



EYA
ENVIRONMENTAL
YOUTH ALLIANCE

2020 Impact Report



Land Acknowledgement

EYA acknowledges that we operate on unceded xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sə́ílwətaʔt̓ (Tseil-Waututh), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and S'ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō) territories. We recognize and support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and are actively working to decolonize our organization through the following actions:

- Braiding Indigenous and Western knowledge in our program curricula
- Including visits from Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in each program
- Hiring Indigenous educators to run our youth programs
- Hiring an Indigenous youth to advise our decolonizing and inclusion work
- Creating a written plan with specific actions to support Indigenous staff and decolonize our youth programs, fundraising, governance, and human resources policies.

We raise our hands in deep thanks to the ancestors who stewarded these lands since time immemorial, to the nations who continue to care for these lands, and to the Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members who generously shared cultural teachings from their nations with youth in our programs this year. We also thank all of the Indigenous youth in our programs who have shared so much knowledge and their own cultural teachings.

Year in Review

Dear community,

If the pandemic showed us anything, it's that spending time in nature can support wellbeing in challenging times - and that not everyone has the same access to safe, biodiverse nature.

Over the past year, we saw a huge increase in applications for EYA's land-based programs - more than 85 eligible youth were waitlisted for our multi-week education programs. Many youth who were able to participate shared that EYA programs helped them cope with COVID-19 by creating safe outdoor opportunities to connect with nature and other youth.

In May 2020, EYA also launched a new land-based employment training program in partnership with Red Fox Healthy Living Society. The 10 youth who joined our first two cohorts participated in two full-time 10-week trainings led by EYA staff and 12-week work placements with local environmental organizations in the community.

It's also been a year of embracing the work of decolonizing and becoming an actively anti-racist organization - from our programs and HR policies to fundraising and governance. We have created a new position, Youth Empowerment Specialist, to lead this work.

Despite the struggles of 2020, we're buoyed by youth stories about how EYA programs impact their lives and relationship with nature - and the many generous gifts of knowledge, time, and dollars received from our community. We couldn't do it without all of you!

With gratitude,

The EYA team



Who We Are

EYA supports youth facing barriers to connect with nature and develop the skills and confidence to become environmental stewards. We provide free, land-based environmental education and paid employment training programs that braid Western and Indigenous perspectives on land stewardship. Our participants identify as BIPOC, LGBTQ2, living with a disability, racialized new immigrants, in foster care, living on low incomes, or targeted by other systemic barriers.

Our work is guided by the principles of intersectional environmentalism. We recognize that youth facing barriers are disproportionately impacted by environmental crises but systemically excluded from environmental advocacy and careers. Our programs centre the voices of youth facing barriers in land stewardship to help build a more inclusive environmental movement that acknowledges the intersections of social and environmental justice.

HOW WE MAKE AN IMPACT

- Our **Nature Stewards Program** engages youth ages 14-18 in free land-based education
- Our **Roots & Shoots Program** trains youth ages 18-25 in environmental job skills and places them with local environmental organizations for work experience
- Our **Youth Habitat Crew Program** creates paid summer jobs for youth so they can grow environmental job skills
- Our **Peer Mentor Program** engages youth volunteers to co-lead Nature Stewards programs to develop leadership and facilitation skills
- Our **Wild Mind Program** provides urban ecology field trips for East Vancouver elementary schools



Nature Stewards

Our Nature Stewards Program empowers youth facing barriers ages 14-18 as environmental stewards by providing free 10-week land-based education programs. Each program engages a small group of eight youth participants in weekly 4-hour sessions centred on three themes:

Native plant horticulture, habitat restoration, and Indigenous foodscapes. Hands-on activities blend Western ecology and Indigenous teachings and include growing thousands of native plants, restoring wildlife habitat along Still Creek, and making medicinal teas and salves.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS



ENGAGED 220 YOUTH FACING BARRIERS IN 21 LAND-BASED PROGRAMS.

Our programs grew this year by 90%, allowing us to reach an additional 85 youth. We also reduced the size of each cohort to 8 participants to support fuller engagement of all youth.



YOUTH REPORTED INCREASED CONNECTION TO NATURE AND GROWTH IN SKILLS.

Through our post-program surveys, 99% of youth reported feeling more connected to nature and 97% cared more about the environment. 95% felt that they gained new skills in land stewardship, 79% felt more confident, and 91% felt more connected with community.



CONTINUED BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.

We continued delivering programs in collaboration with Urban Native Youth Association and Red Fox Healthy Living Society and started a new partnership with Still Moon Arts Society. We also co-delivered a program with AfroVan Connect.



GREW 2500 NATIVE PLANTS FOR HABITAT RESTORATION AND INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY PROJECTS.

Through the programs, youth participants propagated and grew 2500 native plants that were gifted to 30 schools and community organizations in East Vancouver and Indigenous-led groups across the Lower Mainland.



STEWARDED 2.5 ACRES OF URBAN WILDLIFE HABITAT. Through program activities, youth participants helped to steward and restore habitat for birds, pollinators, and other urban wildlife in Strathcona and Cottonwood Gardens and Renfrew Ravine in East Vancouver.



"I learned not only about native plants and their uses, I learned about how we impact the world around us and how we can help heal it."

- age 16

"I loved weaving cedar with Elder Leonard because I got to do what my ancestors did and it was really good to know I was a natural at it."

- age 13

"Learning about plants has made me feel more a part of nature than just an observer. I learned to respect, preserve, love and care for nature."

- age 15

"The teachings I'll keep with me are the Indigenous perspectives from Elders and Knowledge-keepers. The program taught me different worldviews and I learned that everything is connected. It made me think about the differences in the way science is done in Western and First People's ways of science."

- age 16

"I enjoyed gaining skills to remove invasive blackberries because it inspired me to take action in my own neighborhood. Getting a nice workout in while removing blackberries was very satisfying."

- age 18



Roots & Shoots

Our Roots & Shoots Program creates a pathway to environmental careers for youth facing barriers ages 18-25. We provide 10 weeks of paid training in land-based job skills like habitat restoration, native plant horticulture, and plant medicine.

We then place participants at host environmental organizations for 12 weeks and support youth to find work after the program. We run this program in partnership with Red Fox Healthy Living Society.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS



LAUNCHED THE FIRST TWO COHORTS OF THE NEW PROGRAM WITH 10 YOUTH PARTICIPANTS! Participants completed 10-week trainings led by EYA staff where they grew land-based job skills, explored green careers, and developed employability skills like communication and digital literacy.



FOUR YOUTH FROM OUR FIRST COHORT COMPLETED THEIR WORK PLACEMENTS. Youth chose a local organization with environmental programming that matched their interests. The first four participants completed their placements at the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, Britannia Community Centre, Wild Bird Trust, and Growing Chefs.



YOUTH RECOGNIZED SELF-GROWTH IN ENVIRONMENTAL JOB SKILLS. Through participant surveys, 100% of youth reported that they developed more skills to get a land-based job as a result of the program and 100% also feel more prepared for the workplace.



WE DEVELOPED A NEW CURRICULUM FOR THE 10-WEEK TRAINING.

We are working to apply a decolonial lens to employability training and concepts like 'professionalism' in the curriculum, which continues to evolve as we deliver the program.



Our Roots & Shoots Participants

Introducing our 2020 Roots & Shoots cohorts! All of our participants have developed skills in land-based careers while gaining experience in the environmental sector.



Alannah Haizimsque
Colibri Learning Foundation



Darian Leung
Growing Chefs!



Deandra Atmojo
Wild Bird Trust



Hazel Point
Muddy Bootprints



Jessica (Kitty) Charlie
Environmental Youth Alliance



Justin Percival
Britannia Community Centre



Kelsey Schwab
Downtown Eastside
Neighbourhood House



Nicholas Peters
Downtown Eastside
Neighbourhood House



Mya Bordeau
Environmental Youth Alliance



Phin Drummond
Hives for Humanity



Impact Story

A Roots & Shoots Participant shares her experience

The Roots & Shoots Internship brought many life changing lessons for me and allowed me to explore many different facets of environmental stewardships and career paths.

My favourite part of the internship, besides being outdoors all the time, was our daily check-ins at the beginning and end of the day; I never knew how important it is to be aware of how our spirit, mind and body is doing everyday. By learning to be aware of these things, I am able to shift my priorities of the day so I can still meet any goals I set.

Another valuable thing I have learned throughout the internship was program facilitation. It was an amazing experience to be able to develop and execute our own workshops at the end of the internship. It gave me confidence in myself and helped me see future career possibilities.

I got to apply some of the skills I learned at EYA during my work placement at Wild Bird Trust of BC. My main tasks were to develop and deliver on-site and online programming for kids and the general public. It was such a rewarding experience. I get to connect and share knowledge with people from all walks of life. Moreover, I also got to support some habitat restoration projects at the beautiful conservation area of Maplewood Flats and gained knowledge about birds from some expert birders.

I'm so grateful for these opportunities and I can't wait to apply my newfound knowledge and skills in my next opportunity.

- Deandra Atmojo



Youth Habitat Crew

Our Youth Habitat Crew Program provides 10-week paid employment opportunities for a team of five youth each summer. YHC members help to maintain EYA programming sites in East Vancouver and restore wildlife habitat in urban green spaces while growing skills and work experience in environmental stewardship.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



RECRUITED, HIRED, AND EMPLOYED FIVE YOUTH FACING BARRIERS AS PART OF OUR SECOND YOUTH HABITAT CREW COHORT. Two university-aged youth were hired as Crew Leaders to supervise and lead the other three crew members, with mentorship from EYA staff.



THE CREW TRANSFORMED EYA'S PROGRAMMING SITES AND RESTORED HABITAT. Crew Members tackled a huge range of projects - from removing invasive species along Still Creek to harvesting native plant seeds for our nursery to small maintenance projects.



THE CREW BUILT STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AND INCREASED JOB SKILLS. Through daily work together on the land, youth developed strong connection to the land and each other. 100% reported feeling more connected to other youth, 80% reported that they improved their skills to get a job, and 100% care more about nature.



It really feels good to be able to reconnect with nature and explore another side of me. The program gave everyone an opportunity to form lasting relationships while learning, exploring and gaining valuable experience, whether it be work or life. It gave me an opportunity to form new relationships during a time of isolation as well as the chance to get to work in and with nature.



Our Youth Habitat Crew

Please meet our 2020 Youth Habitat Crew!



Hannah Douglas-Ezzat



Angela Chia



Alannah Haizimsque



Nicole Johnson



Elsie L'Hirondelle



"Being in the YHC has changed my life so much it's hard to explain. I was struggling so much and this place helped me escape that. I've been able to pay for medical expenses, and I've been around very supportive people. I wasn't going outside much and it was really affecting my health and being outside made me healthier mentally and physically. I'm more confident in myself now because of this job and I feel a lot more healthier and I feel so much more better."

"I gained more leadership skills as the co-supervisor and finding ways to ask people to do stuff that wasn't rude and was to the point. I also learned how to work with a group and lead a group efficiently."



Peer Mentors

Our Peer Mentor Program creates a pathway to leadership for future environmental educators by providing volunteer positions in our Nature Stewards programs. Peer Mentors bring their experience and passion and we provide a half-day training, one-on-one mentorship with an EYA educator, and opportunities to practice facilitation and group leadership.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



ENGAGED 10 YOUTH AS PEER MENTORS. We supported each Peer Mentor to step into a leadership role as a supporting facilitator in our Nature Stewards programs. A number of youth participated more than once, deepening their skills.



WE RAN THREE HALF-DAY TRAININGS FOR THE PEER MENTORS. Youth learned about facilitation and environmental education from EYA staff and set learning objectives for the program that were revisited through weekly mentorship check-ins.



"I am more comfortable being myself while facilitating and supporting programs. I'm better at planning ahead of time and I'm more confident in sharing my knowledge. I now have a sense of belonging in a leadership role."

"I feel more confident engaging youth and leading activities, which helps reassure my career choice and abilities."



Wild Mind

Our Wild Mind Program engages elementary students from East Vancouver Schools to re-imagine the city as biodiverse ecosystems supporting a variety of species including our own through hands-on, curriculum-aligned field trips at Strathcona Community Gardens.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



RAN 23 FIELD TRIPS REACHING 421 YOUTH. Children learned about native plants, bees and wildlife living in the city from an EYA educator, cultivating their interest and care for nature.



PARTNERED WITH KIDSAFE PROJECT SOCIETY TO RUN SUMMER FIELD TRIPS FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR PROGRAMS. This helped to make up for spring program cancellations due to Covid-19 school closures and we loved working with KidSafe!



"They are more curious during outdoor education and expressed excitement and interest in learning about nature"

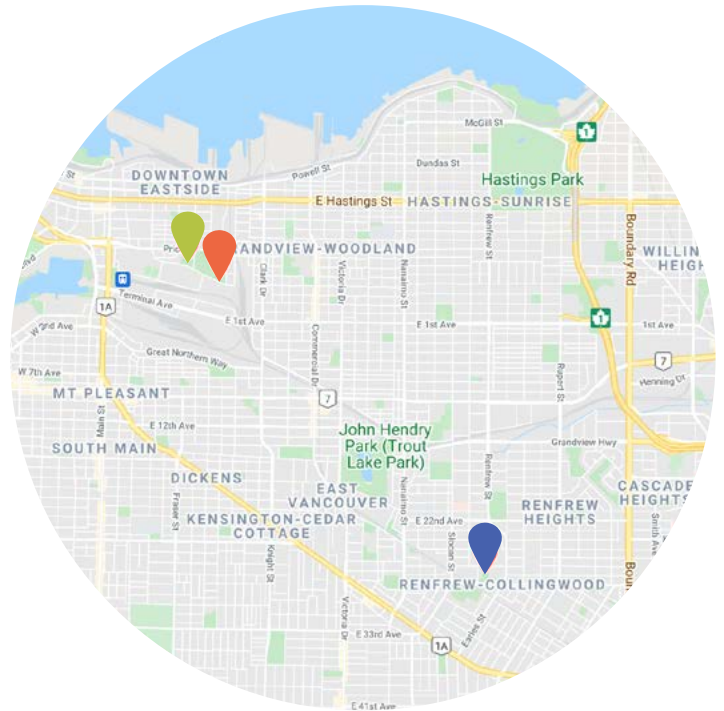
"My students learned to appreciate new pieces of nature in their community that they didn't know were there before. Every time we get them on an outside adventure, they discover and learn something new!"

"Learning about and simply being outside in nature, helps children appreciate that they are a part of something larger and they can play a role in protecting it."



Program Sites

EYA empowers youth to connect with nature and steward the land *in their own neighbourhood*. Our programs take place at outdoor programming sites in **Strathcona** and **Cottonwood Community Gardens** - a 1.4 hectare community-run green space in the Downtown Eastside with a nursery, rewilding areas, plant medicine gardens, and solar-powered classroom - and along Still Creek in **Renfrew Ravine** in southeast Vancouver, one of the city's only daylighted, salmon-bearing streams. We are grateful to Strathcona and Cottonwood gardeners and staff at Still Moon Arts Society for supporting EYA programs in these spaces.

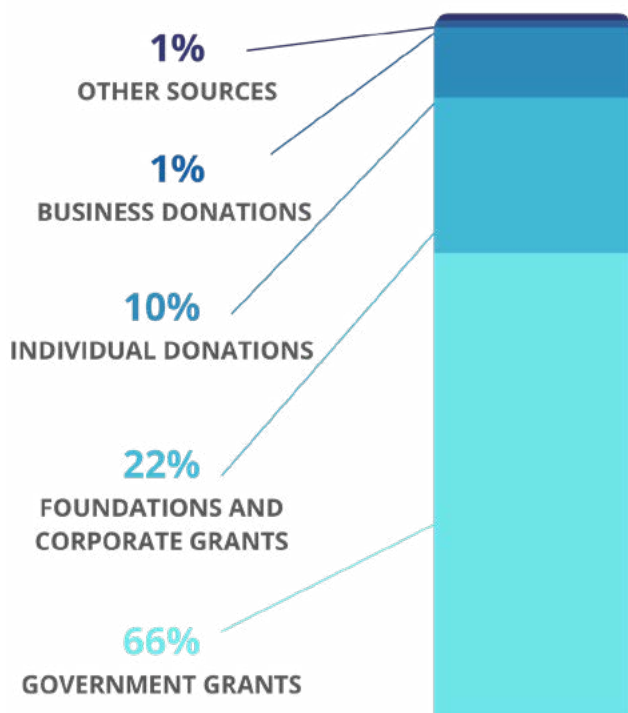


Financials

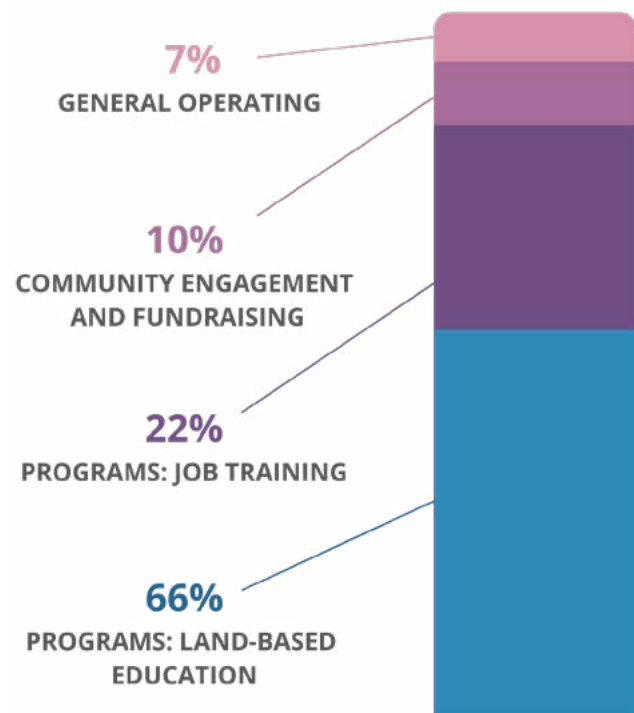
This year was a reminder of the important role EYA plays in connecting local youth with nature and community. We saw increased numbers of youth applying for our programs - and increased donations from local businesses and individuals. This support allowed us to pivot quickly in response to Covid-19 and keep our programs running when youth needed them the most.

Covid-19 delayed some of our youth-led habitat restoration work, resulting in the deferral of some foundation grants and a larger-than-usual surplus. We were also able to access federal Covid-19 relief funds that will ensure uninterrupted program delivery as we navigate a period of fundraising uncertainty. Deferred grants will be spent in 2021-22 as work resumes. In 2020, our expenses were \$636,251 to deliver our programs.

Revenue



Expenses



Partners

EYA's partnerships with other local organizations strengthen our youth programs and create a sense of community. We share resources and learnings, and collaborate closely to deliver youth programs, steward program spaces, and support youth on their pathway to green jobs.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

AfroVan Connect
Grandview Woodland Food Connection
Red Fox Healthy Living Society
Still Moon Arts Society
Urban Native Youth Association

SITE PARTNERS

Cottonwood Community Garden
Strathcona Community Garden

WORK PLACEMENT PARTNERS

Britannia Community Centre
Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
Growing Chefs! Chefs for Children's Urban
Agriculture
Hives for Humanity
Wild Bird Trust of BC



Supporters

EYA is honoured to receive many gifts of knowledge, time, and dollars that sustain our work. Every donation is equally valued.

GIFTS OF KNOWLEDGE

We raise our hands in thanks to the Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members who shared cultural teachings from their nations with the youth in our programs.

Chrystal Sparrow (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm)
Elder Bon Fabian (Métis)
Elder Glyda Morgan (Tla'amin)
Elder Henry Williams (Skwxwú7mesh)
Elder Leonard Williams (Quatsino)
Elder Sharon Jinkerson Brass (Key)
John Priesl (Skwxwú7mesh, Leq'á:mel)
Kim Haxton (Wasauksing)
Lori Snyder (Métis)
Lynne-Marie & Melissa-Rae Angus (Gitxaala, Nisga'a, Métis)
Matthew Williams (Skwxwú7mesh)
Natasha Anderson (Key)
Nicole Priesl (Skwxwú7mesh, Leq'á:mel)
Stacey Gallagher (Anishinaabe)
T'uy't'ananat-Cease Wyss (Skwxwú7mesh, Stó:lō, Kanaka Maoli, Irish-Métis)

GIFTS OF TIME

We couldn't do it without our amazing youth Peer Mentor volunteers!

Dorsa Charkhsaz
Hana Watanabe
Hafsa Ahmed
Kirsten Steenblok
Lara Virsik
Mahynour Saleh
Njoki Mburu
Raeanne Tieu
Saksham Preet Kaur
Victor Herdez

GIFTS OF DOLLARS

We're deeply grateful to everyone who made a financial contribution in a challenging year.

Funders

BioTalent Canada
City of Vancouver (Greenest City)
Contributing to Lives of Inner City Kids
Dennis and Kathy Meakin Family Foundation
Emergency Community Support Fund (Federal Government of Canada)
Employment & Social Development Canada
Environment & Climate Change Canada
G&F Financial Foundation
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Indigenous Services Canada
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Supporters

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*Did we miss you or
make an error?

Contact
giving@eya.ca
to let us know!



"I am so inspired by the organization as a whole and its programs. As an environmental educator myself, I am aspiring to create something like EYA out east - and I cannot tell you how much I learn just from seeing how you are orchestrating youth in different areas of environmental connection. As a woman of colour myself, it's perhaps most important and most heartwarming for me to see such a strong focus on and commitment towards engaging BIPOC youth."

- 2020 Donor



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*Empower youth facing
barriers to become
environmental stewards.*

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