

Prince George Gleaning Abundance Program (PG GAP)
Report to the City of Prince George's Advisory Committee on Bear Awareness
August 2024

Thank you for allowing us to share with you the following information about initiatives already underway to mitigate the problems associated with unpicked tree fruits attracting bears in Prince George.

The Prince George Gleaning Abundance Program (PG GAP) was initiated in 2023 as a pilot project that gave us enough experience to realize how the program can be improved to be more effective in future years. We are confident that the strategies planned by the numerous partner organizations and businesses involved will have a significant effect in reducing the amount of human-bear conflict associated with fruit trees. The following is a summary of our past work and our plans for 2024, as well as considerations for future years.

Background Information:

As we all realize, thousands of pounds of apples grown on trees in yards throughout our city go unused every year. Although many people happily use the fruits they grow for themselves, many more people become overwhelmed with the quantity, and they struggle to pick their apples and crabapples. Unfortunately, overripe fruit are a reason for bears to stay in neighbourhoods rather than pass through. The bear can be perceived as a potential safety risk, and all-too-often are killed to prevent dangerous encounters from occurring.

The Everyone At the Table collective and its Gleaning Abundance Program acknowledge gratefully the long term efforts of the Northern Bear Awareness Society (NBAS) to facilitate the removal of fruit bear attractants, primarily through their Prince George Fruit Exchange facebook page, connecting people who have unwanted fruit with people who want fruit. Through public education and other initiatives, NBAS also provides people with resources for making use of the fruit produced in their yards. For many years NBAS volunteers have picked fruit for people who cannot, and give them to the Northern Lights Estate Winery (NLEW).

In 2023, the Everyone At the Table (EAT) collective in collaboration with the Recycling and Environmental Action Planning Society (REAPS) and Eco Living Community, and after consulting with NBAS and NLEW, ran a pilot project to explore the feasibility of a more intensive apple gleaning program in Prince George. Northern Light Estate Winery reports that since 2015 community members have delivered an average of 17,000

pounds of apples each year and estimated that could be increased to 50,000 lbs. Inspired by the well-established (9 years) Kamloops Gleaning Abundance Program, the GAP project hired a coordinator to organize and help transport volunteers who picked fruit to improve local food security, reduce waste, and protect bears and people. The program used the gleaning principle of thirds: ⅓ to the tree owner (when they wanted it), ⅓ to the gleaners, ⅓ to a processing partner like the EAT Canning Circle or to the winery. The Canning Circle processed the gleaned fruit into sauces, jams and juices to improve local food sovereignty/security. The already well-established partnerships of the Canning Circle with existing local food security projects such as The Salvation Army Food Rescue Program and programs like Baby's New Beginnings, Knights Inn, Positive Living North, the Firepit, and UNDU made distribution easy.

Benefits of the Gleaning Abundance Program:

- Prevention of food waste, contributing to environmental health
- Improved local food security and sovereignty with large quantities of fruit being processed for short and long term use
- Increased access to local and nutritious foods throughout the year and support of healthy eating.
- Break isolation and provide community support to individuals as they work as part of a team.
- Build community between people from diverse backgrounds.
- A safer city, since unpicked apples attract bears
- Citizen pride at doing something concrete to prevent bear deaths (we are not proud of being the bear killing capital of BC)

Our 2023 pilot provided us with a good understanding of where improvements in collaboration may be able to happen. There are many more apples in our city than we were collectively able to pick last year, and we hope to expand our efforts in the future. This year's GAP project is to bring together last year's partners and add some new faces to develop a solid and efficient plan of who will do what in collaboration with the GAP in future years, so that we can maintain a long term city-wide plan to both prevent food waste and prevent fruit from attracting bears.

Northern Lights Estate Winery reports that 30,000 pounds were collected in 2023.

2024 Initiative: PG Fall Fruit Fest

The objective of the GAP 2024 project is to develop a city-wide, solid, collaborative and efficient plan for fruit collection for future years, but the group that gathered around the table to plan next year feels strongly that we need to act this year as well. From that first meeting emerged the PG Fall Fruit Fest 2024, a community fruit cleanup event culminating on the weekend of September 7-8. Like the Spring Clean-up, the Prince

George Fall Fruit Fest is intended to be a community cleanup event in which people all over the city get together in small groups to pick apples and other fruit that would otherwise be wasted and keep bears around. With REAPS in the lead, the GAP partners will begin promoting this event on August 16th, with mass promotion to encourage people to pick their fruit before it becomes problematic, including several options of what people can do with unwanted fruit. Currently in the making are informative handouts, social media campaigns, posters, and other promotional means, as well as an instructional video about picking fruit, and live and recorded workshops about how to process large quantities of fruit. On the weekend of September 6-8, all partners working together will provide volunteer picking crews, volunteer and fruit transportation to drop off points, fruit drop off bins, and the coordination of businesses and organizations that will take fruit.

List of Partners Confirmed to Participate in the Fall Fruit Fest :

- The Everyone At the Table (EAT) collective
- The Canning Circle of EAT
- Eco Living Community (ELC)
- Farm to School BC (F2SBC)
- Recycling and Environmental Action Planning Society (REAPS)
- Drug Awareness Recovery Team (DART)
- Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre (ABDC)
- REDACTED
- Northern Bear Awareness Society (NBAS)
- Northern Lights Wildlife Society (NLWS)
- REDACTED
- REDACTED
- BC Conservation Officer Service (BC COS)
- Northern Lights Estate Winery (NLEW)
- Hobby Brews
- Slaughterhouse Craft Mead & Cider
- Cold Front Cidery
- Soul Fruitin Good
- REDACTED
- REDACTED
- REDACTED
- University of Northern BC (UNBC)
- REDACTED
- Tourism Prince George
- Prince George Native Friendship Centre

REDACTED

2025 and Beyond

We anticipate that the Fall Fruit Fest will be a success and will become an annual event, which GAP partners are committed to repeating.

This summer we will also continue to engage in a planning process that will detail efficient plans for a coordinated, multi-faceted effort by the numerous partners involved. Some of the initiatives include further volunteer recruitment to establish a strong gleaning program throughout the fruit season, pruning instructions and services, expansion of the Canning Circle to process fruit, and more promotion in the community.

Anticipated Role of the City of Prince George

We foresee participation in and support of the GAP as being an ideal way for the City to participate in proactively taking steps to reduce human-bear conflict. The City has already shown financial support by providing a MyPG Grant for each of 2023 and 2024, and we hope that the City can show further support by partnering to provide in-kind assistance with the promotion of the Fall Fruit Fest and related educational efforts. Representatives of both the City's Communications and Bylaws departments have been invited to join in the GAP planning process.

We also see this partnership as an effective way for the City to make use of funds that may be available to prevent fruit from attracting bears to residential neighbourhoods. Some expenses already taken on by some of the GAP partner organizations include the provision of meeting space, staff time to develop promotional materials, and coverage of volunteers by liability insurance. Many volunteer hours have also been donated by GAP partners. Further anticipated expenses for this year include printing costs for promotional materials, purchase of first aid kits for gleaners, fuel or mileage expenses for vehicles used to transport volunteers and fruit. For future years we foresee needing to purchase ladders (or borrow them from city yards?), purchase more fruit processing equipment, and pay fuel or mileage expenses for vehicles used to transport volunteers and fruit. The GAP partners see this program, used in combination with enforcement of bylaw 8425, section 11, as not only a cost-effective way for the City to mitigate human-bear conflict, but also an opportunity to build community and improve local food security. It is a better investment than a fruit tree removal incentive program would be. We suggest that the Advisory Committee on Bear Awareness consider a recommendation for the City to provide further funding to the GAP and the Fall Fruit Fest.