights. City of Yellowknife residents had to evacuate from August 16 to September 6 due to wildfires in the area.

**YKFM PROGRAMS**

In 2023, programs ran included the Harvesters Table, Mentorship Program Pilot Project, Waste Reduction Program, Community Table, Music at the Market, Loyalty Program, Pay it Forward, and 10th Anniversary celebrations.

**MUSIC AT THE MARKET**

The goal of Music at the Market project is to bring a variety of music and performances to the Yellowknife Farmers Market by providing a venue for local artists/performers; offer an opportunity to perform to a very diverse audience, compensate artists for their work, present an opportunity to promote the sales and progress of the artist’s current album/work, and demonstrate the potential of the arts industry.

In 2023, the YKFM received \$13,000 from NWT Arts Council + \$4,000 fr Support to NOrthern Performers to run the Music at the Market program. A contractor with Music NWT was hired to coordinate the program. This offered access to new talent and a diverse array of up-and-coming artists.

The YKFM hosted 10 evenings with music during the summer season at the Yellowknife Farmers Market with dozens of performers, including both musicians and dancers. The performances were well attended, with many families and other Yellowknifers positioning themselves to eat and play at the amphitheatre, where they could enjoy the performance. This year, YKFM provided a sound system as well so the music could be heard across the Market area. The diverse and high quality performances uplifted the spirit of the Market and introduced many Yellowknifers to some new musical talent.

## **MENTORSHIP PROGRAM PILOT PROJECT: HARVESTERS TABLE AND COMMERCIAL FOOD PRODUCTION**

With funding from ITI, the YKFM hired two Mentees to support local food production initiatives in Yellowknife. One part-time Mentee coordinated the Harvesters Table at the Tuesday market while the other Mentee was being mentored in commercial food production by providing full-time support to Bush Order Provisions, a commercial food grower and YKFM vendor. The overarching objective was to increase the volume of local produce at the Market.

### **Harvesters Table**

The first Mentee was responsible for coordinating the Harvesters Table which provides an opportunity for gardeners to sell fresh produce at the weekly Market. Contributors to the table generate a modest revenue from the sales, which provides an incentive for growers to consider entrepreneurial development as a path forward. Local gardeners can reinvest this revenue in seeds, soil, and other supplies for the following year.

The Table also acts as an informal space for gardeners to meet, inquire into one another's practices, and offer helpful information by sharing from their experience growing in the city. The Harvesters Table is also able to reduce food waste by helping gardeners offload excess produce when more is grown than they are able to consume or process themselves.

### Highlights

- Harvesters Table overall revenue: \$2601.05
- YKFM portion of revenue from Harvesters Table : \$466.77
- Total weight of produce sold: 141 kg
- 12 new registered harvesters and 15 returning from previous years
- 2 vendors attended weekly with own table, kept 90% of sales
- Partnership with Food Rescue to divert food waste after each market
- New Point of Sale equipment (iPad, Square scale and cash drawer) streamlined weekly sales
- Electronic money transfers facilitated payments to gardeners for their %
- New Google forms for ease of registering vendors

- New handbook on how to use POS equipment and Google forms

The Harvesters Table faced a decrease in sales of about 28% from the previous year but the end of the season was cut short due to the evacuation. Typically this is when more produce is harvested and brought to the Market. The goal of increasing the presence of local food at the Market was met because of the Harvesters Table and the commercial grower Bush Order Provisions' ability to increase their production due in part to the extra help provided by the second Mentee.

### **Commercial Food Production**

With the help of the second Mentee position, Bush Order Provisions was able to provide more produce at the Market every week throughout the summer. Bush Order Provisions was also able to fully use a recent expansion on their property which provided more growing space and more yield to be harvested and brought to market.

Over the course of the summer the Mentee was responsible for a variety of tasks on site. The Mentee was supervised and instructed on the day to day operations of running a commercial market garden in Yellowknife. The Mentee developed their knowledge through hands-on experience building beds, starting seeds and transplanting seedlings, as well as flipping beds for regular crop succession throughout the growing season.

The positive effects of the Mentee on overall production were assessed as follows:

- Consistent daily integrated pest management reduced pest pressure leading to stronger crops and a longer harvesting window;
- Consistent harvesting every few days resulted in less crop loss to overmaturing in the field;
- Timely succession planting allowed for multiple harvests per bed, translating into a greater harvest;
- Implementing season extension measures during the later half of the season to maintain revenue streams late into the fall seasons when most other crops have been terminated.

Bush Order Provisions made a financial donation to the Yellowknife Farmers Market. This donation represents a percentage of their increased produce sales. The YKFM was appreciative of this additional revenue which was re-invested in the Harvesters Table.

Both Mentees were able to fill in for each other during time away from Yellowknife or due to sickness. This was an added bonus to be able to replace one Mentee with the other when needed.

### **PAY IT FORWARD**

The 2023 Pay It Forward program took place in the summer Market season of 2023. Vouchers for \$20 (up from \$15 in previous years) were distributed to Yellowknifers at risk of food insecurity through partner service agencies. These vouchers were redeemed at the Market, thereby allowing recipients to enjoy a free meal while taking part in the Market. Patrons with

vouchers were not limited to them at food vendors however – they are able to use them at any vendor stall to buy food, snacks, desserts, veggies, or art.

In 2023, a \$12,000 grant was received from the GNWT’s Anti-Poverty Program. We spent \$11,193.74 of this funding over two fiscal years. This allowed for a contractor to be hired to coordinate the program, as well as the printing and distribution of vouchers to service agencies. The program was a great success with 376 vouchers redeemed of 498 vouchers that were handed out (a 75 percent uptake rate). This represents \$7,520 in meals and products from the Market. In addition to the numbers of recipients who were fed through the program, 24 YKFM vendors also benefited from additional sales.

## **WASTE REDUCTION AND COMPOST PROGRAM**

The “Waste Reduction and Compost Program” (WRCP) of the YKFM, introduced in 2015, was continued in 2023 with the following targets:

- 1- REDUCE the amount of waste generated at the Market by reducing the use of disposable dinnerware.
- 2- COMPOST disposable dinnerware and other organics.

To meet the goals of the program:

- All vendors were monitored at the beginning of each market to ensure they used compostable dinnerware and wrapping, including plates, packaging, cups, utensils, straws and napkins.
- Patrons were encouraged to bring their own container and use our YKFM Loyalty Cards (see below).
- Waste stations made up of compost bins are set up next to the garbage cans on the Market site. Each compost bin has a sign informing the public that the disposable dinnerware are compostable and should be discarded in a compost bin. Volunteers ask patrons to use the compost bins when discarding the disposable dinnerware.
- The compostable waste was collected in Green organic bins and then discarded in an organic dumpster, which is collected and taken to the municipal compost.
- Up to 85% of the waste generated by the Market is composted and diverted from the landfill.

### **Loyalty Card Program**

The YKFM reduces the use of disposable dinnerware by encouraging patrons to bring their own dinnerware to the Market through the Loyalty Card Program. Individuals who wish to participate can request a Loyalty Card at the Market and every time patrons purchase food using their own container their Loyalty Card gets initialed/punched. People who bring their own containers/cutlery five times throughout the season receive a \$20 voucher (up from \$15 in previous years) valid at the Market. Loyalty Card were also given out through the Pay It Forward program, which distributes cards to local organizations that work with those at risk of

food insecurity in Yellowknife. This allows those in a lower income bracket to still attend and enjoy the Market.

YKFM Loyalty Cards have been occasionally purchased by different organizations to be used at events as door prizes or gifts. In 2023, the organizers of the Multicultural Event purchased 10 Loyalty Card vouchers from the Market at the cost of \$20 each; however, this event was cancelled and they returned the vouchers, so the YKFM cancelled the invoice.

**2023 Highlights**

- Reusable containers were used **172 times** (*67 times in 2022*) by patrons.
- 20 loyalty vouchers were handed out to people who brought their containers five times.

YEAR	People registered in Loyalty Card Program	Number of times a home container was used	Number of people bringing container 8 times*	Number of people bringing container 5 times
2017	105	357	17	--
2018	97	263	--	26
2019	164	539	--	67
2020**	--	--	--	--
2021	55 + 60 for Welcome Newcomers event	109	--	12
2022	28 + 40 for the Multicultural Event	67	–	7
2023	181	172	–	20

\*In 2017, the number of stamps required to complete the card changed from 8 to 5. This made it easier for patrons to complete a card over the course of the summer.

\*\*This program did not run in 2020.

The results above reflect only the number of people who registered with the Loyalty Card Program. There were other patrons bringing their containers to the Market, but either did not know or did not wish to participate in the program. The YKFM is very proud of the results achieved with the Loyalty Card Program. It confirms that it is possible to reduce waste at public events.

**10th ANNIVERSARY**

This summer marked the 10th anniversary of the Yellowknife Farmers Market. Celebration activities throughout the summer included:

- The Dene Drummers attended the first market of the season.
- Continuing to work with the City of Yellowknife to develop and implement its agriculture strategy for Yellowknife.
- Continuing to grow and improve the Market by learning from successes and innovations at markets elsewhere and increasing opportunities for board members to participate in training, workshops and virtual conferences.

- Handing out seeds, stickers, and pins to patrons through the summer.
- Working with the Territorial Agrifood Association to host a Saladbration during the first NWT Culinary Festival at the end of July.
- Scheduling additional social media posts celebrating the history of the market
- Handing out Golden Carrot Awards to market founders France Benoit and Amy Lizotte, and long-time volunteer Lise Picard.
- Scheduling activities for families throughout the summer markets, such as painting pots.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Farmers Markets are a recognized engine of economic growth across the country and play a vital role in local economic development. The Yellowknife Farmers Market provides a unique venue for local and small business incubation. Spending is generated at the Market itself and funds are recycled within the community.

During the Summer Market, sales revenue is collected every week from vendors through a survey platform. Total gross revenue per week was difficult to calculate this year, as vendors were not consistent in their reporting, but most food vendors consistently made between \$1000-1500 or more in a night, while vendors selling art, produce, and other products averaged \$200-500 per night. Overall, the 2023 Market had average weekly sales of \$11,312.41, for total generated revenues of approximately \$147,061.35.

YEAR	Gross sales results
2019	\$220,442.00
2020	\$75,505.00
2021	\$166,544.37
2022	\$128,244.62
<b>2023</b>	<b>\$147,061.35</b>

Both attendance and sales appeared lower than in past years due to the three week wildfire evacuation order, which cancelled three of the summer’s markets. Significant wildfire smoke on other nights throughout the market also correlated to lower attendance numbers.

Additionally, in 2022 and 2023, point-in-time counts were conducted rather than counting every patron as was done during the pandemic when attendance was restricted; and because vendors were not reporting their weekly sales consistently. For example, there were only 189 weekly sales entries, but given the number of markets and average number of vendors there should have been around 313 weekly sales entries if vendors had been reporting sales each week.

YKFM is hopeful the number of patrons and sales will continue to increase as the pandemic impacts slowly dissipate over the coming years.

The Market continues to be an incubator for new businesses. In 2023, there was a dramatic increase in new vendors at the Market with 16 of our 45 vendors never having sold at the Yellowknife Farmers Market before (note that not all new vendors were new businesses, just new to the Market). Of the original 57 vendors that were approved to sell, 19 of those were new to the Farmers Market. With only six new vendors pulling out of the Market before the season, there was a 3% drop out rate of new vendors. This is a significant improvement from previous where a 50% drop out rate in first time vendors was common. An additional two vendors from Hay River were unable to make it to the market due to road closures because of the wildfire and then the evacuation orders in both communities. They have not been counted as vendors who dropped out.

## SOCIAL IMPACT

There is an immeasurable intrinsic value the Yellowknife Farmers Market brings to the community through hosting an event that encourages people to get outdoors, walk around, and socialise with friends and family, and enjoy free music. By encouraging individuals and families to get out after work, the Farmers Market helps give life to the city and creates a positive environment that fosters social connection.

Patrons came to the Market to experience a sense of community – not just to pick up food and art. Many vendors developed a rapport with their customers. Engaging people and building relationships is a lovely aspect of the Market, helping people to feel happier and contributing to overall health and well-being.

This was particularly evident this summer, which was marked by extreme wildfire smoke and a wildfire evacuation. Despite the smoke, the market still ran and was well attended up to the day before the evacuation order (August 15), showing the strong social impact the market has on the community. After the evacuation, the YKFM board and staff decided to hold two more markets: one that had already been scheduled for September 12, and an additional market on September 19. Despite that people were still returning to Yellowknife and the air was still smoky, these markets were well attended as people were eager to see their friends, share stories, and support local businesses. These final events of the summer were filled with excitement for a “return to normal.”

Music at the Market supports a sense of community by introducing local talents to a new audience. A great sense of pride in Yellowknife talent often emerged from the patrons listening to the local artists.



Nineteen local community and public organizations also participated in the Farmers Market. Community tables are offered weekly, free of charge, to such organizations to give them the opportunity to promote themselves to Market patrons. This season, the YKFM supported the following organizations:

- YKHEMP
- Toastmasters
- Tin Can Conservation
- Girl Guides
- Northern Mosaic
- Folk on the Rocks
- Campaign 2000
- GNWT Health and Social Services
- Yellowknife Playgroup Association
- YK Gymnastics Club
- Arctic Energy Alliance
- Old Town Ramble & Ride
- La mécanique du coeur
- BikeSpace
- Territorial Agri-food Association
- YK LARP (*cancelled due to wildfire evacuation order*)
- Northern Arts and Cultural Centre (*cancelled due to wildfire evacuation order*)
- NWT Literacy Council (*cancelled due to wildfire evacuation order*)
- Communauté francophone accueillante de Yellowknife (*cancelled due to wildfire evacuation order*)

## VOLUNTEERS

The Yellowknife Farmers Market relies heavily on volunteer support. From the Board of Directors to the programs being run during the season, it is all powered by volunteers. In 2023, there were approximately eight active volunteers including board members and community members. In total, 28 individuals volunteered at the market at least once this summer.

Thank you volunteers! The Yellowknife Farmers Market would not exist without your support!

## GOING FORWARD - 2024

The YKFM is committed to continuing to provide local food growers and businesses with a platform to expand their sales and support for the development of local food systems in Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories. However, the needs of both vendors and patrons have changed significantly in recent years. There has been an overall decline in the number of vendors and patrons, resulting in a less vibrant Market and a decrease in revenues.

- **Shelter/poor weather.** While the weather this year was mostly favourable, the smoke and occasional cold and rainy weather has had a measurable impact on vendor participation and patron attendance over the last few years. The YKFM must strive to find solutions to alleviate the impact of the weather.
- **Food trucks** want to vend at the market, but the YKFM is limited by the space available for vehicles at Samba K'e Civic Plaza. The YKFM must look for solutions with the City of Yellowknife to find food trucks parking space so they can vend, thereby increasing revenues for the market.
- **Mentorship Program** to help support local food production. Following an evaluation of the mentorship Program Pilot Project, a decision will be made whether to apply for further funding to continue the program in 2024.

The Yellowknife Farmers Market looks forward to receiving

## THANK YOU

The Yellowknife Farmers Market is grateful to all who contributed to making this weekly event such an incredible success!

Our thanks go out to:

- The volunteers who put countless numbers of hours into ensuring the Market runs smoothly;
- The wonderful population of Yellowknife who continue to support us every year;
- Our funders: the City of Yellowknife, the Government of the Northwest Territories, notably the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, the NWT Arts Council, Inclusion NWT, and of course...
- 
- Our vendors! Without you, there would be no Market.