**SUMMARY**

Soups and Sides Wrap-up Report

**“The most amazing place for a soup-based friendship to blossom.”**

After a quiet program launch in September, Soups and Sides saw slow but steady growth through our 31 weeks of operation. Consistent outreach with invitations, old school posters and activity on social media helped attract new guests and pulled folks back, as regulars, week after week. Our numbers in the final weeks of the program were between 130 and 140 guests. Along with a special meal on the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, we served close to 4,000 guests.

We had a nice mix of students, seniors, L’Arche community core members, volunteer fire fighters and some young families who attended on a regular basis. The diversity of the Wolfville community was celebrated each week and Council’s presence was also appreciated.

Our volunteer team were a remarkable bunch, who managed the stress of big crowds, spoon shortages and constant adaptations in our on-going quest to help things run more smoothly. Through every busy Monday evening, the volunteers managed to build deep personal relationships with each other, and they made a real impact on guests.

Ayzhia Beaton, our community chef, did a great job of working with Market vendors to source fresh, healthy and local ingredients for each of her two weekly creations and everyone was amazed by just how many recipes she could bring to life. One of our volunteers also arrived at the Market each Monday, ready to bake-up multiple batches of amazing cookies, squares and scones.

The “sides,” were well received. Guests loved crafts, games, the listening sessions, cupcake decorating and anything competitive. The sides did what they were intended to do – bringing strangers into conversation and helping to break the ice around the tables.

Student support from the Community Development students at Acadia went well and it is something we would like to keep going. Staff also appreciated the support from the ASU Food Cupboard, with weekly pick-ups of extra soup, that kept more folks connected to the program.

Community support for the program was warmly received with $2,585 in donations at the meals and we also had $3,000 from Chartwell and $1,500 generously donated by RBC. RBC has also donated another $3,000 for the new program year.

This program was designed to help build community, to break down barriers and to make sure that more folks felt seen, known and supported in the community. From the guest feedback, we achieved these goals and more.

**Guest feedback**

“Soups and Sides makes me feel part of the community that we live in.”

“It helps me understand the culture of the community more and gives me a sense of belonging.”

“Thank you for serving the community the love.”

“This program was comforting.”

“It has fed me weekly and helped me grow closer with the Wolfville community outside Acadia.”

“Makes me feel less isolated.”

“It brought me into contact with the community in a way the university couldn’t.”

“It created a dedicated time to catch-up with friends which was especially helpful during the dark and cold winter months.”

## CAO COMMENTS

It has been amazing to watch Soups and Sides emerge and evolve into a wonderful example of community. I would like to thank the staff, particularly Barb Shaw, council, volunteers, funders and participants who have made Monday evenings a very special time in Wolfville.

This report is provided for your information and as a small celebration of success.

## REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

## DISCUSSION

Staff will review all guest feedback and complete some engagement with volunteers and our community chef when planning for our launch in September 2025.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Thanks to the additional community support, Soups and Sides has the potential to grow. Some options being considered are additional food offerings like fruit and salads, more bread, longer hours and more guest chefs.

## REFERENCES TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN AND TOWN REPORTS

* Social Equity
* Community Wellness

## COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

Volunteer recruitment will begin in July for our September launch and the program will be well promoted prior to our next launch.

## FUTURE COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT

Feedback, suggestions and ideas are all welcome. Staff are grateful for the continuation of this program.