

Binners' Project

Annual Report
2019-2020



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Cover photo:

FRANCIS does Back-of-House Waste Sorting at Vancouver Convention Centre, one of our contracts that helped grow our SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROGRAMS this year.

Opening Letter

In March 2020, at the end of a monumental and record-breaking year for Binners' Project, COVID-19 threw our work into significant uncertainty, specifically our social enterprise programs. However, between April 2019 and March 2020, Binners' Project experienced unprecedented success in the midst of a staffing change that brought on four new core staff, including myself.

I have been an admirer of Binners' Project since it began in 2014. When given the chance to join the Project in 2019 as the new Director, I was humbled how our members not only welcomed, but also imparted in me the trust to continue to build on the great work done so far. This past year, Binners' Project has grown our core staff team from four to six, said goodbye to co-founders Anna and Gabby, and continued to hire more binners as staff. This progress was made possible due to parallel growth in our social enterprise programs thanks to new partnerships with places like Vancouver Aquarium.

Destigmatizing the work of binners and making a place for their voices in the community is fundamental to our mission, and over the past year our Community Engagement program placed more binners in those conversations than ever before—and their voices made an impact. On November 1, 2019, refunds for most containers in BC increased from 5-cents to 10-cents per container, effectively doubling the amount of income binners receive at the depot.

Like many in our community, we are grappling with how we will be changed after COVID-19, but we are still looking forward to further success. This coming year, we will finally launch the Universal Cart Initiative and kick off a new training program to continue building the capacity of binners to lead in their community. When looking at the ways our social enterprise programs will be changed by the economic and health implications of this pandemic, we continue to innovate and are eager, along with the rest of you, to get back to work to ensure Vancouver binners are supported.

As you read on, I hope you get a sense of the positive economic, social, and environmental impact these programs have on binners in our community. Thank you for being a part of our community and helping to make this a record-breaking year.

Landon Hoyt
Director, Binners' Project

Our Impacts: A Snapshot

\$285,502 in
income went directly
to binners, 64%
higher than last year

85.8% average
diversion rate across
3 social enterprise
programs

The refund rate
changed from
5¢ to 10¢,
effectively doubling
binners' income!

Binners' Project



A team of binners gets ready for their shift at the West End Car Free Day.

About the Binners

Binners, also known as waste-pickers or dumpster divers, are people who sustain their livelihoods through redeeming bottles and cans. Binners' Project is a group of waste-pickers dedicated to improving their livelihoods and destigmatizing the work they do.

Our work always centers on 'binners-first' and through this model we have built a community from the bottom up. This grassroots approach is at the core of each of our programs.

This year we engaged a record number of **168** unique binners throughout the year.

As Binners' Project has continued to grow, we are actively bringing more and more binners on as staff. 2019-2020 was a record-breaking year again in this regard, as we hired 12 binners in the positions of Member, Team Lead, Community Coordinator, and Head Coordinator (a new position this year). This brings our total number of binners on staff to 25.

Employment Program

Almost all of the binners we work with have faced barriers to formal employment, or, as they age, are physically restricted from working in traditional jobs.

Because of these factors, we continue to innovate our hiring process to ensure binners are fully supported as they transition into formal employment – some for the first time ever.

For example, we've created a process where binners are paid weekly for their first month once on-boarded as staff. Ensuring a steady cash flow is vital for people living in poverty, and transitioning from the honorarium model to payroll can be challenging. We've found this one-month transition period to be a successful approach in helping people move to a bi-weekly pay cheque.

We're also continuing to ensure that the earnings of binners receiving government benefits (for example, welfare, disability payments, or the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement) remain within their earnings exemptions. What this means is when a binner receives government benefits, they're only allowed to make so much in earned income before money is clawed back from their benefit cheque. These earnings exemptions are both strict and limited, starting at only \$400 in earnable income allowed per month.

In 2020, more dedicated time will be spent on understanding and working within these systems, while we advocate for equitable revisions to these regulations that continue to hold people in poverty.

DENISE was one of our hires this year and has succeeded tremendously—she has now been promoted to Team Lead.



Community Specialist

This year, as a result of growth and additional capacity in our core staff team, we created a new role held by former binner, Davin Boutang. Davin has been on staff since 2016, and full-time since 2017 in outreach and programs related roles.

The Community Specialist role allocates dedicated time to what we're calling 'inreach' with our current membership and 'outreach' with the outside community.

Inreach is a commitment to engaging our membership in addressing their unique needs. Binner's meet with us weekly at our Binner's Meetings, however, sometimes this touchpoint isn't enough. Through Davin's role, we can connect more meaningfully with the binner's ensuring we're supporting them in ways that build their capacity to fully participate in our social enterprise programs.

Outreach, of course, requires going out into the community to meet binner's with which we have yet to engage. In addition to that, we're working on connecting more with other organizations in the community doing similar work to share successes and continue learning from one another.



Leadership Team

As our social enterprise programs grow, so does our leadership team—the group of binner-staff that hold the positions of Team Lead or Coordinator. This year, we transitioned from a once-a-month meeting to a bi-weekly check-in and consultation with the leadership team. This core group of binner's feeds the grassroots nature of our work and ensures that decisions, strategy, and the Project's vision continue to be developed from the bottom-up.

Binner Profile



Ed joined the Binnings' Project staff team in early 2019 as a Team Lead. At the time, he was couch-surfing and living out of his van after having a small stroke that left him out of work. 2019 was a challenging year for Ed as he continued to live in his van, but he soon became one of Binnings' Project's most reliable members, eventually earning a promotion to Community Coordinator.

In early 2020, just as Ed secured a new place to live in a social housing building he found through one of our partnerships, we selected him for the position of Head Coordinator: A new, permanent part-time salaried position on our core staff team. We are so excited to see what 2020 brings for Ed!

Education & Awareness-Raising



DAVIN gives a tour to a group, which involved exploring the waste area of one of our back-of-house sorting locations.

Community Engagement

As part of our mission to destigmatize the work of binners while building their professional capacity, we regularly coordinate public appearances with partners and clients where binners can network with members of the community and provide valuable insight into policy discussions and learning sessions.

We have grown this program to include fee-for-service tours, presentations, and consultations with binners. This year we conducted **7 tours, 21 presentations, and 15 consultations putting \$3,310 into the pockets of binners**. This newer aspect of our social enterprise programs brings awareness to the work and livelihoods of binners, acknowledging the value in their experiences and stories.

Policy Advocacy

In the summer of 2019, the BC Ministry of Environment conducted a public consultation on plastics to which Binners' Project sent a formal submission. After discussion with our members, we advocated for an increase on the deposit/refund system for beverage containers.

In response to the public consultation, on November 1, 2019, the stewards of the beverage refund system, **Return-It**, increased the refund rate on most containers from 5-cents, to 10-cents – effectively doubling binners' income!

We also wrote a letter to the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction in March 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, requesting a temporary increase in income assistance to informal workers, like binners, who were ineligible for federal aid.

Shortly after, the Province announced that it would be increasing income assistance by \$300 for three months to help people in poverty during this uncertain time.



This year, **RETURN-IT** increased the refund on 5 cent containers to 10 cents – effectively doubling binners' income!

Other City Partnerships

DAVIN attended an international conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where he got to see the landfills where local waste-pickers work.



Victoria Needs Assessment

In early 2019, in partnership with the City of Victoria, Victoria Foundation, and Our Place Society, Binners' Project conducted a 4-month needs assessment of local waste-pickers in Victoria to determine whether the Binners' Project model could be replicated there.

Through consultations with Victoria binners, or 'diverters', it was determined that there was ample energy and community need for social enterprise programs that could provide income opportunities to diverters. Now, the 'Diverters' Project' continues to work on developing opportunities to further their impact in Victoria.

Recycling Networks & Grassroots Resilience

In May 2019, Community Specialist Davin Boutang attended the Recycling Networks & Grassroots Resilience conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This was made possible by our partners at the University of Victoria.

The one-week conference gathered government officials, community organizations, and waste-pickers from six countries around the world.

In one of the sessions, Davin presented on Binners' Project and our social enterprise programs. He also attended field trips in Dar es Salaam to local landfills where waste-pickers work.

GoodSort: Toronto

This year we connected with Fallon Butler, based in Toronto, who was inspired by Binners' Project to conduct a needs assessment to see if our model could be feasible there. Fallon has since founded the initiative GoodSort, received funding from an accelerator program, and will be conducting consultations with local waste-pickers to determine their needs.

As part of our charitable mission to support local waste-pickers across communities, we have started a formal partnership with GoodSort to advise on expanding programs for binners in Toronto.

Coffee Cup Revolution

On October 18, 2019, we hosted the sixth annual Coffee Cup Revolution in Victory Square Park. Waves of binners showed up on a rainy day in October to refund cups for 5-cents each at a depot that is always 100% binner-led.

Each year we continue to break records at this event, and 2019 was no exception with over 150 binners collecting **96,285 cups** in 3 hours. This means **\$4,814.25** went directly into the pockets of Vancouver binners.

AMANDA gets ready to deposit her mountain of coffee cups at the 6th Annual Coffee Cup Revolution



Huge thanks to our sponsors
or this year's CCR!

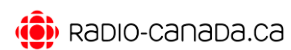


In the Media

We had a positive media year with stories on **CTV**, in the **National Post**, **The Tyee**, and **Vancouver is Awesome** highlighting the Coffee Cup Revolution and Binners' Project's overall positive role in the community.

We also did filming for series featured on the **Knowledge Network**, **TV5**, and **UNIS TV**, many of which will be released later in 2020.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic we submitted an op-ed to **The Province** and chatted with **Radio-Canada** about the health and economic impacts of the disease on binners and the Downtown Eastside.





Landon welcomes guests at our annual fundraiser where we raised over \$25,000 in just 32 minutes!

Annual Fundraiser

In 2018 we held our first-ever fundraiser, which has now become an annual event. On November 21, 2019, our fundraiser was held at 312 Main Street, where we invited 80+ community partners, stakeholders, and donors to help us reach a goal of \$25,000.

We exceeded our goal, **raising \$25,330 in just 32 minutes!** These funds helped cover critical aspects of our Universal Cart Initiative, as well as gear for binners participating in our social enterprise programs. We are grateful to be a part of such a supportive community.

Binner Profile



Bev joined Binner's Project in 2015 as one of our first members and has shown greater commitment in the past few years. It can be tough living in the Downtown Eastside, being precariously housed, and working in the informal economy, but Bev's work with us has grown and she was hired as a Team Lead in 2019. This was a big step for Bev as many of our staff members find that switching to a bi-weekly pay cheque can be a barrier.

Bev continues to prove herself as a hard worker with a kind and gentle soul, making her a strong leader. While it can still be a struggle to maintain consistency with her work, Bev has new goals this year and is working towards becoming a Community Coordinator.

Community Economic Development Programs



FRANCIS, one of our Team Leads, is shown working at Vancouver Convention Centre, where we do daily back-of-house sorting.

Back-of-House Waste Sorting

The back-of-house waste sorting program gained traction in early 2017 as we moved toward a fee-for-service model with previous pick-up clients. The early pick-up program was a free service offered to interested businesses and residents where binners would come regularly to haul away refundable containers.

However, we found binners were often doing much more than that and not being appropriately compensated.

Through their relationships with clients, binners would sort through the waste to ensure that recyclables were properly separated, while also cleaning up the waste room before leaving. We knew there was potential in organizing this as a formal program to ensure binners were fairly compensated for their work. Today this program provides an average of **47** safe and stable income opportunities for binners each week, and we continue to seek new partnerships in the coming year.

The back-of-house sorting program saw exponential growth last year. In addition to our existing weekly contracts, we secured two new contracts that have binners on-site sorting daily and twice a week. We expect further growth in this program, albeit more gradual in the 2021 fiscal year.



Back-of-House Waste Sorting

“Sustainability is at the heart of our organization, and a big part of that is waste management. Our expert sorters play a big role in identifying contaminants and sorting them into their correct streams. This has helped the Vancouver Convention Centre achieve a diversion rate greater than **80%.**”

Jessy Uppal
Sustainability Coordinator,
Vancouver Convention Centre

Measures of Success

At one of our back-of-house sorting sites, a team of two binners is on-site every day for two shifts a day.

Our team sorts the landfill stream and, on average, diverts **82%** of items away from the landfill.

This represents more than **7,000 kg** of waste that was diverted over a one-month period.

Our **Back-of-House Sorting** partners in **2019-2020** were:





KURT helps a guest at West End Car Free Day properly sort their waste

Public Waste Education

In 2015, we began organizing groups of bidders at street parties and outdoor events to pick-up the bottles and cans left by attendees, with the first being the FIFA Women's World Cup where bidders took home an average of \$75 each.

After a few events where bidders left with only \$3-4 each, we realized we could market the work bidders were doing as a service in order to properly financially recognize their contributions.

At these events, bidders are stationed at zero-waste stations, engaging with the public and ensuring guests are properly sorting their waste before it enters the bins. This program fosters community connections through face-to-face interactions with bidders and community residents, helping to build bidders' confidence by allowing them to use their unique knowledge and experience with waste systems to educate the public.

Now, after its fifth season, the waste education program has matured into a diverse group of events, many of which are returning partners year after year. We continue to look for smaller events in the offseason to help keep this program running year-round, as many bidders cite this program as their favourite.



Public Waste Education

“Since our collaboration, we have seen a year over year improvement not only in the percentage of diverted material from waste, but also the quality of diverted material. Over the 3-year period [at the Fair at the PNE], we have had an increase in **10%** or **30 Metric Tonnes** of material from attendee waste into diversion.”

George Jasper

General Manager Recycling
Waste Control Services

Measures of Success

Binners' Project's work at the three Car Free Day festivals in 2019 contributed to landfill diversion rates of **85.8%** at Commercial Drive, **88.5%** at Main Street, and **90%** in the West End.

This is an increase from 2018's rates, which averaged 81% across the three Car Free Day festivals. As Car Free Day Green Team Manager, Eyal Lebel, said: *“Binners' Project is a big part of it.”*

Our Public Waste Education partnerships in **2019-2020** were:



Waste Audits



This year, we began formalizing a new initiative within our social enterprise programs—waste audits. This is a new offering to partners who seek to better understand contamination rates of their waste streams.

Waste audit results can be used to provide next steps for partners to improve upon their current waste systems through training and education, signage, and to determine if further sorting services are needed.

This year, we completed a waste audit pilot with Simon Fraser University (SFU) at their Burnaby Campus.



ANCILLARY
SERVICES



SUSTAINABILITY
OFFICE

Snapshot of the impact of our social enterprise programs in **2019-2020**:

- ▶ **168** bidders were involved in social enterprise programs (up from 51 in 2018)
- ▶ **11,916** hours of economic opportunities (up from 6,276 in 2018)
- ▶ **\$170,210** went directly into the pockets of bidders through these programs (up from \$82,685 in 2018)
- ▶ **47** income opportunities each week, on average

Measures of Success

The SFU waste audit mobilized nine bidder members, generating **\$980** of income to our members.

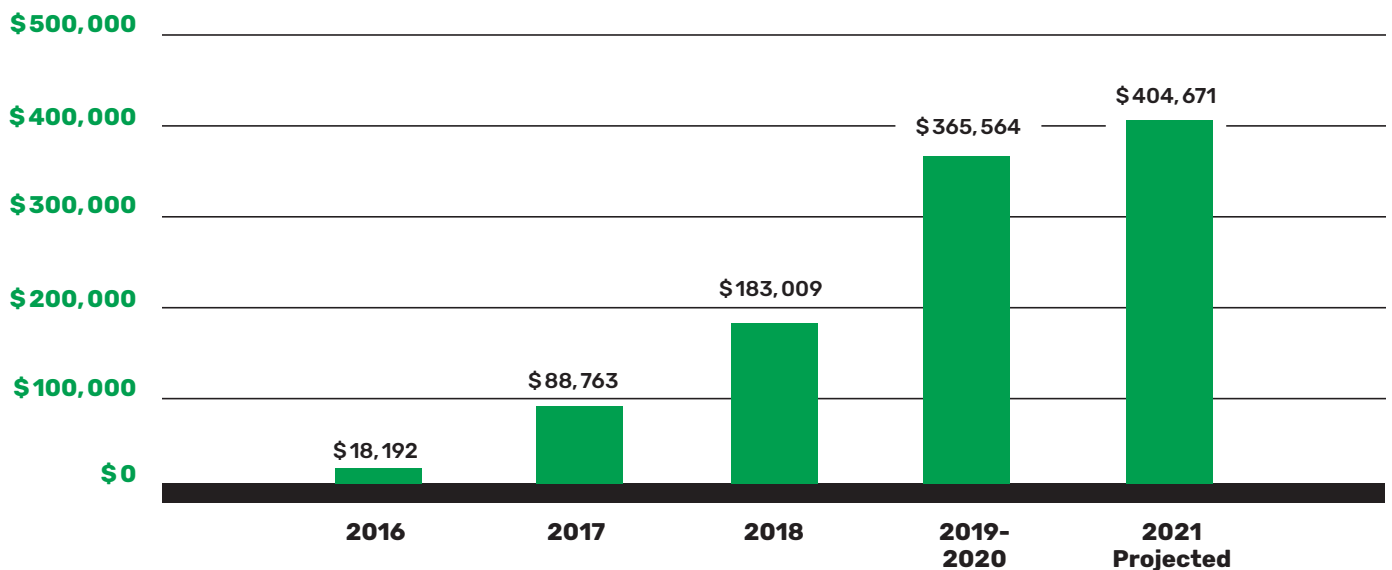
Over the course of the audit, bidders sorted **108.4 kg** of compostables, mixed paper, recyclables, and landfill waste. Overall, **87.3%** of the items were diverted out of the landfill stream.



Financial Overview

Community Economic Development Revenues

See Financial Overview section for info on how our fiscal year changed this period.



Infrastructure Programs



NAOMI shares about the Universal Carts with guests at the **WHY I DESIGN** event at the Museum of Vancouver.

Universal Cart Initiative

We made major progress in finalizing the Universal Cart Initiative this year and we were almost ready to launch. However, there were some unexpected delays in the design and production of some key materials like the custom locking mechanism.

Still, the progress we made in designing both the carts and station infrastructure along with the program itself was huge. Here's what we did:

Ensured the carts are membership-based

Once launched, members of Binners' Project will have access to the carts, ensuring that cart users feel a sense of ownership and accountability over the program.

We're also working with a professional illustrator to ensure instructions and the user agreement are visual and binner-friendly.

Designed in-house software and hardware

Our technical and design teams have custom developed an automated cart docking station that identifies members, releases carts, and accepts and secures carts once they are returned, allowing us to securely track which cart is being used by whom, for how long, and how often.

By the end of March 2020, we finally completed the purchase orders of all the major materials, moving us into the manufacturing stage. This means the launch is closer than ever!



DAVIN and Software Engineer, DAVE share about the locking mechanism to an attendee at Why I Design.

Created a voice-activated locking mechanism

With a voice-activated locking mechanism, binners will easily be able to unlock carts without worrying about things like a lost fob, or a forgotten pin number. This also allows us to create a unique profile for each binner using the carts, and prevents anyone not associated with this profile from using the carts.

Binners Hook

The Binners Hook continues to be a signature initiative of Binners' Project and has been accepted widely across Vancouver. Over 150 hooks have been installed in many Vancouver neighbourhoods, encouraging residents to make accessing bottles and cans easier and safer for their local binners.



Hooks are mounted in an alleyway near Mount Pleasant in Vancouver.

Brought on new financial supporters to take us to the next stage

Each year, more and more people want to be involved in North America's first recycling cart-sharing program. In addition to a strong list of sponsors and community donors, this year we brought on new supporters like LUSH Cosmetics and the Stollery Small Grants Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation to our already strong funding base.

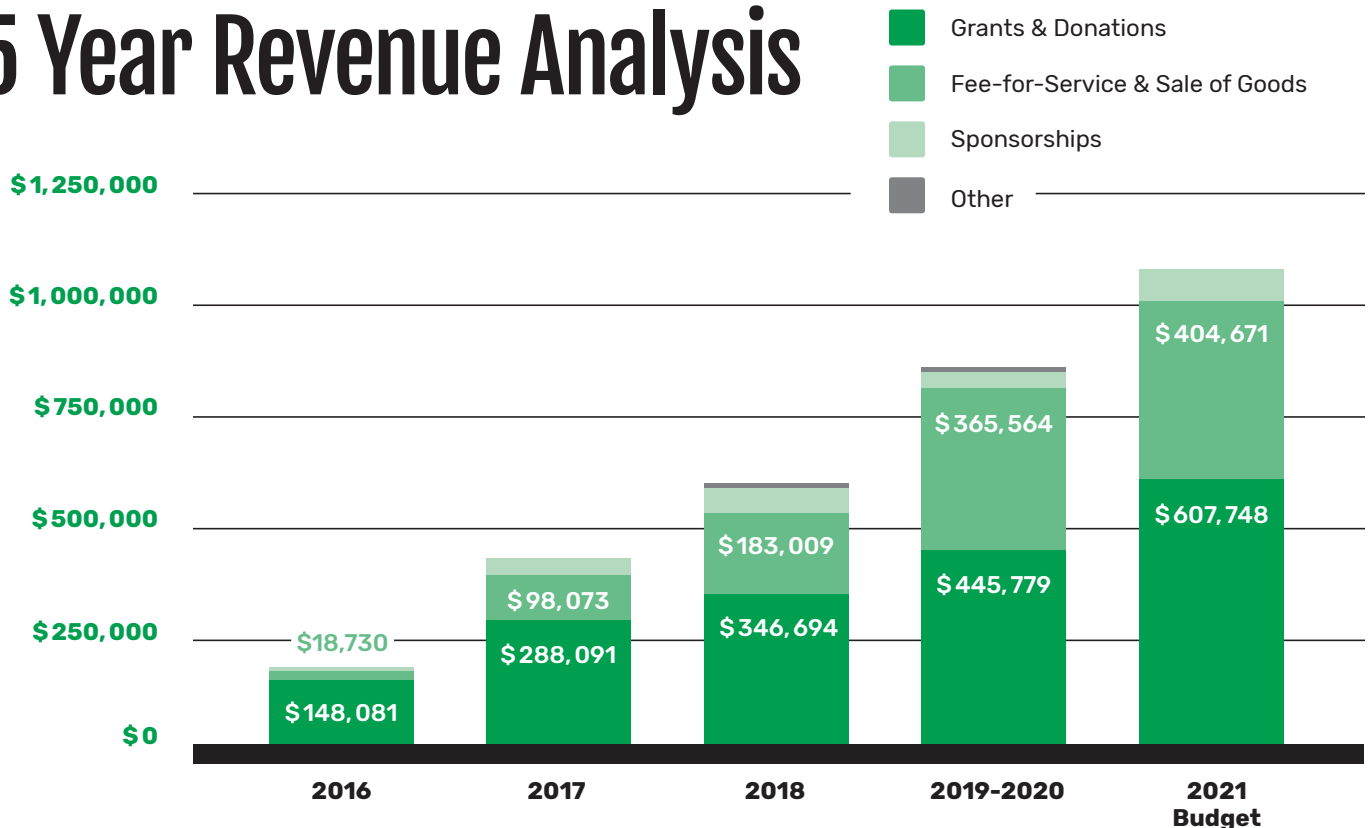
Thank you to all of our partners for ensuring the Universal Cart Initiative is a success!



Binners' Project Financial Overview

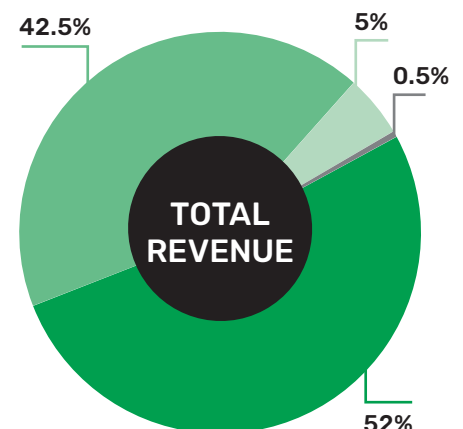
Binners' Project changed from a January 1 – December 31 fiscal year in 2018 to an April 1–March 31 fiscal year in 2019. Therefore, we had a 3-month 'stub budget' during the transition period, which is not included here to maintain consistency in year-to-year comparisons. The fiscal year being reported here will be referred to as 2019–2020, and the upcoming fiscal year projections will be referred to as 2021.

5 Year Revenue Analysis



2019–2020 Fiscal Year Revenue Breakdown

Grants & Donations	\$ 445,779
Fee-For-Service	\$ 365,564
Sponsorships	\$ 41,500
Other Revenue	\$ 3,906
TOTAL	\$ 856,749

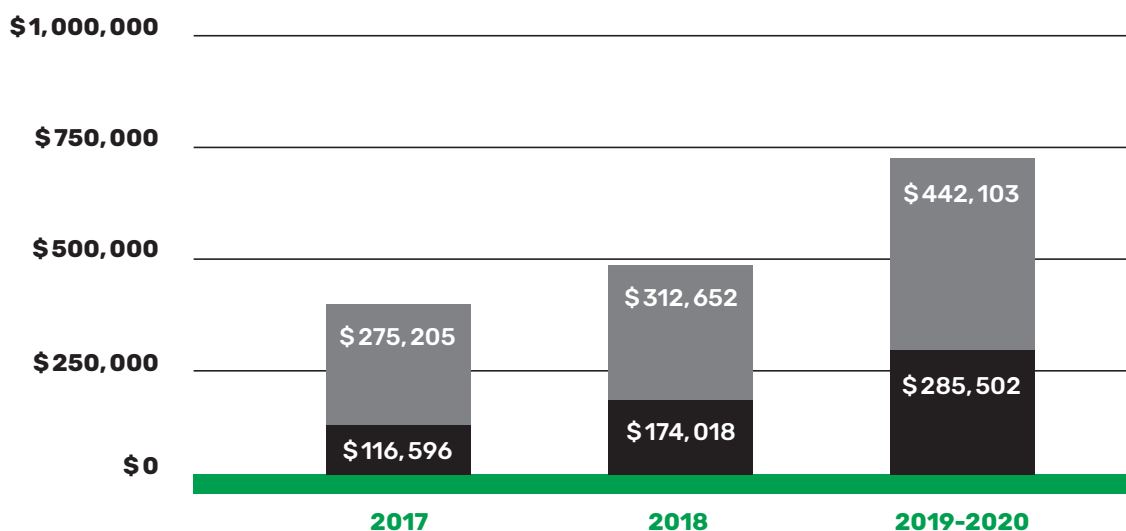
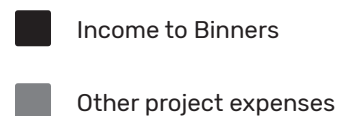




*My favourite part about Binnery's Project is the **events**—they are huge for us. I like being around people, and it's steady income. With places like the PNE, we're there every day and it's fun to hang out at the Fair after your shift.*

Robyn,
Binner

3 Year Income to Binnery's Analysis



Acknowledgements

Our work takes place on the shared, unceded lands of the **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm** (Musqueam), **Skwxwú7mesh** (Squamish) and **selílwitlh** (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

We acknowledge the **binner-members**, whose dedication and effort inspires the incredible team of staff, volunteers, funders, and supporters Binner's Project is fortunate to have in its corner. Additionally, we take this opportunity to recognize the contributions of the following groups and individuals:

Core Staff

Core staff are full or part-time with Binner's Project. This year, we said goodbye to two members of our co-founding team, Anna Godefroy and Gabby Korcheva.

- **Landon Hoyt**, Director
- **Davin Boutang**,
Community Specialist
- **Brianne De Man**, Communications
& Development Manager
- **Iris Ting**,
Social Enterprise Programs Manager
- **Kevin Gombart**,
Operations Manager
- **Ed Hawkey**, Head Coordinator

Binner-Staff

Binner's who started as volunteers and decided they were ready to take on more work with us:

- **Pat Bazinet**, Binner-staff
- **Sonia Bruin**, Binner-staff
- **Sam Hamm**, Binner-staff
- **Dwayne Flohr**, Binner-staff
- **Gael LePocher**, Binner-staff
- **Lesley Clark**, Binner-staff
- **Mike Audet**, Binner-staff
- **Curtis Traverse**, Binner-staff

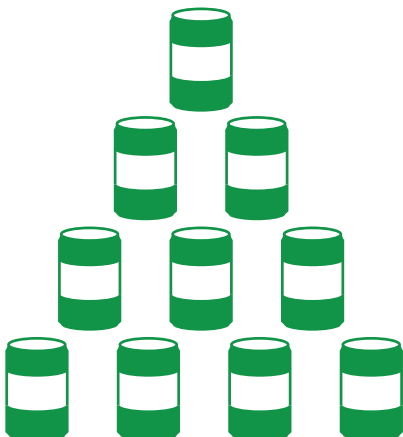
DAVIN and **BERTHA** are shown leading our weekly Tuesday Binner's Meeting.



Leadership Team

The leadership team is made up of the following staff-binner:

- **Andrew Jack,** Community Coordinator
- **David Washpan,** Community Coordinator
- **Bertha Cardinal,** Team Lead
- **Mark DeFreitas,** Team Lead
- **Brian Rutledge,** Team Lead
- **Shirley Vivian,** Team Lead
- **Sheldon Bowers,** Team Lead
- **Kelly Angecone,** Team Lead
- **Bev Welsey,** Team Lead
- **Dave Collicott,** Team Lead
- **Glenn Grafton,** Team Lead
- **Joyce Many Chiefs,** Team Lead
- **Francis Taban,** Team Lead
- **Denise Folland,** Team Lead
- **Kashe Soukup,** Team Lead
- **Gerry Maynard,** Team Lead
- **Brenda Shorty,** Team Lead



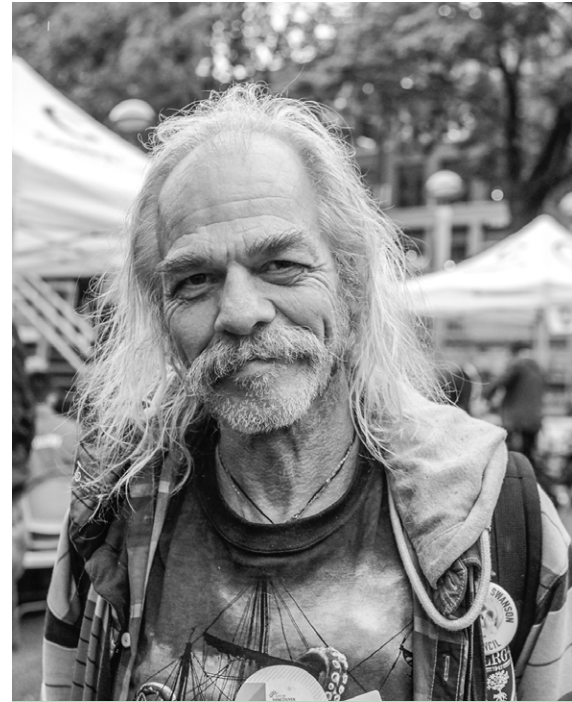
Advisors, Consultants, and Volunteers

- **Lani Brunn**
- **Jake Collinge**
- **Shane Frei**
- **Melanie Kwan**
- **Johanna Li**
- **Ken Lyotier**
- **Michaela Montaner**
- **Sam Reeve**
- **David Schwartz**
- **Shaugn Schwartz**
- **Derek Senft**

Steering Committee

The steering committee provides administrative oversight to Binner's Project. This year, the steering committee recruited two new members, Alexandra Kenyon and Ann Cooper.

- **Jeanette Ageson,** Chair
Publisher, The Tyee
- **David Lee,**
Accredited Partnership Broker and
PBA Practitioner-Trainer
- **Scott Fraser,**
Former President and CEO,
Encorp Pacific
- **Steve Johnston,**
Executive Director, Community Impact
Real Estate Society
- **Alexandra Kenyon,**
Associate, HCMA Architecture + Design
- **Ann Cooper,**
Project Coordinator, Green Events, City
of Vancouver



In Memoriam

In December 2019, we said goodbye to longtime Binner's Project member, **Hendrik Beune**. Hendrik was one of the founding members of Binner's Project and wore his green with pride. He was a fierce advocate for policy changes impacting the whole of the Downtown Eastside, from legal vending to increasing the deposit rates on refundables.

He's fondly remembered for being active in every and all committee, group, and organization he could. He was always on the go. We will always be proud to be his "favourite organization in the Downtown Eastside" (an actual quote!).

Our Partners & Funders





BINNERS' PROJECT joined Tides Canada's shared platform in 2015. It provides governance, human resources, financial, and grant management for leading environmental and social projects across Canada, allowing projects to more effectively achieve their missions. All projects contribute 10-12% of revenue to the collective operation of the shared platform.



Don't wait until our next report for an update! Join us on social media or our low-traffic email list to keep up with our activities year-round:

binnersproject.org/signup



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