

Casandra Fletcher



Tell us about your work

My journey in community building began when I was 19, when my mother's suicide turned my world upside down and pulled me off a path in corporate finance. I started building programs and resources for people with mental health needs and disabilities, and over time, focused on ethics, rights, inclusion, stigma, and power, all intending to push systems change led by the very people these resources are meant to support.

Over time, I began consulting for non-profits, helping build strategic plans, strong boards, and greater inclusion. In the big picture of my work, I am deeply concerned about the climate crisis and see this work as tightly connected to climate justice.



In my personal life, we were raising our children on a beautiful farm on the Sunshine Coast, feet in the dirt, canning fruit, and cuddling (and sometimes eating) the chickens we raised. My connection to the earth and food is deeply rooted in my lineage of farmer ancestors, and I grew up with a love (and hate) for legumes, kale, and homemade peanut butter.

How did you come into this leadership role?

In 2016, I was approached by One Straw Society, a grassroots non-profit focused on building a resilient, local, ethical food system that was facing dissolution after its founder passed away four years earlier. I learned there was little documentation, no assets, no policies, no board members, no staff, and only one part-time (but extraordinary) contractor, and yet, I was intrigued. Their values aligned with mine, and I could feel the community's deep connection to the organization's legacy and its potential for revival. At first, I was just there to write a strategic plan.

But then a cancer diagnosis gifted me perspective and time during a year of surgery and chemotherapy, and I poured my energy into rebuilding the organization. With long to-do lists, I slowly built connections, policies, spaces and projects focused on a food system care for our earth under a looming climate crisis.

Today, One Straw Society incorporates principles of inclusion into everything we do—a clear reflection of my past work—while also balancing the needs of the land and the people who depend on it.



What makes your work hard?



I struggle with “imposter syndrome,” and the fear that my voice isn’t worthy of being heard. Since my work in food systems only began in 2016, I’m on a steep learning curve and prone to feeling completely out of my depth.

The lack of funding is an ongoing challenge. Building the organization from the ground up meant I had to handle finance, HR, fundraising, grant writing, and administration as an unpaid, full-time volunteer. My days are filled with switching hats, bumps in the road, endless research, and learning. Yet, this is what drives me—drawing in passionate knowledge-holders and mentors.

You have a big set of problems to contend with What makes for a good day?

It's all about human stories and human successes. There's so much joy in seeing everyday efforts translate into meaningful impacts in people's lives. I'm committed to building relationships with Indigenous elders and facilitating opportunities for them to pass on their knowledge, stories, and culture to younger generations.

I also get goosebumps thinking about a woman who picked up her farm food box and turned to say, "You know you're changing people's lives, right?" Or the summer staff member, who had paused her nursing career due to post-pandemic burnout, and who said, "I just realized this is the first time I've ever worked in health care. I've spent my whole career in sick care."



What gives you hope?

I'm a cheerleader at heart. I love inspiring people to create and connect with others and to see their eyes light up as ideas swirl and form collectively.

What do you see if we get this right?

None of this work depends on just one person; it's all a collective effort. It's not about being a saviour but being a servant. I envision partnering with other regions and people across the country who are working to restore a sovereign, wholesome, and sustainable food system. Food is the foundation of our physical well-being - at the very base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and at the centre of a climate secure future so we need to get this right.



What would you say to younger readers?



Keep challenging the traditional image of hierarchy. Keep expressing your opinions and values. Don't let titles devalue your voice. Practice accountability, commitment, and tact. And ask great questions that command respect and inclusion. You're an essential part of the world's healing.

What would you say to older readers?

It can be hard for older folks to connect with younger generations. I encourage them to recognize their privilege and understand that people face very different starting lines in life. We have so much to learn from young people who are growing up in a world where they're influenced by perspectives we never could have imagined.



SPEC Elders Circle
Legacy-making as Elder-making

About Elders in our Midst

The Elders in our Midst project celebrates seniors across British Columbia and Canada who have contributed meaningfully to climate action in their communities. Through youth-led interviews and Joy Hanser's hand-painted portraits, it highlights their unique efforts and inspires all generations to foster community-driven climate action.

Learn More and Connect

Elders in Our Midst: spec.bc.ca/eldersinourmidst

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