



EYA
ENVIRONMENTAL
YOUTH ALLIANCE

2021 Impact Report

Land Honouring

EYA acknowledges that we operate on unceded xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), səliłwətat (Tseil-Waututh), and Sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish) 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 working to decolonize our organization through the following actions:

- Hiring Indigenous educators to run our youth programs
- Braiding Indigenous and Western knowledge in our program curricula
- Including visits from Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in each program
- Including an activity on leading land acknowledgements in each program
- Hiring an Indigenous youth to advise our decolonizing and inclusion work
- Paid consulting with Indigenous youth and Elders on our decolonizing work
- Integrating trauma-informed practices into our programs
- Providing trauma-informed training for EYA staff and community partners
- Decolonizing urban landscapes by replacing non-native plants with Indigenous plants
- Gifting youth-grown native plants to Indigenous-led garden projects
- Gifting plant medicine made by youth participants to community
- Establishing Indigenous People's Day and Orange Shirt Day as paid days off
- Recognizing gifts of time and knowledge equally to financial gifts

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 brilliance and their own cultural teachings.

Year in Review

Dear community,

From heat domes to atmospheric rivers, we all felt the effects of a changing climate this year - but some of us more than others, thanks to the unequal distribution of green space in our city that causes more intense heat and flooding in lower income, racialized communities.

As we moved through these new weather events, our team was reminded why centring the voices of youth targeted by systemic oppression is vital for a just and sustainable future. At EYA, it was a year of strengthening and deepening our environmental justice work. We integrated trauma-informed practices into our programs and restructured our staff team to support youth to move into leadership roles at EYA. We also updated our employment training curriculum to unpack and look critically at colonial norms like "professionalism". Diving into this work resulted in creating a long list of other actions that we're still working to achieve!

We were also reminded that local youth are ready to lead the way on transformative change - and that our communities are ready to support them. Over the past year, 246 youth completed our land-based education and employment training programs and another 118 youth were waitlisted. At the same time, we received increased donations from local businesses and individuals, including a transformative \$200,000 gift from St Andrew's-Wesley United Church, an LGBTQ2+ affirming church committed to reconciliation and environmental justice. This is the single largest donation in EYA's history and will support capacity-building projects and the long-term financial stability of the organization.

We were also excited to see growing interest in our annual Plant Gifts to Community event, now in its fifth year. Last year, youth participants in our programs grew over 2600 native plants that were gifted to wildlife habitat and food sovereignty projects led by 40 schools and community groups in East Vancouver and Indigenous groups across the region including Kilala Lelum, Vancouver Native Housing Society, and the Squamish Nation.

We're deeply grateful to each youth who contributed their knowledge and time to our programs this year and to our supporters who gave so generously. We're excited for what's to come and look forward to continuing to grow and learn alongside you.

In solidarity,

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 Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, LGBTQ2, living with a disability, racialized new immigrants, 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 food and medicine. Hands-on activities braid 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 215 YOUTH FACING BARRIERS IN 27 LAND-BASED PROGRAMS.

The number of youth reached grew this year by 10% and we delivered six additional programs.



YOUTH REPORTED INCREASED CONNECTION TO NATURE AND GROWTH IN SKILLS.

Through our post-program surveys, 94% of youth reported feeling more connected to nature and 98% cared more about the environment. 95% felt they gained new skills in land stewardship, 78% felt more confident, and 82% felt more connected with other youth.



INTEGRATED TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES INTO THE PROGRAMS.

Staff received training on trauma and trauma-responses, and we integrated trauma-informed practices - like community agreements and prioritizing relationships - into our programs.



DEVELOPED PROGRAM CURRICULA.

We continued to expand and develop our program curricula and lesson plans, adding new activities related to honourable harvest, decolonizing weeds, ecological careers, and salmon habitat.





"I am able to recognize more plants and birds, which makes me feel more connected with nature. Being able to understand nature more makes me more likely to take care of and consider the environment around me."

"I am more caring and thoughtful to plants around me. I think the biggest change is my worldview and how I view the environment."

"I learned skills and methods to take care of the environment. I feel more connected to nature and that I can make a difference. I met new people and had to come out of my comfort zone, but now I feel more connected to other people."

"I feel that I've learned so much about each plant and why they are important, so that makes me feel even more strongly about protecting all that we have left to enjoy."

"I feel more connected with the environment, having done so much restoration work and having hands-on experience taking care of the environment. Even though doing restoration work in the rain is cold and tiring, I understand the value of taking care of the environment more and I've changed in becoming more caring and careful."



Roots & Shoots

Our Roots & Shoots Program creates a pathway to values-aligned environmental careers for youth facing barriers ages 19-25. We provide 10 weeks of paid training in land-based job skills including habitat restoration, native plant horticulture, and plant medicine, and employability skills like teamwork

and communication. Participants then join a local organization of their choice for a 12 week paid work placement. The program curriculum applies an anti-oppressive lens to employability concepts like 'professionalism' and supports youth to advocate for themselves in the workplace.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS



DELIVERED TWO MORE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR 11 YOUTH. 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. We also ran a 6-week alumni program with five participants.



15 YOUTH COMPLETED PAID WORK PLACEMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY. Youth chose a local organization with environmental programming that matched their interests. This year, work placement hosts included Stanley Park Ecology Society, Still Moon Arts Society, Hives for Humanity, Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, Wild Bird Trust, Soaring Eagle Nature School, UBC Farm, and UBC Botanical Garden.



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. 100% improved their communication skills, 92% improved their project management skills, and 85% improved their digital skills.



IMPROVED THE SUPPORTS THAT WE OFFER TO YOUTH. We developed a list of culturally-safe community resources to refer youth to when needs exceed what EYA can provide, provided training on trauma-informed practice for work placement employers, and integrated trauma-informed practice into program delivery.



Our Roots & Shoots Participants

Introducing our two new 2021 Roots & Shoots cohorts! All of our participants have developed skills in land-based careers while gaining experience in the environmental sector.



Kingston Palmer
Still Moon Arts Society



Konah Child
GardenWorks



Mahki Pelletier
Wild Bird Trust



Stef Urloiu
Collingwood
Neighbourhood House



Shelby-Lynn Soney
Stanley Park Ecology Society



Shyann Thomas
UBC Botanical Garden



Takaya Natrall



Toucanni Edwards
UBC Farm



Travis Clifford
Hives for Humanity



Trish Barbarona
Fractal Farms



Zoe Peterson
Soaring Eagle Nature School



Impact Story

A Roots & Shoots Participant shares their experience

When I applied for the internship, I was feeling lost as everything seemed to have changed - both in my own life and the world at large. I did not have much in terms of job skills, so my options were limited in terms of work. My friend told me about Roots & Shoots, and it sounded like everything I loved, so I applied in a heartbeat. In the meantime, I left to give my support in the Fairy Creek Blockade, and planned to stay involved with Indigenous-led activism for the foreseeable future, and it was while there I was accepted into the program!



After the initial shyness, my cohort of interns quickly became close friends. I loved that most of the internship was spent outside, whether at Strathcona Garde or along Still Creek. The training itself was so fulfilling, as it covered such a wide array of topics, and has already been useful in both my professional and personal life. It's no exaggeration when I say my resume-building and budgeting capabilities have leveled-up. I was also very happy to receive certifications for First-Aid and Foodsafe which will be sure to help with job hunts in the future.

My work placement was with The Wild Bird Trust of B.C., which is located in North Vancouver on unceded Tsleil-Waututh territory. Some of my tasks included: maintaining the trails, removing invasive species, helping with WBT programming, and supporting their native plant nursery. My new-found Google Suite proficiency was super handy for office work, while my blackberry removing prowess had onlookers in awe. I have started using some of my new skills to make my own medicines and transplant native species in my neighborhood.

- Mahki Pelletier



Youth Habitat Crew

Our Youth Habitat Crew Program provides 10-week paid employment opportunities each summer for a small team of youth who are targeted by oppression. 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



EMPLOYED SIX YOUTH AS PART OF OUR THIRD YOUTH HABITAT CREW COHORT. Two university-aged youth were hired as Crew Leaders to supervise and lead the other four crew members, with mentorship from EYA staff.



ALL FOUR CREW MEMBERS WERE INDIGENOUS YOUTH. Next year, we will also work to hire an Indigenous youth for at least one of the Crew Leader positions.



THE CREW STEWARDED WILDLIFE HABITAT AND IMPROVED EYA'S PROGRAMMING SITES. 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 increased connection to nature and each other. 80% reported that they improved their skills to get a job, 100% are more interested in environmental jobs, and 100% reported feeling more connected to other youth.



My biggest change in my relationship to work/career would be learning about new environmental positions. I gained a new understanding of invasive species and native species, skills to take care of the environment, communication skills, and how to work on a team with other youth to complete tasks. As someone who wants to continue to do work that is environmental focused/frontline work, these skills are very useful.



Our Youth Habitat Crew

Please meet our 2021 Youth Habitat Crew!



Mehar Imran



Shogofa Alizada



Elsie L'Hirondelle



Evelyn Sharp



Cheris McKay



Megan Jones



My experience as a Crew Leader provided me with the skills to become a more decisive yet collaborative leader in empowering youth in teamwork and decision-making. Throughout the summer, our habitat restoration work had a profound impact on my connection to the land, where each stewardship activity felt meaningful and worthwhile. Being able to support youth in their goals and interest in land-based careers has made me realize how instrumental my role was in sharing my own experiences to help guide youth in their future decision-making.



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 17 YOUTH AS PEER MENTORS - A 70% INCREASE FROM LAST YEAR. We supported each Peer Mentor to step into a leadership role as a supporting facilitator in our Nature Stewards programs. Several 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.



YOUTH IMPROVED SKILLS IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION. 100% said they improved their skills facilitating land-based activities, managing and leading small groups, and building relationships with youth.



"I am more willing to lead activities and discussions. I'm not as worried as I was before to speak in front of a group. This is important because I want to be able to lead in an effective way. There needs to be more Indigenous-led activism and engaging with the youth here has helped a lot with how I communicate effectively."

"I have never considered career paths related to land-based education before due to often being labelled as timid and quiet growing up, although I have always found it rewarding to teach and inspire younger generations about environmental stewardship. The enjoyment that I got from the Peer Mentor role is a sign to myself that I should keep this in mind when looking for jobs in the future. It is empowering to empower others!"



Wild Mind

Our Wild Mind Program engages elementary students from public schools in East Vancouver 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 26 FIELD TRIPS REACHING 471 CHILDREN AND YOUTH. Students learned about native plants, bees and wildlife living in the city from an EYA educator, cultivating their interest and care for nature.



STARTED TO DEVELOP FIELD TRIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. Our team began exploring options for offering field trips for high school classes.



"My students' engagement in the pollinator catching and releasing boosted their confidence. They were so proud of catching things. This is powerful social emotional learning."

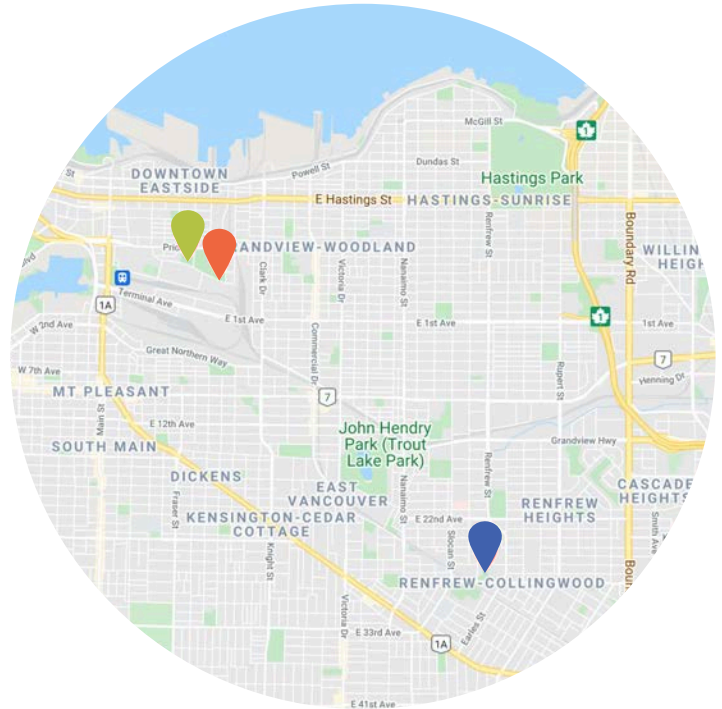
"I noticed my students' engagement and respect for nature increased. This is significant because it demonstrated more care for the environment and the connectedness of themselves with nature."

"My students started to notice more things around them and become more observant and are excited about sharing new facts they learned. They gained a simple appreciation of the garden space and nature in their community. Learning about nature and simply being outside helps them respect living things and then they are better equipped and driven to protect 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.



Youth-Led Land Stewardship

Through EYA's hands-on programs, youth participants are empowered to steward the land in East Vancouver, helping to create wildlife habitat, restore Indigenous foodlands, improve access to nature, and support climate resilience. EYA staff plan and manage these projects and youth put reciprocity into action by gifting their time and skills to healing the land.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



PLANT GIFTS FOR THE COMMUNITY. Youth participants grew 2624 native plants in EYA's nursery for habitat restoration and Indigenous food sovereignty projects. The plants were gifted to 40 schools and community groups in East Vancouver and Black- and Indigenous-led groups across the region, including Kilala Lelum, Hives for Humanity, Broadway Youth Resource Centre, Vancouver Native Housing Society, Ray Cam Community Centre, and Squamish Nation.



STILL CREEK HABITAT RESTORATION. Youth helped to remove invasive species like Himalayan blackberry, English Ivy, and bluebells and plant 755 native species in riparian areas along Still Creek in Renfrew Ravine and along Grandview Highway. It was our second year partnering with Still Moon Arts Society on this work.



PLANT MEDICINE GARDENS AND GIFTING. Participants stewarded plant medicine gardens in Strathcona and Cottonwood Community Gardens. They got to know plant relatives like yarrow, camas, self heal, and ceremonial tobacco and made medicinal salves and teas that were gifted to the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, Kilala Lelum, Urban Native Youth Association, and Pacific Association of First Nations Women.



WETLAND PROJECT IN STRATHCONA. In partnership with Strathcona Community Garden Society, EYA staff planned and fundraised for a new wetland project in Strathcona Gardens. Youth will help to deliver this project over the next two years.



WILDFLOWER MEADOWS. Youth continued to steward three native wildflower meadows at Copley Orchard, Renfrew Ravine and Strathcona Community Garden, that provide important food for pollinators, beneficial insects, as well as important sources of food, medicine, and seeds for our community.

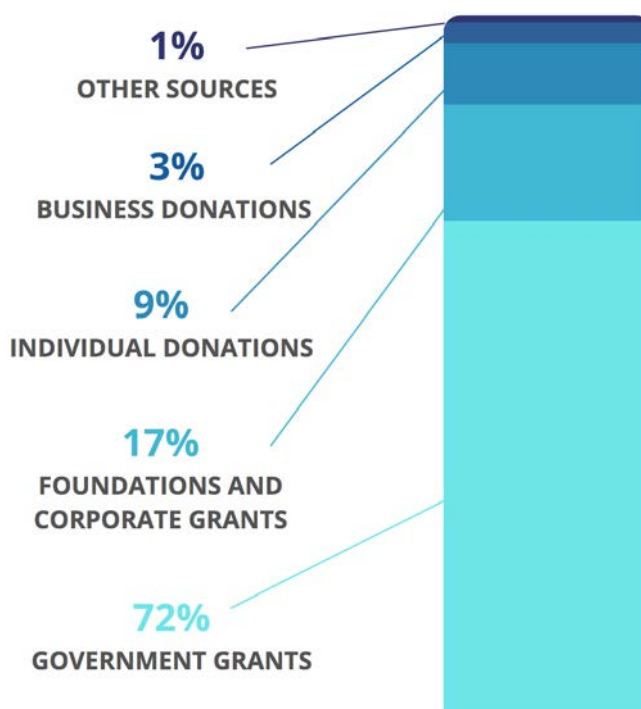


Financials

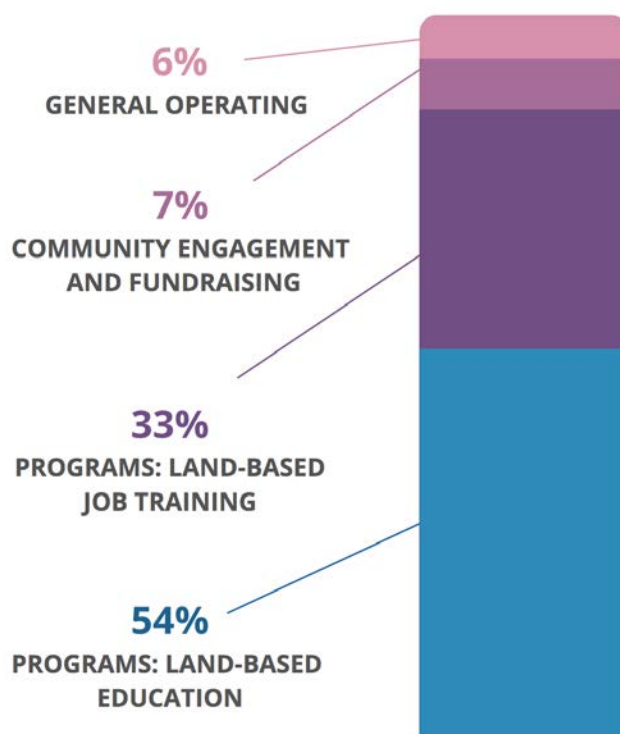
We were reminded again this year of EYA's important role in empowering local youth to lead the transition to a more just and sustainable world. We saw sustained interest in our programs from youth and increased donations from local businesses and individuals, including a transformative \$200,000 gift from St Andrew's-

Wesley United Church, an LGBTQ2+ affirming church that is committed to reconciliation and environmental and social justice. This is the largest single donation in EYA's history and will support capacity building projects and the long-term financial stability of the organization. In 2021, our expenses were \$787,714 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

Red Fox Healthy Living Society
Still Moon Arts Society
Urban Native Youth Association

SITE PARTNERS

Cottonwood Community Garden
Strathcona Community Garden

WORK PLACEMENT PARTNERS

Colibri Learning Foundation
Collingwood Neighbourhood House
Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
Fractal Farms
GardenWorks
Hives for Humanity
Muddy Bootprints Outdoor Learning
Soaring Eagle Nature School
Stanley Park Ecology Society
Still Moon Arts Society
UBC Botanical Garden
UBC Farm
Wild Bird Trust



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 and Knowledge Keeper who shared their brilliance and cultural teachings from their nations with the youth in our programs.

Dallas Guss (Skwxwú7mesh)
Elder Glida 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)
Leona Brown (Gitxsan)
Lori Snyder (Métis)
Matthew Williams (Skwxwú7mesh)
Melissa West Morrison (Kwakwaka'wakw)
Nicole Priesl (Skwxwú7mesh, Leq'á:mel)
Spelexilh (Angie) Dawson (Skwxwú7mesh)
T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss (Skwxwú7mesh, Stó:lō,
Kanakaná Maoli, Irish-Métis)

We also send a special thanks to wildlife educator Jaylen Bastos for many joyful program visits.

GIFTS OF TIME

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

Achintya Chandwani
Alyana Lalani
Andrew Philips
Christopher Wolflinger
Gurleen Goraya
Israel Olmos
Jessica Ye
Julia Nguyen
Julieta Dey
Kaylee Wolflinger
Maria Jose Obandó
Melissa Milne
Ruchi Sharma

Samarth Srivastava
Torrie Smith
Xi (Larkin) Chen
Ziyun (Alina) Zeng

We also give a big shout-out to J Peachy and Andy Hnatyshyn from Cottonwood Community Garden for constructing new shelving in EYA's native plant nursery.

GIFTS OF DOLLARS

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

Funders

Arcteryx
BC Gaming Commission
BioTalent Canada
Canada Post Foundation
City of Vancouver (Greenest City)
Chris Spencer Foundation
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
Endswell Foundation
Environment & Climate Change Canada
G&F Financial Foundation
Glasswaters Foundation
GMR Foundation
Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
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Supporters

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Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
The Edith Lando Charitable Foundation
Tweedledum Foundation
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Vancouver Park Board
Vancouver Foundation
VanTel / Safeway Credit Union
Legacy Fund
Wildlife Habitat Canada
YVR Vancouver Airport Authority
Zacks Family Charitable Foundation

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“Some kids I worked with in elementary school have participated in your programs. I can’t tell you how much it meant to me to see them on your social media, looking happy and healthy and engaged. One student was SO PROUD when he told me he had a job working in your garden. I wish all youth could have access to such valuable nature programming. It’s such a crucial part of our humanity, to be informed and connected to the natural world. I think this connection is especially important for Indigenous urban youth. Thank you for what you do!”

- 2021 donor

“Keep up the great work in cultivating respect, honour and sustainability of the lands we call home. So encouraging that these young people are taking a hands-on approach to learning about how to sustain and live respectfully with these lands”

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“We are inspired by the programs offered by EYA, and encouraging youth to connect, participate and become environmental leaders in their respective communities!”

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*Empower youth facing
barriers to become
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