

A Hungry one



By Nate Smelle

WHAT KIND OF A MONSTER would rob a food bank just before Christmas? I asked myself after hearing the news of the break-in at the North Hastings Community Cupboard (NHCC) on Dec. 18.

Images of a green hair covered Santa Claus impersonator with a dog forced to pose as a flying caribou first came to mind. Could such a greedy Grinch really live among us? With so many families in this community relying on the food bank on a regular basis, it is common knowledge that every holiday season the demand for food increases. Whoever committed this crime must have been aware of this food surplus that accumulates at the NHCC this time each year.

Speculations could wander in an infinite number of directions, so there is no time to effectively play detective here. Rather than wasting time pondering who committed the crime it serves us better to ask why this crime happened in the first place. Questioning the reasons why anyone would want to steal food from hungry people I can only see two possible motivations: greed and hunger. Either way, it is here in this motivation that I find the answer to the question I started with...what kind of a monster would steal from a food bank just before Christmas?

Well, a hungry one of course. When I think of the driving force behind this crime it is clear that hunger gave birth to this transgression, not greed. Certainly a small shed-full of boxes containing pre-packaged food and 10 or so frozen turkeys wouldn't really have much of a resale value on the black market. Maybe on the other hand, the culprit is not driven by their will to survive; and is instead compelled to rob from the poor to make themselves rich. Maybe...but not likely.

No matter how you look at it, stealing food from the hungry is an act of desperation? a poor on poor crime that lowers everyone's quality of life in the end. Where do hunger and desperation come from? Poverty. Where does poverty come from? Greed.

Moving forward in the New Year these are two motivations worth keeping an eye on in our day-to-day operations. We need to ask the question why hunger, poverty and greed are acceptable states of existence when there is more than enough to share. With Bancroft's Committee of the Whole now picking up where the the Community Sustainable Planning Committee (CSPC) left off, it will be interesting to see how the Town continues to implement the committee's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP).

With more than 700 men, women and children receiving food from the NHCC for Christmas day it is obvious how many people are still going hungry while living in Bancroft. Such a high number of people going hungry in such a small community is not, and should not be considered sustainable. Implementing the ICSP would be a good first step towards making this community a more enjoyable and sustainable place for people to live, work and play.

One way for Bancroft to create a better, more sustainable community for all, while at the same time alleviating hunger in the community would be to plant more urban food gardens on town property. Food producing plants could even be incorporated into already existing flowerbeds, on flat roofs of municipal buildings like the library and in local parks. Why not add a little communal nutrition and flavour to the beauty of Bancroft?

There is plenty of work to be done here in terms of creating the community and the future we desire. Unfortunately there are not enough people in the area willing to pay citizens a decent living wage in order to get this work done.

Where would we be without our volunteers?