



Field Report

Uncovering hidden urban bounty: A case study of Hidden Harvest

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Abstract

Urban food systems primarily rely on foods grown in rural spaces, and often face challenges in creating spaces to grow fresh, healthful and affordable food in cities. Urban food harvest organizations aim to overcome these challenges by locating and harvesting food that already exists in cities on the numerous fruit- and nut-bearing trees located on public and private lands. Hidden Harvest is a leading initiative for urban fruit and nut harvesting in Canada, and unique in its for-profit social enterprise model. The organization aims to legitimize and support the practice of harvesting fruits and nuts in urban areas and provides a means to increase access to—and availability of—fresh, healthful foods hyper-locally in Ottawa, as people harvest from their own (or nearby) neighbourhoods. This field report examines the challenges and opportunities faced by Hidden Harvest in attempting to link multiple social, environmental and economic goals relating to food sovereignty, social justice, and ecological sustainability. In particular, the organization seeks to establish a self-sustaining business model through innovative solutions and the development of networks with local food processes, food organizations, and businesses, which enables Hidden Harvest to grow and develop distinct ties and relationships in Ottawa. This case study reveals how organizations such as Hidden Harvest use food to enhance and tie together local economies, knowledge, food security and community well-being.

Keywords: gleaning; social enterprise; localized food systems; diverse economies; social economies

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Introduction

During my summertime commutes in Ottawa, my attention is almost immediately drawn to the trees. More specifically, the ones bearing fruit or nuts. I find myself trying to identify and ascertain the ripeness of the bounty hanging from the branches, and wondering if the owner of the property on which the tree sits will put this food to good use or let it go to waste on their lawn. If left unharvested, a majority of the ripe fruits will fall off the tree to rot on the ground below. This phenomenon of seeing trees for the food they produce is an aftereffect of participating in the harvest of fresh fruits and nuts, and what the co-founders of Hidden Harvest, Jason Garlough and Katrina Sisk, refer to as "tree goggles". These tree goggles shine a light on the abundance of locally-available, healthful and fresh foods growing on trees throughout urban environments.

The Hidden Harvest model is a multi-pronged approach to address food insecurity in urban environments, and provides a source of free and healthful food to people in need, supports small business, and educates people about fruit and nut trees while providing opportunities to enhance food literacy and skills (Bartlett, 2012). The Hidden Harvest volunteers pick fruits and nuts from trees on city-owned and private properties throughout Ottawa and share it with harvest volunteers, homeowners, food processors, and local food agencies.

Hidden Harvest is a leading example among Canadian urban fruit and nut harvesting organizations, particularly in their goals as a social enterprise to become profitable and use surplus funds to grow the impact of the organization. This model allows Hidden Harvest to innovate and strive for independence from external funding while forging connections with like-minded businesses. These businesses offer fundamental support through a more reliable source of revenue and the promotion of Hidden Harvest's cause. For these reasons, Hidden Harvest provides a unique example by which to examine the social economies of food.

This research describes the key facets of Hidden Harvest and reflects on the challenges and opportunities faced by the organization, based on participant observation of harvest activities and interviews with the founders of Hidden Harvest. The case study of Hidden Harvest is tied to a larger inquiry into the social economy of food by the Nourishing Communities research group. This broader study seeks to understand the transformative potential of organizations like Hidden Harvest in their attempts to create economic opportunities in which profit is not the primary goal, but equally important to social and environmental motivations. Hidden Harvest is of particular interest in its attempt to use their profit to create social good, thereby reconceptualizing surplus, both material and economic, as something to be shared among communities.

Research Methods

The case study of Hidden Harvest took place over the summer of 2015 until fall 2016, in which participant observation was the primary method of data collection. Participant observation allowed for

a rich and illustrative narrative of harvesting activities to emerge, particularly as the experience of picking fruit in an urban context is a largely informal and underrepresented activity. This method allowed for data to be generated in a way that captures the material and social aspects of ‘place’, grounding the observations in particular geographies and contexts (Elwood & Martin, 2000). I participated in harvests on two different occasions; the first being the harvest of sour Cherries with a small group in the east of the city, and the second picking crab apples and apples with a larger group, organized in collaboration with a local food agency—the Parkdale Food Center—and documented by a local television network. I also attended a workshop organized by Hidden Harvest on home brewing using harvested black walnuts as brewing adjuncts, and a presentation at city hall concerning the proposed urban forestry plan, during which Hidden Harvest advocated for the consideration of fruit-bearing trees in the Ottawa’s Official Plan.

Participant observation was coupled with semi-structured interviews Hidden Harvest co-founders Jay Garlough and Katrina Siks. The interview questions sought to better understand the opportunities and challenges faced by Hidden Harvest, and how the co-founders envision the future of the organization. In order to ensure that the study was of mutual benefit to Hidden Harvest, the founders asked that I help design a Social Return on Investment (SROI) tool that would aid the organization to track and make transparent their impacts and activities for funders and the broader community. The design of the SROI tool was a collaborative process between myself and the organization, based on a previous iteration of a more complex SROI commissioned by Hidden Harvest.

‘Rescuing’ food: The Hidden Harvest model

As a city bounded by a largely agricultural greenbelt, Ottawa is connected to rural landscapes and a strengthening local food movement which is supported by local government (Ballamingie & Walker, 2013). There is a push from government and local food organizations to enhance urban food system sustainability in Ottawa through a network of community gardens, a food hub and farmers markets (Ballamingie & Walker, 2013.). Hidden Harvest is a vital part of creating a sustainable urban food system for the city by making use of food that is already available and accessible to urban residents.

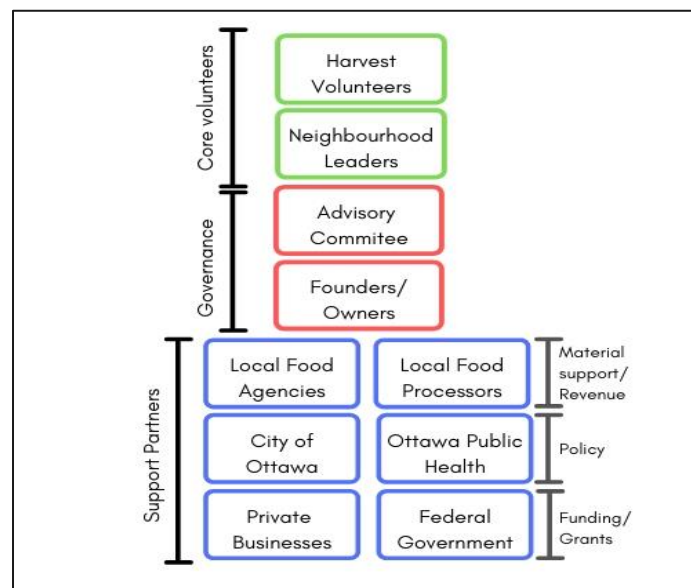
Diverse fruit and nut tree species, native and introduced, are a part of Ottawa’s urban landscape, and their role in enhancing local ecologies and food systems have been largely under-recognized. Despite the bounty of fresh and healthful foods these trees offer, most often, their fruits and nuts are left un-harvested—to be eaten by animals, or to decompose, but with a good portion of the food ultimately going to waste. Many homeowners lack the capacity and/or time to harvest trees on their land, or else may not want or be able to use all the food produced. Often, un-harvested fruit and nut trees are cut down as they become labelled a nuisance, as the fallen fruits attract animals and insects, and a posing a slipping hazard from fruit rotting on sidewalks (Bartlett, 2012; Nordahl, 2014). Fruit that has fallen on roadways and sidewalks may be dealt with by residents or removed through normal street-sweeping operations. The fruit on city-

owned trees is most often treated as waste and is typically mulched during grass-cutting operations by maintenance staff and left in place as natural compost (Nordahl, 2014).

Hidden Harvest co-founders Jay Garlough and Katrina Siks partnered in 2011 to act upon their concern over these large amounts of unused food produced by trees in the City of Ottawa. Garlough revealed that people have unofficially collected fruits from trees on private and public lands in the area, and he and Siks wanted to legitimize, formalize and popularize the practice. Upon realizing that no organization existed to harvest nuts and fruits in the city at that time, Garlough and Siks put their plan for Hidden Harvest into action, securing local partners and funding. In doing so, Hidden Harvest aimed to create a self-sustaining business model to build public capacity and knowledge to access fresh, healthful food in their own neighbourhoods. The first official fruit rescue operation took place in 2012, and there have been approximately 467 harvest events held since then, as of October 2018¹.

Hidden Harvest attempts to redefine the ways in which food trees are valued in urban environments by creating a legitimate means to collect and distribute the fruits and nuts produced, a practice that they depict as ‘rescuing’ food. The founders use the word ‘rescue’ to describe their harvesting activities, as the term denotes that the organization is helping the products of fruit trees fulfill their purpose as food. The enterprise works to identify and catalogue city- and privately-owned trees that, with permission, they harvest when the produce is ripe, to share within the local community. Homeowners register their trees to be harvested through the Hidden Harvest website, and city-owned trees are identified through a tree inventory that the municipal government created in 2009.

Figure 1: Hidden Harvest Business Model



¹ For up-to-date harvest data, see <http://ottawa.hiddenharvest.ca>

As an organization, Hidden Harvest is supported by different categories of volunteers, as well as private business, governmental organizations and other institutions that offer financial, material and policy assistance (Figure 1). There are two categories of core volunteers, neighbourhood leaders and harvesters, as well as additional volunteer positions, including research assistants, harvest tool builders, and volunteers for outreach and fundraising events. Interested persons can apply for any volunteer position, including that of neighbourhood leader, which requires specific training (Hidden Harvest, 2012b). Hidden Harvest relies on volunteers to coordinate harvest events and pick the fruit, as well as govern the organization through its advisory board. While Garlough and Siks remain the owners and co-founders, they found that the time they could dedicate to Hidden Harvest becoming increasingly limited due to other obligations, and the organization moved to become largely volunteer-lead through their advisory board. This group of volunteers, along with Garlough and Siks, outline the strategic plan for the organization, coordinate with business, government and funding partners, and help to organize fundraising and outreach events.

‘Neighbourhood leaders’ coordinate with property owners and organize harvests; in turn, Hidden Harvest provides them with training on tree identification, and best practices regarding food safety, in order to meet the requirements of local food agencies. Neighbourhood leaders organize the harvests, first identifying when the fruit will be ready to be harvested, and then coordinating with property owners to plan the event. Once a time and date are secured, the neighbourhood leader creates an event invitation, listing the species to be harvested, event time and a general locale, permitting volunteers to sign up and receive the exact address of the tree. Harvesters make up the majority of volunteers, and anyone can sign up on the Hidden Harvest website to become a volunteer and receive invitations to sign up for harvest events. The number of harvests that participate in a given event varies greatly and is determined by the number of trees to be harvested. For instance, the largest harvest event in 2017 took place at a former orchard, and 16 volunteers harvested 40 trees. On average, only a single tree will be harvested, and neighbourhood leaders will cap the number of volunteers based on the size of the property and the number of available fruits. At a minimum, harvest events require at least one volunteer (in addition to the neighbourhood leader). The number of harvest events hosted per year is dependent on a set of different factors, including volunteer availability, homeowner participation and the growing season.

At the harvests, neighbourhood leaders ensure that the harvest equipment, including ladders, bags and pole harvesters, is available and that the site is free of hazards, such as rotting fruit beneath the tree. As volunteers arrive, they are given instructions on the appropriate harvesting techniques and basic food safety guidelines. While Hidden Harvest does not need to adhere to formal regulations, the enterprise adopted a set of best practices that conform to the needs of the food agencies they work with. These include not collecting windfall (food that has fallen on the ground that might potentially be contaminated) for donated shares, discarding rotten and bug-eaten fruits, and storing food to meet the food safety standards set by the participating food agencies.

During the event, the neighbourhood leader provides guidance and assistance to harvesters, and then weighs, records and divides the collected fruits between the homeowner, the volunteers and the food agency of the leader's choosing. Typically, the neighbourhood leader will connect with the food agency closest to the harvest location and gauge their needs for fresh fruits and their capacity to store and process certain varieties. As a 'for-profit' social enterprise, Hidden Harvest may also retain a quarter share of the fruit collected to share with a local food processor, if the amount and type of fruit can be put to good use and be used to generate revenue. Garlough stresses that the best fruits collected during harvests are the ones that are donated, as they are typically better for fresh eating, while fruits with cosmetic discrepancies and minimal bruising are best suited to being processed. Of the 6,396lbs of fruits harvested at 97 harvest events in 2017, which included cherries, serviceberries, apple species and elderberries, 2,880lbs were donated to local food agencies, 1,130lbs were shared with processors, and 2,386lbs were divided between homeowners and volunteers (Hidden Harvest, 2018, p.21). Although the total amount of fruits harvested since 2013 varies per year, the amount that Hidden Harvest donates to food agencies continues to increase yearly (Hidden Harvest, 2018).

A harvest event lasts approximately two hours, from set up to clean up, and most events take place in the later summer months and into the fall as fruits come to ripen. Hidden Harvest's peak season is from May until October, and the quieter winter months are used to plan and train volunteers for the next season. The harvest events provide meaningful opportunities for participants to connect with people in their neighbourhoods, as well as contribute to local food agencies. Hidden Harvest's activities cultivate interpersonal relationships between homeowners and neighbourhood leaders, and friendships between volunteers. Prior to harvests, relationships are established between homeowners and neighbourhood leaders to coordinate the harvest event when the fruits are ripe. Relationships are cultivated between neighbourhood leaders and volunteers, particularly as many will live in the same neighbourhood. The very local scale of the relations is by design, as Hidden Harvest uses an algorithm to keep harvest invitations within a particular geography when they are initially sent out to volunteers, to help build more localized social relations. During the semi-structured interviews, Garlough indicated that the reason for this design is that people are more likely to attend a harvest nearest their residence or workplace; they are more likely to walk, bike or take public transit to the event; they are more likely to treat the property with respect, or stay a bit longer to help the neighbourhood leader clean up; they are more likely to remain engaged with the program when discovering 'hidden' fruit that is close to areas they know well. Only when more volunteers are needed will a harvest event be broadened to include more volunteers from a wider geographic area.

Social entrepreneurship: Profit as a social good

As a social enterprise, Hidden Harvest aims to create a sustainable means of garnering an income to support harvest activities and, eventually, become profitable. A social enterprise is defined as a social-

purpose business that is oriented towards the improvement of social and environmental well-being (Diochon & Anderson, 2014). Some enterprises are for-profit businesses that use the economic resources garnered through market-based activities to create social good, while others do not engage in formal market activities and can be categorized as non-profit (Diochon & Anderson, 2014, p. 11). In general, social enterprises are autonomous and self-reliant entities that are innovative in their approaches to addressing social issues and must seek a balance between economic and social goals (Diochon & Anderson, 2014, p. 24). Some urban gleaning organizations in Canada and the United States operate as not-for-profit social enterprises, producing value-added products with harvested fruits and partnering with local processors (Bartlett, 2012).

Community and economy are intrinsically linked in the Hidden Harvest model, and Siks explained that the pursuit of profit for Hidden Harvest has community-minded intentions with the aim of realizing broader social and ecological good. Siks noted that ‘profit’ in the context of social and environmental organizations often holds negative connotations, as capital is largely retained by a select few and is often the result of exploitative activities. She argues that profit can be a positive goal so long as it is used as a means to support and grow harvesting activities, and is defined as a financial return based on the goods and services provided to society. Siks posits that good work should generate good pay: people who engage in work that benefits the wider community should be afforded a living wage. In this, Hidden Harvest does not shy away from identifying as ‘for-profit’, as they attempt to reframe the idea of profit as benefiting multiple actors: the organization aims to provide its employees with an adequate and secure living while sustaining its operations and to benefit community members through enhanced socio-economic and ecological resilience.

This model and description of profit are illustrated in Gibson-Graham’s (2006) notion of the community economy, in which economic activities are place-based, community-led and ethically oriented in the aim of providing social and physical well-being. Surplus, or profit, is directly connected to the survival of individuals and communities, with alternative ways of conducting business, such as social enterprises, re-orienting how surplus can be distributed in a more democratic fashion (Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy, 2013).

As a social enterprise, the majority of Hidden Harvest’s profit gets reinvested in the organization to help expand harvesting activities. Over a three-year period, Hidden Harvest reports its revenues as between \$16,000 - \$22,000 per year, and expenses between \$11,500 - \$19,000 per year (Hidden Harvest, 2018, p.18). The organization’s expenses include outreach (e.g. posters and promotional materials), funding for part-time staff for special projects, and harvesting tools such as buckets, bags and pole pickers (Hidden Harvest, 2018). In light of their restricted budget, Hidden Harvest attempts to reduce overhead costs where possible, including forgoing a physical office space and telephone to rely solely on a web-based platform for activity coordination and outreach.

Although Hidden Harvest has a way to go before achieving profitability and becoming self-sustaining, the organization seeks support for activities through funding and partnerships with community organizations and businesses. Economic viability is an ongoing challenge for social enterprises, many of which depend on external funding and operate at a loss (Diochon & Anderson,

2014). Hidden Harvest relies primarily on publically funded grants and donations, in which partnerships with local businesses and food agencies are key in securing funding. For instance, certain larger businesses in the region provide financial support to the organization through donations and help market the Hidden Harvest brand and cause. Most notably, Beau's Brewery, based in Vankleek Hill, Ontario, hosts an annual Oktoberfest weekend, through which Hidden Harvest is able to generate their most significant source of income by means of donations collected through a Midway Games setup. The Midway Games are staffed by volunteers and typically generate around \$10,000 in funding for the organization (Hidden Harvest, 2018). A smaller portion of the organization's earnings comes from the partnerships with food processors through the sales of goods, such as jams and preserves, which use harvested fruits.

Certain partnerships with food agencies and processors work to decrease the organization's dependence on the cash economy through non-monetary donations and bartering practices. Bartering, or non-monetary exchange of goods or services, occurs when food processors receive Hidden Harvest fruit in exchange for a portion of the profits and/or marketing for the organization. These partnerships allow small-scale processors, such as craft breweries and artisanal jam producers, to access locally-harvested fresh fruits and nuts, enabling them to tell a rich and locally embedded story to their consumers about where the fruit comes from. In each case, these processors supply Hidden Harvest with either a portion of the products made with Hidden Harvest fruits or a share of the profits from these products. Often, the processors of these value-added products will use the Hidden Harvest name and/or logo on their products, which provides the social enterprise with marketing impact as well as income.

These arrangements often provide mutual benefits for the organizations that lend a hand in supporting Hidden Harvest, as the organization provides both direct and indirect social, ecological and economic benefits beyond collecting foods. For instance, fruit donated to a local food agency, Parkdale Food Centre, is often used in their Muesli social enterprise (Thirteen Muesli), which helps to offset the cost of purchasing fruit wholesale. In return, the Parkdale Food Center shares its refrigerated trucks with Hidden Harvest and provides space to hold food education workshops. This mutuality is also exemplified through the relationship the organization developed with the municipal government. The city of Ottawa provides support to Hidden Harvest by reducing the cost of permits necessary to harvest on city-owned land, and in return, city officials cite Hidden Harvest as a means to reduce waste and enhance food security in Ottawa. In seeking municipal support, Garlough underlines the importance of fostering relationships between Hidden Harvest and city councillors who champion local food and environmental causes in Ottawa.

In hopes of growing partnerships with food processors, Garlough is developing a perspective plan to increase profitability that would emulate a community-supported agriculture (CSA) model—by sharing risks with consumers—while borrowing from the supply management model, as seen in the Canadian dairy industry (Garlough's parents are dairy farmers). Dairy processors purchase quota for the opportunity to buy milk to then make cheese or other products. In the case of Hidden Harvest, the quota would take the form of a sponsorship through which a local food processor would buy a license for a share of the harvest of a particular species in a

geographic area. For instance, a brewery would be able to buy the first right of refusal to ¼ of the sour cherries in a particular neighbourhood. In purchasing this license, the business would have access to not only the produce but also its accompanying story, which would include a social media story and pictures to share with their consumers for marketing purposes.

The enhancement of local economies through the work of Hidden Harvest is a long-term project. Much of their work directly contributes to the local economy, particularly through the tangible economic benefits generated through partnerships with local food processors. Hidden Harvest also impacts the local economy indirectly by developing an ecologically sound, inclusive and accessible means of accessing food. This benefit is demonstrated through their work to increase the food and ecological values of urban fruit trees, and create a space for low-income populations, people with disabilities, women, new Canadians, and Indigenous peoples in the local food economy. Equally, the harvest events are structured in a way that people with mobility issues can participate, as volunteers are needed to harvest fruits and sort the collected bounty. While Hidden Harvest does not survey or ask for data on marginalized groups, Garlough notes that certain volunteers, after attending a few harvests, are comfortable with sharing their stories, which conveys the diverse backgrounds and experiences of participants.

Growing urban food sovereignty

Food sovereignty advocates seek to build a food system where people have control over the ways in which food is grown, distributed and consumed, and strives for social, economic and ecological resilience (Wittman, 2011). Garlough describes Hidden Harvest as aligned with the principles of food sovereignty as the organization aims to build adaptive capacity and allow people to have greater control over their local food system through harvesting and food education activities. In addition to guaranteeing basic tenets of food security, such as adequate access to and availability of healthful and culturally-appropriate foods, proponents of food sovereignty also advocate for food systems that are more localized in terms of supply chains and governance. Within the Hidden Harvest model, people in the community decide where the harvested food goes beyond the mandated half share, which is donated to the nearest food agency. Often, participants and homeowners will donate part of (or the whole of) their share in lieu of keeping it. Donations and partnerships with local food banks not only provide low-income populations with food but also offer the opportunity to harvest food and develop food skills through workshops. The donated fruits allow food bank clients (respectfully referred to as ‘neighbours’ by Hidden Harvest) to not compromise their dignity when accessing harvested food, particularly as many participate in the harvests themselves. Furthermore, many people don’t have the ability or desire to harvest their own fruit trees, and so the portion of fruit reserved for homeowners can be a means to increase food security for these individuals.

For many, the harvests provide a means through which to connect with their agrarian roots and food traditions through harvesting particular fruits and nuts. Certain foods are difficult to access through conventional markets but are nonetheless available locally. For instance, Garlough recounted

that some people with rural Canadian roots want to access Eastern black walnuts—something their grandparents would have eaten, but which is not readily available in stores. The harvest events offer people the opportunity to gain access to these foods and connect with their roots and culture. Ultimately, the work undertaken by Hidden Harvest aims to increase people’s appreciation for urban trees as potential food sources. Moreover, by encouraging the planting and care of fruit-bearing trees in Ottawa, Hidden Harvest ultimately increases the availability of fresh, healthful and local foods.

Equally, Hidden Harvest strives to build relationships in the food system, particularly between volunteers, food agencies and local businesses, and awareness of local food issues. Many neighbourhood leaders’ first in-person interaction with their local food bank was when they dropped off the food bank’s share of fruit. The ties to food agencies are a fundamental part of Hidden Harvest’s mandate, as neighbourhood leaders come to understand the unique needs of different food agencies through the donations of fruit. Many of the workshops offered by Hidden Harvest are conducted in partnership with local food processors, and harvest volunteers become more aware of—and more likely to purchase—the products from these processors.

One of Hidden Harvest’s primary goals is to raise awareness of urban trees as a food source and as a vital part of urban ecologies, and harvest events provide an important experiential learning opportunity through which people build their knowledge of local fruit trees and ecosystems. Hidden Harvest seeks to highlight the importance of fruit trees for urban biodiversity. Many studies show that a close relationship with nature—even in urban areas—is critical to maintaining health, results in a reduction of healthcare costs, and bolsters citizen support for greenspace conservation (Clark & Nicholas, 2013; Poe et al., 2013). Hidden Harvest provides such opportunities for people to engage with nature in their own neighbourhoods and educates the public about the benefits of planting fruit trees. The organization’s founders note that homeowners that have hosted or participated in harvests are also more aware of the benefits of fruit-bearing trees and are more likely to plant a tree that can produce food on their property. In order to directly support natural ecosystem functions as part of their activities, Hidden Harvest purposefully leaves some portion of the fruit during harvest events, recognizing the critical role of different species in propagating urban fruit trees. For example, Garlough stressed the efficacy of squirrels in propagating fruit trees in urban areas, as their foraging activities lead to fruit trees being planted on vacant lots and the edge lands of city parks.

In seeking to promote urban natures, the organization also advocates for increasing the number of fruit trees on public lands in Ottawa. When the City of Ottawa sought input into its Urban Forest Management Plan, Hidden Harvest advocated for fruit-bearing trees to be recognized as vital components of urban food security and ecosystems. Though an official mandate is still being drafted, city officials demonstrate support for Hidden Harvest’s approach to engaging citizens with urban forests. To wit, in their first year of harvesting, some city councillors would first approach Hidden Harvest rather than forestry services, out of fear that the latter might then remove the offending tree.

Harvest volunteers develop the knowledge needed to harvest and care for different fruit trees, as well as learning how the fruit tastes, the different ways to consume, prepare and preserve the food, and what stories describe the trees, such as Indigenous medicinal and food uses. Through these activities, harvest volunteers develop the aforementioned ‘tree goggles’ as they become more familiar

at identifying fruit trees by appearance. In developing harvester knowledge and capacity, Hidden Harvest strives to be culturally inclusive; efforts are being made to engage with the Indigenous communities and New Canadians. Their recent strategic plan outlined their commitment to engaging with notions of reconciliation by decolonizing the food system (Hidden Harvest, 2018). Steps towards these goals comprise the inclusion of Indigenous stories and knowledge as part of harvest events, and efforts to recruit and train Indigenous harvest leaders. So far, the success in these efforts has been limited, although the organization is working towards developing strategies that engage Indigenous populations in ways that produce lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships in order to recognize and re-embed traditional knowledge in urban landscapes and food systems.

The social enterprise also strives to build capacity through workshops on food preparation and preservation, some of which are aimed at new Canadians who may have limited knowledge of how to prepare locally-available fruits—though, as mentioned, they may also have familiarity and expertise in harvesting and preparing non-native species that have been planted locally. To further enhance inclusivity, Hidden Harvest has developed programs with local food banks—predominantly the Parkdale Food Centre and Dalhousie Food Cupboard—which aim to provide opportunities for more low-income populations in harvest activities.

Knowledge building opportunities for volunteers take place post-harvest as well, through workshops and advisory board meetings. The food preparation workshops are an important means to share knowledge about often underused and relatively unknown fruits and nuts that may require special skills or knowledge to prepare. Hidden Harvest also provides the opportunity for volunteers to govern the organization through its advisory board. In engaging with a broad range of tasks and issues associated with the direction of Hidden Harvest, these volunteers have had to develop their understanding of policies that apply to urban gleaning and fruit trees, and their corresponding capacities to analyze and comment on these policies.

Overcoming challenges

With every new season, Hidden Harvest sees its popularity grow with increased demand from volunteers to participate in harvest events. Ironically, success was identified as a possible threat for Hidden Harvest, particularly in their aspirations of becoming self-sufficient. The potential profitability of the social enterprise holds both positive and negative outcomes and hosts a set of new and distinctive challenges. Notably, Garlough remains concerned about the attention that a bigger and more profitable Hidden Harvest might attract from other food producers, funders, supporters and regulators. In particular, Hidden Harvest fears that the increased scale of Harvest activities could subject the organization to the agricultural requirements of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, particularly those around food safety that would be difficult and expensive to implement (Hidden Harvest, 2018). Much of the funding and financial support the organization receives is contingent on the income generated by activities and could be limited if Hidden Harvest manages to turn a profit. Currently, and for the foreseeable future,

funding is essential to maintain operations. Hidden Harvest proponents also expressed concern over the ways in which profitability might impact the primarily volunteer labour force that is fundamental to Hidden Harvest operations. Garlough views the reliance of many community-supported agriculture businesses on unpaid labour through internships as problematic, and questions whether people will still want to volunteer with Hidden Harvest if they were to become profitable. In light of these challenges, Hidden Harvest is working to restructure its activities and governing structure so as to become a non-profit organization, which would allow them to pursue additional grants and funding opportunities to expand their reach within the city of Ottawa (Hidden Harvest, 2018). While profitability remains a key method of supporting their activities, their central goal is supporting community well-being and contributing to sustainable urban food systems (Hidden Harvest, 2018).

A current challenge for Hidden Harvest is the need to communicate the impacts of their activities to policymakers and funders, as they continue to rely on the support of municipal officials and external funding opportunities. While the organization's goals supersede the attainment of profit, as a social enterprise, they need to demonstrate their financial value to remain accountable to funders, government and their community. In doing so, Hidden Harvest must adhere to conventional economic models to estimate the monetary value of their activities, which often do not have a clear economic value. The organization, therefore, chose to create a social return on investment (SROI) tool to calculate the economic value of social and environmental goods, which provides a means to illustrate the monetary value of harvest activities. The tool allows them to demonstrate the economic impacts of their knowledge building activities, environmental conservation efforts, waste diversion practices and food donations. In effect, the SROI allows the organization to justify its value to funders, policymakers and the broader community in a way that is easily understood and fits within conventional economic paradigms. For instance, the SROI tool estimates the monetary value of the harvested fruits using proxies based on data garnered from wholesale market prices in Ontario. Other SROI proxies illustrate the monetary value of volunteer labour, volunteer training sessions and public workshops. While the SROI cannot capture all the myriad benefits of Hidden Harvest's activities, particularly the less tangible social and environmental services, it provides a snapshot of how 'rescuing' fruits contributes to local economies. Currently, the tool is used by harvest leaders to track the outcomes of harvest events, with data being relayed on the Hidden Harvest website.

Conclusion

Hidden Harvest embraces innovation as it continually evolves to not only better meet community needs, but also become a self-sustaining social enterprise. Co-founder Garlough sees each new harvest season as a means through which to rebuild the organization based on lessons learned over the previous year. This openness to change and willingness to adapt has allowed the

enterprise to grow the number of events and increase the amount of fruit and nuts rescued each year. In part, the reliance on their online platform to coordinate harvest events has provided a means to reduce overhead costs and staffing needs, while enabling growth and flexibility. Equally, social media provides a key method for the organization to promote itself and its cause by sharing stories and pictures of harvest events and workshops. Traditional media outlets also serve as an important means to spread their message, and Hidden Harvest has been featured on local television and radio programs, in local newspapers and magazines, and in a national Canadian journal. Communicating their impacts to funders, government and their community feeds into Hidden Harvest's goal of transparency and accountability. More recently, their activities were documented in the Social Economy of Food video series by Nicole Bedford, which illustrates the need to recognize the importance and weight of the work done by Hidden Harvest and other organizations working towards creating resilience in the food system through alternative economic models. The opportunity to spread Hidden Harvest's message is vital to increase the buy-in and participation in harvest events, in order to increase the amount of food being rescued and the access to fresh, healthful food for people in Ottawa.

The ability to share their story brings legitimacy to the practice of harvesting urban fruits and nuts and can help to inspire similar actions in other municipalities. In seeking to support the cause of urban fruit and nut rescue, Hidden Harvest has made important connections with several similar groups, to share experiences and provide support. As one of the more well-established and larger organizations, Hidden Harvest shares their experiences with groups wanting to set up their own urban gleaning projects in other cities—including, most recently, a group from Halifax that established the urban gleaning organization Found. In growing these partnerships, Canadian urban tree harvest organizations work together to draw attention to and legitimize the practice of gleaning fruits and nuts in cities.

In continuing to develop and change the ways in which Hidden Harvest operates, partnerships with local organizations and actors play a key role in the reevaluation and progression of business practices and organizational models. This enables Hidden Harvest to learn how to communicate their role and benefits in ways that the municipal government understands, particularly in emphasizing the ways in which they contribute to food security and offer an effective means to divert waste and increase sustainability in Ottawa. Through their harvesting events and workshops, Hidden Harvest offers services to the community and the city by creating alternate means to feed people, managing renewable resources, developing green infrastructure and diverting waste from landfills. These actions speak to the aims of different city offices, including community and social services, energy planning, and forestry services.

In partnering with food agencies, Hidden Harvest is able to meet their needs by providing training opportunities and harvest equipment as well as helping to organize harvest events for clients. Garlough states that food agencies continually need to apply for funding, and that projects with Hidden Harvest allow them to access additional funds while expanding their program offerings. He notes that it is not much different than if the food agency were to apply for a grant to hire a professional chef to run food preparation workshops for their clients,

particularly as Hidden Harvest events also provide opportunities to improve food knowledge and skills.

Both Garlough and Siks stressed the unrealized potential of Hidden Harvest, particularly as their own personal and professional commitments have drawn them away from the social enterprise. Siks hopes Hidden Harvest will eventually be taken over by the community entirely, possibly leading to neighbourhood-led branches connected to an overarching and supporting organization. She ties this type of model to that of Ottawa's Community Gardening Network (run by Just Food), which oversees and supports garden projects throughout the city that function relatively independently of one another.

While the social enterprise hopes to engage more formally in the local economy to become profitable, Hidden Harvest also engages in practices not typically accounted for in conventional, that is capitalist, economies by building towards diverse and community economies. Activities such as sharing foods, enhancing food literacy and knowledge, and forming partnerships with other businesses contribute largely indirectly to strengthening local economies, and aren't typically considered as part of 'formal economies' (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Ballamingie et al., 2019). By broadening their conception of profit and engaging in these activities, Hidden Harvest helps to orient local economies towards broader community well-being rather than the accumulation of profit (Ballamingie et al., 2019).

All told, Hidden Harvest aspires to demonstrate that profitability can go hand in hand with social good by meeting local community needs.

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