



Environmental
Youth Alliance

2024 Impact Report



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Land Honouring

EYA operates on unceded, ancestral & traditional xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (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 honourings in each program
- Integrating trauma-informed practices into our programs
- Providing trauma-informed practice training for EYA staff and community partners
- Decolonizing urban landscapes by replacing non-native plants with native plants
- Gifting youth-grown native plants to Indigenous-led projects and our Host Nations
- Gifting plant medicine made by youth participants to community members
- Recognizing Indigenous People's Day as a paid day off
- Recognizing gifts of time and knowledge equally to financial gifts
- Paying Indigenous collaborators who provide grant support letters
- Discussing Indigenous stewardship practices in each stewardship program
- Providing staff with flexibility on statutory holidays to honour diverse cultural days of significance

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,

Witnessing the increasing stressors faced by urban youth and their families, we find hope in the movements centring community care, and the importance of listening to one another. We spent 2024 following the lead of equity-denied youth working to build sustainable networks of support, focusing inward to strengthen our internal systems, build strong partnerships, increase the accessibility of our programs, and grow a more supportive workplace.

Early in the year, we engaged our team in training and feedback sessions to deepen our understanding of disability justice & inclusion and co-create an accessibility action plan. We recognized the need for more hands to support our programs, and brought on additional staff to support the development of new and improved lesson plans. We also diversified our employment training programs, launching Cultivate - our new, low-barrier drop-in program.

In 2024, we worked to amplify the impact of our neighbours by continuing to deepen our partnership with Ancestral Foodways Society and supporting their Community-led Indigenous Food Land and Wetland Biodiversity Corridor project located between our sites at Strathcona and Cottonwood Community Gardens. Focusing

stewardship work on these 3 sites and a section of Still Creek in Renfrew Ravine, EYA youth developed a deep connection to these spaces and returned hundreds of native plants to urban habitats.

In our Native Plant Nursery, over 4000 youth-grown plants were distributed across EYA restoration projects, 60 local school and community projects, 113 fundraiser bundles, and Host-Nation Plant Giveaways with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations, helping to expand our network and provide more habitat for native species across the region.

Listening to feedback from EYA youth leaders, we pushed ourselves to strengthen the financial support we could offer to our staff. Our efforts to diversify revenue sources over the years helped us successfully design and apply a strong compensation structure in 2024, providing staff with fair wages, increased health benefits, additional personal days, and broader professional development support. We also developed a plan to transition our entire team to a 4-day work week by early 2025.

We extend our gratitude to everyone who contributed their knowledge, time, and dollars that helped guide our programs and capacity-building work this year. We look forward to continuing this work together.

In solidarity,

THE EYA TEAM



Who We Are

EYA supports youth from equity-denied communities to connect with nature and develop 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, 2SLGBTQIA+, 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 from equity-denied communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental crises but systematically excluded from environmental advocacy and careers. Our programs centre the voices of youth from equity-denied communities 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 Cultivate Program** offers drop-in employment training workshops for youth ages 17-25 to develop skills to start their environmental careers
- **Our Roots & Shoots Program** trains youth ages 18-25 in environmental job skills and facilitates work experience with local environmental organizations.
- **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 land-based field trips for East Vancouver elementary and high schools.





Nature Stewards

Our Nature Stewards Program empowers youth from equity-denied communities ages 14-18 to be environmental stewards by providing free multi-week, land-based education programs. Each program engages a small group of ten 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 and Indigenous ecologies and include growing thousands of native plants, restoring wildlife habitat in East Vancouver, making medicinal teas and salves, and helping develop Vancouver's newest wetland.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

- **Engaged 246 youth** from equity-denied communities in **25 land-based programs**.
- **Youth reported increased connection to nature and growth in skills.** Through our post-program surveys, 97% of participants increased their skills to help care for nature, 93% reported feeling more connected to Indigenous teachings, 94% felt more connected with other youth, and 95% felt more empowered to take action to protect the environment.
- **Practicum student Varsha joined us** for the summer and led the development of lesson plans, supported programs, and facilitated staff training, increasing the team's capacity to engage youth.
- **Developed new curricula.** We continued to expand and develop our program curricula and lesson plans, adding new activities related to wetland ecosystem health and community care.

“I feel like I’m more curious about the plants & wildlife around me whenever I’m outside and about what I’m throwing away. This program showed me the value of our Earth and how to take care of it.”

“The program taught me how to recognize the different plants and wildlife around me, which in turn made me more conscious about the environment than before.”

“I feel more connected with nature and I developed a greater sense of responsibility to protect the environment.”

“I learned a lot more about how plants can be used to heal as medicine. I feel more connected to plants knowing more about their uses.”

“I’ve learned to appreciate nature as being alive and full of various healing properties.”

“I’ve gained and developed important skills in collaboration and teamwork as well as communication and engaging meaningfully.”





Roots & Shoots

Our Roots & Shoots Program creates a pathway to values-aligned environmental careers for youth from equity-denied communities ages 19-25. This program includes paid land-based job skill training including habitat restoration, native plant horticulture, and plant medicine, and employability skills like teamwork and communication and a work placement component. The program curriculum applies an anti-oppressive lens to employability concepts like 'professionalism' and supports youth to navigate discrimination and advocate for themselves in the workplace.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

- **Delivered an alumni training program for 5 youth.** Alumni participants returned for a 5-week training led by EYA staff where they deepened their land-based job skills, applied for environmental career opportunities, and strengthened their relationships.
- **5 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 Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Growing Chefs!, Stanley Park Ecology Society, 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, feel like they have mentors in the environmental sector, and improved their project management skills.

“Because of a decline in my mental wellbeing, I felt intimidated to come into work before. The program changed that for me. I feel welcome with EYA, and that I have a sense of belonging.”

“I feel more open to new opportunities, and ready to take on unexpected jobs.”

“I feel more ambitious and I feel very supported in my future as I can look to EYA for guidance in what I choose to pursue.”





Cultivate

Our new Cultivate Program provides a more accessible environment for youth from equity-denied communities ages 17-25 to develop skills to pursue values-aligned environmental careers. We offer drop-in employment skills workshop series on topics such as resume & cover letter writing, communication, job searching, self & community care, routines, plant medicines, and more.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

- **EYA staff incorporated input** from our Youth Advisory Circle and program alumni to develop this new program
- **Delivered our first two workshop series engaging 28 youth in 19 sessions.** Youth signed up for the workshops they were most interested in and EYA supported them to build their employability skills, while strengthening connections to the land and each other.
- **91% of youth reported feeling more confident and prepared for the workplace,** 100% felt more likely to find meaningful employment aligned with their values, and 92% felt more connected with community.

"I think I improved a lot in my communication skills and confidence throughout this program."

"Conflict resolution is an important skill that should be taught everywhere. It not only helps maintain a healthy work environment but also makes people feel respected and welcomed."

"I feel more prepared to get a job in the environmental sector as this program has given me insight on the values and benefits of sustainability as well as what the environmental sector looks for in its workers."



Youth Habitat Crew

Our Youth Habitat Crew Program provides 10-week paid employment opportunities each summer for a small team of youth from equity-denied communities. 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.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

- **Six youth were employed as part of our fifth Youth Habitat Crew cohort.** We had two new crew leaders who stepped up to the challenge, creating a welcoming environment for the rest of the crew. These crew leaders lead the four crew members, with mentorship from EYA staff.
- **All six crew members identified as BIPOC and were alumni of EYA programs.** 33% of the crew members identified as Indigenous, 33% identified as living with a disability, and 67% lived in East Vancouver.
- **The Crew stewarded wildlife habitat and cared for EYA's programming sites.** Crew Members tackled a huge range of projects – from removing invasive species along Still Creek to harvesting and processing plant medicines, to collecting and packaging native plant seeds for our nursery and community gift program.
- **The Crew built strong relationships and increased job skills.** Through daily work together on the land, youth increased connection to nature and each other. All crew members reported that they improved their skills to get a job, are more interested in environmental jobs, and feel more connected to other youth.

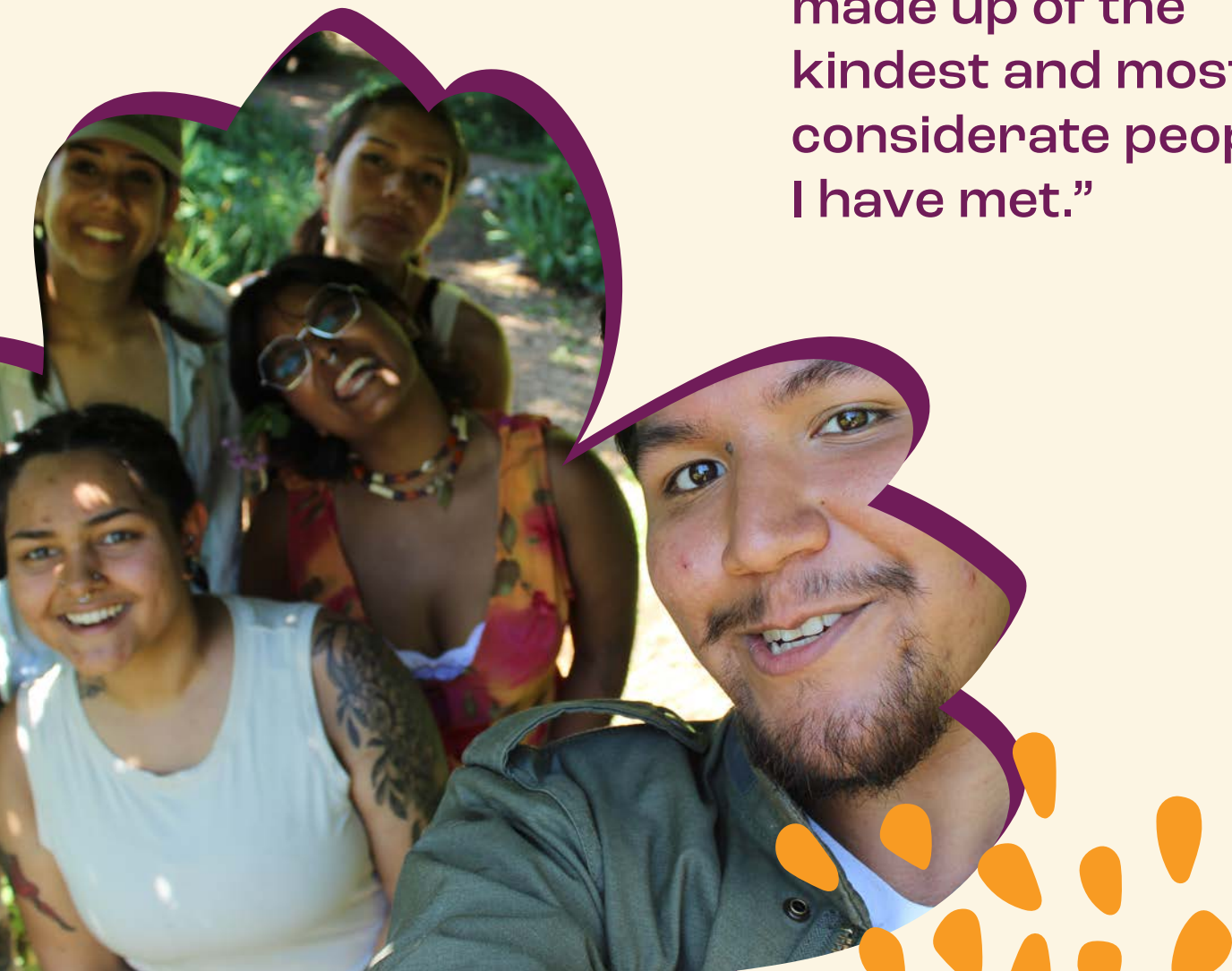
Our Youth Habitat Crew

“This summer I learned to let go and relax. I trusted the process and let my crew take on more responsibility. I usually overwork myself & place everything on my plate, but I’ve learned how to let people carry the load with me.”

“The non-violent communication training was very helpful for me both in a workplace setting and on a more personal level.”

“I have wanted to pursue a career in the environmental field for some time now. Youth Habitat Crew will be a great step to having a career in the industry.”

“This team was made up of the kindest and most considerate people I have met.”



PLEASE MEET OUR 2024 YOUTH HABITAT CREW!



Chloe



Jordan



Kira



Kya



Matina



Vikki





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 training weekend, skill-building workshop series, one-on-one mentorship with an EYA educator, and opportunities to practice facilitation and group leadership.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **We engaged 24 youth in the Peer Mentor program.** We supported each Peer Mentor to step into a leadership role as a supporting facilitator in our Nature Stewards Programs. Five of our Peer Mentors were previous participants of EYA programs. These youth returned to build on their new skills and give back to their community.
- **New program development.** We continue to develop the skill-building workshops, which have been a positive addition to this program. We are seeing the results through

strong survey responses including 100% of participants reporting an increase in land-based education skills, 100% increasing youth work skills, and 100% developing skills that will help them get a job.



“I have always wanted a job in environmental education, and this has not only affirmed that, but given me relevant experience within the field.”

“I really enjoyed the nature & the garden. This is the first time I got the opportunity to work in the garden gaining hands-on experience. Now I’m more interested in the work related to the ecosystem.”

“I learned how to facilitate an activity from the design phase until implementation. It’s a good experience for future project running.”

“Being exposed to stewardship work and learning about the various environmental sector careers has opened my eyes to some areas I would like to explore going forward.”





Wild Mind Field Trips

Our Wild Mind Field Trip Program engages elementary and high school 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

- **Delivered 21 field trips reaching 494 students.** Youth learned about native plants, bees and wildlife living in the city from an EYA educator, cultivating their interest and care for nature.
- **Engaged 15 classes from 11 schools.** Our team provided curriculum-aligned field trips for 6 high school classes and 9 elementary school classes. Wild Mind provided opportunities to learn about urban ecology through hands-on stewardship activities.



Plant Gifts to Community

Through the Plants Gifts to Community Program, 60 schools and community groups in East Vancouver and Black- and Indigenous-led groups across the region received 1,178 youth-grown native plants. The plants will support community-led habitat restoration projects, school teaching gardens, and Indigenous food sovereignty projects. We also expanded our Host-Nation Plant Giveaways to include xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations. 630 youth-grown native plants were gifted to Host Nations in 2024.

Other groups receiving plants include: AfroVan Connect, Art Ecosystem Collective, Ayas Men Men Child & Family Services, Cedar Cottage Community Garden, Copley Community Orchard, Cottonwood Community Garden, Earthand Gleaners, Free the Fern Stewardship Society, Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, Gathering of Eagles Building, Gordon Neighbourhood House, Grandview Woodland Food Connection, Hives for Humanity, Homegrown Climate Justice, Kilala Lelum, Moberly Arts & Cultural Centre, Raven

House Society, Mount Pleasant Family Centre, PHS Community Services, RayCam Community Centre, See-Emilia Cultural Studies Society, Squamish Nation Valley Elders, Strathcona Community Garden, Tsawaysia's Garden, V6A Garden Club at DTES Urban Farm, Vancouver Urban Food Forest Foundation, Village Vancouver Transition Society.

In addition to plant gifts, youth made medicinal salves and teas from plants grown and harvested in our programs. Youth gifted 50+ salves and teas to community groups such as Downtown Eastside Women's Center, Kilala Lelum, Urban Native Youth Association, and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Center.





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.

STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- **Wetland project in Strathcona.** In partnership with Strathcona Community Garden Society, EYA youth and Strathcona gardeners continued the maintenance of the newly-established year-round wetland by removing invasive species and caring for recently-planted native plants. EYA also partnered with Ancestral Foodways Society to work on expanding this wetland across the street at Strathcona Park. The project supports climate resiliency by reducing flooding, while enhancing biodiversity, and access to traditional food and medicine. Work on this expansion is expected to continue for the next year.
- **Native Plant Nursery.** Youth participants grew 4,023 native plants in EYA's nursery for habitat restoration projects, plant gifts to schools, community groups, Indigenous food sovereignty projects, and Native Plant Fundraiser.
- **Still Creek habitat restoration.** Youth helped to remove invasive species like Himalayan blackberry and English Ivy and planted 90 native plants in riparian areas along Still Creek in Renfrew Ravine. Participants also ensured these restoration sites were safe for general use through activities such as clearing

“I learned how to do different stewardship tasks like making potting mix, potting up, and pulling up invasive species. This is important for me because I love gardening and these skills will help me in the future when I’m taking care of my own garden.”

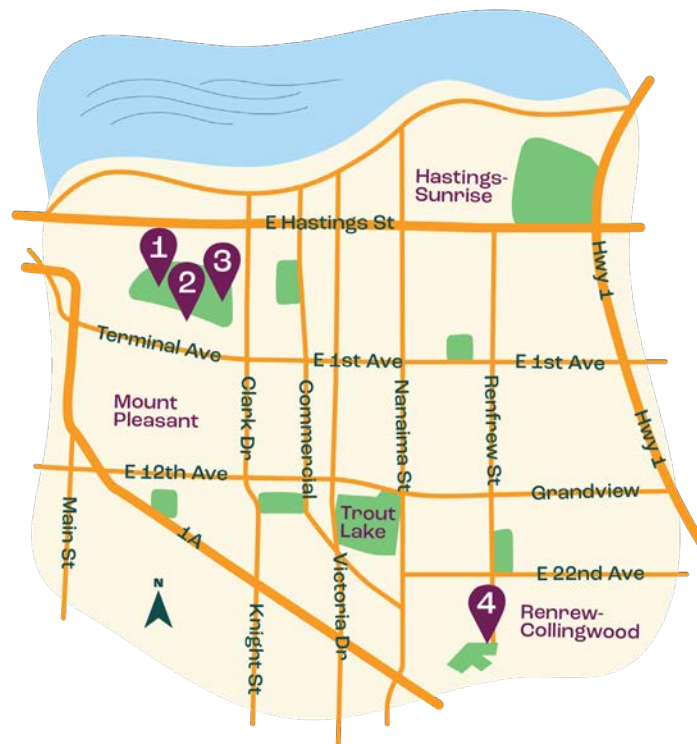
pathways and adding fresh bark mulch. It was our fifth year partnering with Still Moon Arts Society on this work, and this year saw an expansion of this project into the Mid-Ravine region.

- **Plant medicine gardens.** Participants planted 348 native plants and 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 223 medicinal salves and teas that were gifted to community groups in the Downtown Eastside.
- **Wildflower Meadows.** Youth continued to steward a native wildflower meadow at Strathcona Community Garden, that provides important food for pollinators, beneficial insects, as well as important sources of food, medicine, and seeds for our community.



Program Sites

EYA supports youth from equity-denied communities to connect with nature and develop skills and confidence to 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 a solar-powered classroom - at the Ancestral Foodways garden in Strathcona Park, 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, Ancestral Foodways Society and Still Moon Arts Society for supporting EYA programs in these spaces.



1 STRATHCONA COMMUNITY GARDEN

2 ANCESTRAL FOODWAYS GARDEN

3 COTTONWOOD COMMUNITY GARDEN

4 RENFREW RAVINE

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

WORK PLACEMENT PARTNERS

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House
- Growing Chefs!
- Stanley Park Ecology Society
- UBC Botanical Garden

SITE PARTNERS

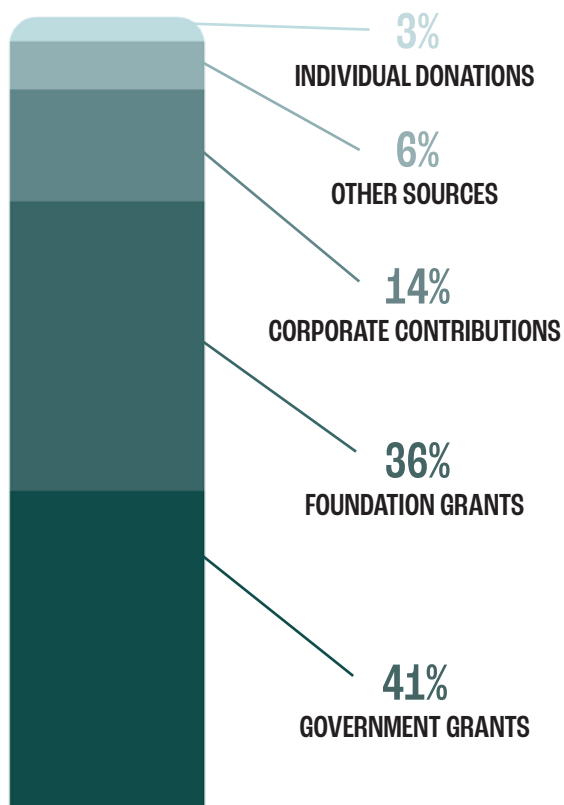
- Ancestral Foodways Society
- Cottonwood Community Garden
- Strathcona Community Garden
- Still Moon Arts Society



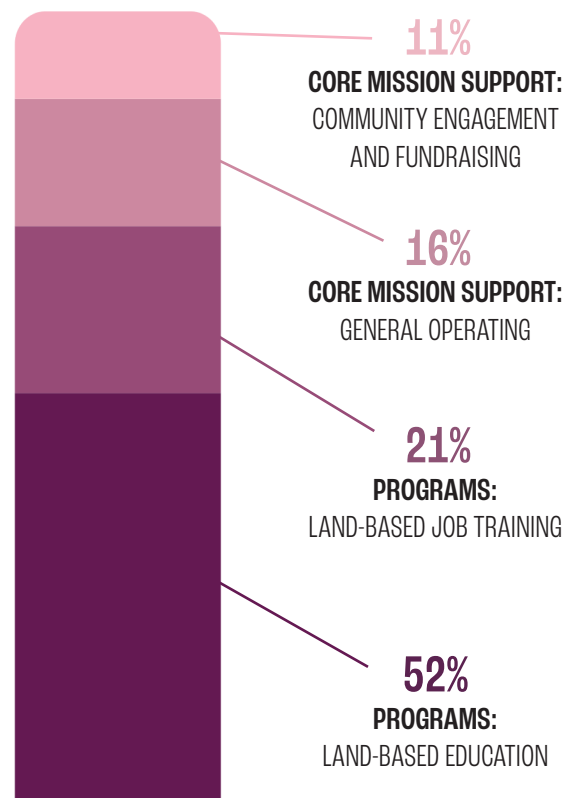
Finances

Donors were once again motivated to support our work in empowering youth to become environmental stewards and leaders in their community. This year saw a significant increase in foundation grants and corporate contributions. **In 2024, our expenses were \$1,022,673 to deliver our programs.**

REVENUE



EXPENSES



“You are doing fantastic work together! I hope you can continue with all your projects into 2025!”

- 2024 donor



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 various experts and organizations who have shared knowledge, and particularly the Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers who shared their brilliance and cultural teachings from their nations with the youth in our programs.

- Ancestral Foodways Society
- CityHive
- Hailey Bird-Matheson (Peguis)
- Jaylen Bastos
- Leonna Brown (Gitxsan)
- Matthew Williams (Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh)
- Maya Preyshon
- Mendel Skulski
- Rita Kompst (x̣ẉṃəθḳẉəỵəm)
- Sam McTavish
- Senaqwila Wyss (Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh, Stó:lō, Kanaka Maoli, Irish-Métis)
- Stanley Park Ecology Society
- Una Liao
- Varsha Gill

GIFTS OF TIME

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

- Abteen
- Alejandra
- Angell
- Aunika
- Avery
- Bonnie
- Elena
- Gracie
- Guranjan
- Hannah
- Harwinder
- Helen
- Jeongin
- Jessica
- Kai
- Kya
- Laurence
- Lynn
- Nili
- Peter
- Rachel
- Shaoni
- Vania
- Zafi



GIFTS OF DOLLARS

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

FUNDERS

- BC Biodiversity & Conservation Awards
- BC Gaming Commission
- BioTalent
- Chris Spencer Foundation
- City of Vancouver
- Commission for Environmental Cooperation
- Contributing to the Lives of Inner-city Kids (CLICK)
- Co-operators Foundation
- Employment & Social Development Canada
- Endswell Foundation
- Environment & Climate Change Canada
- Glasswaters Foundation
- GMR Foundation
- Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
- Historic Collishaw Farm and Arboretum
- Metro Vancouver
- Mind On Development
- Province of British Columbia
- SpencerCreo Foundation
- Storman Foundation
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- Tweedledum Foundation
- Vancouver Foundation
- Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
- WorkBC
- Zacks Family Charitable Foundation

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to let us know!



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Empower youth from equity-denied communities to care for nature

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 Environmental Youth Alliance





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