



**Our stories.**

## Feeding community

Tayybeh, a social enterprise that employs newcomer Syrian women chefs, delivered meals to vulnerable communities during the pandemic, including refugees, low-income individuals, seniors, and members of the Indigenous community.

When COVID-19 first struck and shuttered stores and services, food security was top of mind for Krystal Renschler. “Longstanding support systems in the community were disrupted overnight,” explains the Vancity Community Investment Portfolio Manager. “We had to act quickly to get resources into the hands of community leaders as fast as possible so they could be responsive to immediate needs. Feeding people was at the top of that list, and the best thing we could do was provide financial support to those who had the capacity and connections to get meals to those who needed them.”

One of the organizations with the heart to help and the skills to feed a large group of people was Vancity business member Tayybeh. This full-service catering social enterprise employs newcomer Syrian women chefs with no previous formal work experience. With a \$50,000 grant from Vancity, Tayybeh developed a meal delivery service for vulnerable communities, including refugees, low-income individuals, seniors, and members of the Indigenous community in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. As a result, Tayybeh delivered 5,000 meals to those in need over the course of four months at the height of the pandemic.

At first glance, the benefit was obvious. Tayybeh ensured people in need had access to nutritious meals. But the benefit was two-fold to Krystal and founder Nihal Elwan: the work kept Tayybeh’s employees— mostly refugee women—employed.

The creation of Tayybeh was almost accidental. When Nihal volunteered as a translator for newcomer families in 2015, she witnessed their struggles with housing, childcare and employment due to language barriers and lack of work experience. Having just moved to Canada herself the year prior, she wanted to do more.

The idea was simple: Pop-up dinners for the newcomer women to cook their Syrian cuisine and meet fellow Canadians. Sold-out dinners became the norm and people began asking how they could order the food for their meetings and private events. So, in 2016, after discussions with the team of Syrian chefs, Nihal launched Tayybeh. A business member since day one, Tayybeh now employs 10 to 15 women creating financial independence, community and some of the best Syrian cuisine in Vancouver.

## **From Real Estate to PPE**

LNG Studios pivoted its business from 3D modeling for real estate to making personal protective equipment during the pandemic.

When COVID-19 arrived in our community, thousands of local businesses closed their doors or fundamentally changed how they function. For most small businesses, it became a game of survival. Many have had to adopt, tweak or change direction to keep afloat. One business that had to pivot is LNG Studios. It's a company that creates virtual reality simulations for architects, engineers, and real estate developers, but since April 2020 they've been making personal protective equipment, or PPE.

When real estate developments were paused at the beginning of the pandemic LNG Studios suddenly had no projects or cashflow. The owner, Leon Ng, had to inform his team that the business was on pause. That is, until a doctor from Richmond Hospital reached out to Leon. They were in dire need of PPE and are wondering if LNG could 3D-print face shields. Leon Ng spoke to his team and realized that it's something they could make and provide. At the time, they only had five 3D printers and were able to produce one face shield every 45 minutes. He reached out to the community and was able to rally 300 local 3D printers to meet the initial request by local hospitals and health authorities, but the requests kept coming. Soon other organizations and retail with essential frontline workers were inquiring about face shields.

The Vancity Unity Pivot Business Loan was created for small businesses that have changed track to support the COVID-19 response specifically, or have had to adapt to the changed environment. LNG Studios was a recipient. They bought additional 3D printers and more materials to produce not only face shields, but other 3D printed PPE for various hospitals and local retailers. "My business has pivoted not just to printing 3D face shields, but now to importing and reselling other types of PPE," said Leon Ng.

Vancity's relief programs for small business build on the supports already in place from the provincial and federal governments. We believe that local businesses are the heart and soul of our economy. It takes courage and innovation to change direction when facing unprecedented circumstances, and Vancity is here to help businesses with that spirit.

## Deconstruction over demolition

Unbuilders deconstructs buildings, instead of demolishing them, keeping at least 80 per cent of building materials out of the landfill and reduces carbon footprints.

“The demolition industry is one of the largest contributors to pollution in Canada. We need to change this immediately,” says Adam Corneil, Founder & CEO of Unbuilders. Instead of demolition, they deconstruct and salvage the building components and yield less than five per cent waste on average.

Every year, 40 per cent of the waste going into landfills around B.C.’s Lower Mainland is from construction and demolition. When an average single-family home in Metro Vancouver is torn down, it creates approximately 50 tonnes of waste which are taken to a landfill or incinerated. Approximately 3,000 houses are demolished annually in Metro Vancouver. While 95 per cent of the materials in those houses could be recycled or re-used, the vast majority are discarded.

Deconstruction keeps at least 80 per cent of building materials out of landfill. While rescuing and selling old growth lumber is a byproduct of the deconstruction process, keeping demolition waste out of landfill is Unbuilders’ main goal. Building homes with re-used materials reduce the carbon footprint of its construction. This practice is a key part of a circular economy, in which resources and materials are recovered and re-used in home construction. Beyond the environmental benefits, a transition from demolition to deconstruction would create approximately 13,300 jobs in the Lower Mainland.

Our ambition is to make Vancity net-zero by 2040 across all our mortgages and loans. That means the carbon emitted from anything we finance will be eliminated or significantly reduced, with any remaining emissions being brought to net-zero. That’s why we’re working to empower our members and community partners to reduce emissions and increase climate resilience in their homes and commercial properties.

Vancity has proudly supported Unbuilders through our enviroFund program. Additionally, they were awarded a Lighter Living grant in 2019. According to Adam, “Vancity has helped in so many ways. They gave our contracting company a line of credit when the big banks would not, which gave us the ability to experiment with deconstruction. On top of the financial support, Vancity has connected us with other businesses and community members. Simply put, we would be out of business if it were not for Vancity’s continued support and belief in our vision and mission.”