



Environmental
Youth Alliance

2025 Impact Report





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Land Honouring

EYA operates on unceded, ancestral & traditional xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) territories. Our programs aren't run in pristine natural spaces "out there". Rather, we are in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in Strathcona Park, which carries the Squamish place name "Skwachays", meaning "place where water is drawn down into a hole; whirlpool; water spring, or water coming up from ground beneath" (Kwi Awt Stelmexw). The fact that our programs are run in urban green spaces is intentional & important. It is important for us to make nature accessible and support the youth we work with in connecting with land right in their neighborhoods. Wilderness and "nature" can often feel inaccessible, too white, or the barriers - like transportation, the right gear, the knowledge, etc. - are too high to navigate. Therefore, we work primarily in Strathcona Park, working with youth who experience some of the highest barriers to accessing nature.

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:

- 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
- Including an activity on how to lead land honourings in each program
- Ensuring EYA staff and volunteers are trained to deliver trauma-informed programs
- Helping to decolonize urban landscapes by reintroducing more native plants
- Gifting youth-grown native plants to Indigenous-led projects and our Host Nations
- Gifting culturally relevant plant medicines made by youth participants to Downtown Eastside 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
- Centring Indigenous stewardship practices in each 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 share cultural teachings from their nations with youth in our programs. 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,

In the midst of ongoing global conflict and uncertainty, this year challenged us as leaders to respond with action and resiliency, planting seeds of opportunity to support fellow youth from equity-denied communities and creating ripples of change that echo through our neighbourhoods. 2025 was a year of transformation, presenting more opportunities to continue learning and growing as youth stewards of the lands, spaces, and communities we care for by taking action to deconstruct the systems that harm us.

Our year had a busy start - we moved from our former office in the SpencerCreo Centre to our new home at 1245 Glen Drive, welcomed our first Operations Manager, and started new stewardship projects. We continued growing throughout the year with a new storage container, more Youth Habitat Crew members, new guests visiting our programs, and a record number of native plants shared with community groups.

Past EYA board member and landscape designer, Kristina Zalite, helped us redesign our Youth Garden and we worked with our new office neighbours, Victory Gardens, to build a teaching platform and new garden beds that community volunteers helped fill with native plants.

We continued to evolve our operations to be more equitable and anti-oppressive by transitioning to a 4-day work week, introducing new bylaws that are easier to understand, and implementing a simpler decision-making model for our Board of Directors with the support of Jocelyn Liu, a participant of lululemon's Impact Fellowship Program.

We are grateful for everyone who contributed knowledge, time, and dollars that helped guide our programs and capacity-building work this year. We hope you enjoy reading more about how EYA programs continue to uplift the youth in our communities, and 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 Indigenous and Western 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 overly impacted by environmental crises but systemically excluded from environmental advocacy and careers. Our programs centre the voices of these youth 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 Peer Mentor Program** engages youth volunteers to co-lead Nature Stewards programs to develop leadership and facilitation skills.
- **Our Cultivate Program** offers drop-in employment training workshops for youth ages 17-25 to develop skills to start their environmental careers
- **Our Youth Habitat Crew Program** creates paid summer jobs for youth so they can grow environmental job skills.
- **Our Wild Mind Program** provides land-based field trips for East Vancouver elementary and high schools.



Our Values



FOR YOUTH, BY YOUTH

We are dedicated to building environments for youth to thrive as environmental stewards and emerging leaders. We prioritize youth-led decision-making and create opportunities for youth to apply their knowledge and lived experiences.



LEADING WITH CURIOSITY

We embrace open-mindedness and a spirit of continuous learning. We lead with curiosity, understanding that genuine harmony with our environment grows from our shared commitment to evolving and discovering together.



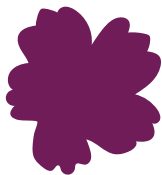
MUTUAL CARE

We believe in shared responsibility and caring for each other and all our relations—the land, water, sky, and their inhabitants. We support and nurture our community with compassion and respect.



COMMUNITY ENGAGED

We value the agency and voices of our members who co-steward our mission and vision. We invite our community to lead and learn with us, fostering a sense of shared ownership in shaping our impact together.



UPLIFTING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

We honour teachings and land stewardship protocols shared by Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers. We strive to uplift this knowledge throughout all aspects of our work.



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 plant knowledge. Hands-on activities braid Indigenous and Western ecologies and include growing thousands of native plants, restoring wildlife habitat in East Vancouver, making medicinal teas and salves, and helping steward Vancouver's newest wetland.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

- **Engaged 241 youth** from equity-denied communities in **24 land-based programs**.
- **Developed new curricula.** We continued to expand and develop our program curricula and lesson plans, adding new activities including wetland ecosystem health, water testing, exploring plant histories through herbaria, and holistic community care.
- **Youth reported increased connection to nature and growth in skills.** Through our post-program surveys, 98% of participants increased their skills to help care for nature, 90% reported feeling more connected to Indigenous teachings, 94% felt more connected with other youth, and 92% felt more empowered to take action to protect the environment.

“I am a lot more aware of my community and the environment I live in. I am more able and willing to make a difference now!”

“I feel encouraged each day I show up to this program because I know I will be making a change.”

“This program has given me more knowledge on what is happening around me, and it has allowed me to be more present in the moment.”

“Working with a group of new people has been very fulfilling. Not only did I get to meet new people, I got to form new connections and make life-long friends.”

“My mental health has become better as a result of this program. When I’m stressed, I go out more often instead of staying home.”

“Learning how to respect the environment through honourable harvest has broadened my view on the ways our food is grown.”

“I learned how to make friends and how important it is to build connections.”



Nature Stewards Program

Highlight: **Land Guardians**

Land Guardians is a Nature Stewards program offered in partnership with four Vancouver School Board alternative schools. Classes attend weekly 4-hour sessions where youth engage in hands-on land-based learning activities on the following topics:

- Plant and animal relations
- Consent-based harvesting and reciprocity
- Native plant identification and propagation
- Invasive plant identification and removal techniques



Activities are flexible by design to encourage youth to learn at their own pace and discover their strengths and interests. EYA educators are trained in trauma-informed practice and how to create welcoming spaces. As fellow BIPOC youth, they act as positive role models and help participants see environmental work as an accessible career choice. Activities related to Indigenous Knowledge Systems are led by local Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers from diverse communities who visit each program.



Employment Training

Our Employment Training Programs are designed for youth ages 18-25. These programs focus on supporting youth to prepare for employment and navigate environmental careers.

“Every time I work with EYA, I further my knowledge of plant species as well as leadership skills and forming strong relationships.”

“Working in the garden and meeting all the amazing program coordinators EYA has to offer has really helped me develop a better relationship with nature. This has definitely pushed my likeliness to work in the environmental sector.”

“I have learned more about my communication styles and my strengths as a leader. This will help me in choosing a career I would like to pursue—one that suits my needs rather than the other way around.”





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 in-depth orientation and training, additional skill-building workshops, 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, with participants dedicating 120 service hours throughout the program.
- **Developed employability skills.** Youth developed skills in goal setting, collaboration, conflict resolution, and leadership. They also practiced delivering land-based educational activities, learned to identify local plants, removed invasive species, and cared for native plants. 100% of participants reported an increase in land-based education skills, youth work skills, and skills that will help them get a job.
- **Increased connection.** We improved systems for communication between staff and Peer Mentors, which supported participants to reach their goals, and nurtured more reciprocal relationships among participants and staff.

“I felt a sense of collective healing during the program, which I thought was very unique to the environmental sector. Definitely a worthwhile experience!”

“I never really considered pursuing a career in the environmental sector until this program. It definitely opened my eyes to the work, and I will definitely look into more opportunities.”

“This program increased my already blossoming desire to work with and for the land. It also gave me a framework I enjoyed and learned well from and gave me inspiration to keep pursuing this path.”

“EYA was a very accessible and comfortable way for me to learn how to facilitate [youth programs], and I now feel comfortable should I ever pursue similar work.”

“Through this program, I learned a lot about setting boundaries and advocating for both myself and others when they can't or don't know they should. This has been extremely valuable and empowering.”





Cultivate

Our Cultivate Program provides a more accessible environment for youth from equity-denied communities ages 18-25 to develop skills to pursue values-aligned environmental careers. We offer an employment skills workshop series that covers topics such as resume & cover letter writing, communication, job searching, self & community care, routines, plant medicines, and more.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

- **We delivered 3 workshop series, engaging 28 youth.** Youth signed up to participate in the cohort stream or drop-in for workshops of interest, where EYA supported them to build their employability skills while strengthening connections to the land and each other.
- **Developed new curricula.** In this program's second year, we introduced new content on understanding climate emotions and eco-anxiety, and welcomed new guest facilitators. In post-program surveys, **100% of participants reported feeling more prepared for the workplace** and more likely to find meaningful employment aligned with their values.

"This program made the environmental sector seem a lot more open and inviting by being welcoming of lived experiences and alternative pathways."

"Reconnecting with environmental work, with outdoor spaces like the garden, and with organizations like EYA has given me so much joy and insight and has definitely reinvigorated my interest in pursuing work in the environmental sector. Without the opportunity to reacclimatize myself in this space and mindset, learn all these skills, and build this network, it would've felt really daunting to attempt a career in this sector."



Youth Habitat Crew

Our Youth Habitat Crew Program provides 2-month 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

- **Eight youth were employed as part of our sixth Youth Habitat Crew cohort.** We had two crew leaders who stepped up to lead the crew, creating a welcoming environment for the rest of the crew members, with mentorship from EYA staff.
- **All eight crew members were alumni of EYA programs.** 80% identified as People of Colour, 50% were 2SLGBTQIA+, and 80% faced intersecting barriers. We had very strong survey responses from all crew members, including 90% reporting growth in land-based job and employability skills.
- **The Crew stewarded wildlife habitat and tended to EYA's programming sites.** The crew had a busy season of stewarding EYA sites, from removing invasive species along Still Creek, to collecting and packaging native plant seeds for our nursery and community gift program, and preparing our Youth Garden for new garden beds. They added creativity and colour to our space by designing and painting a mural on our new storage container.
- **The Crew built strong relationships and increased job skills.** 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 2025 Youth Habitat Crew



Hector



Jordan



Kiah



Kira



Nakshtra



Nathan



Vikki



Wilfredo

"This job taught me how to communicate my needs and limitations better. This will help me in my career by allowing me to effectively convey ideas in the workplace and communicate my limits so that I can work more effectively."

"I improved my conflict resolution skills and leading skills, and I feel much more confident in my desire to work in the environmental and conservation sectors."

“This job changed how I view workplace settings. I am more confident in my skills and how I show up in group work projects.”





Wild Mind Field Trips

Our Wild Mind Field Trip Program engages elementary and high school students from underserved East Vancouver schools in hands-on, curriculum-aligned field trips at Strathcona Community Gardens. Our field trips engage students in land-based learning where they dive into the biodiverse world of urban green spaces and learn how to be good relatives of plants and animals.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

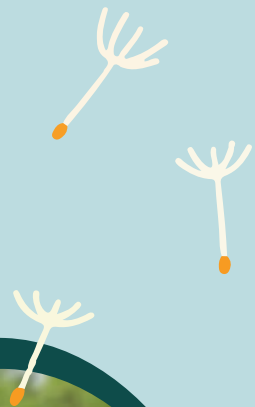
- **Delivered 29 field trips reaching 564 students.** Our team provided curriculum-aligned field trips for 10 high school classes and 19 elementary school classes, including 5 alternative schools.
- **Wild Mind provided opportunities to learn about urban ecology through hands-on stewardship activities.** Youth learned about native plants, land stewardship, and pollinators and their habitats from an EYA educator, cultivating their interest and care for nature. 100% of teachers felt that their students left feeling more interested in and connected to nature.



Plant Gifts to Community

Through the Plants Gifts to Community Program, we engaged youth participants to seed and pot up 4417 native plants. 44 schools and community groups in East Vancouver and Black- and Indigenous-led groups across the region received youth-grown native plants. The plants will support community-led habitat restoration projects, school teaching gardens, and Indigenous food sovereignty projects. We led three Host-Nation Plant Giveaways at xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

709 youth-grown native plants were gifted to Host Nations in 2025.





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

- **Youth Garden revitalization.** After a youth-led re-design process, the revitalization of our Youth Garden in Cottonwood Community Garden is almost complete with a new teaching platform and 5 new garden beds including an accessible raised bed. EYA youth prepared the beds and pathways and planted 75 native plants, with help from community volunteers.
- **Native Plant Nursery.** Youth participants grew 4417 native plants in EYA's nursery for EYA's habitat restoration projects, the Plant Gifts to Community Program, and our Native Plant Fundraiser.
- **Still Creek habitat restoration.** In our sixth year of partnering with Still Moon Arts Society, we focused our efforts on a new project area within Renfrew Ravine. Youth helped to remove invasive species like Himalayan blackberry and English ivy, and planted over 90 native plants in riparian areas along Still Creek.
- **Plant medicine gardens.** Participants planted over 466 native plants and stewarded plant medicine gardens in Strathcona and Cottonwood Community Gardens. They got to know plant relatives like yarrow, camas, nettle, and ceremonial tobacco and made medicinal salves and teas that were gifted to community groups in the Downtown Eastside.

“The simple act of being outside and experiencing the natural world has motivated me to support the environment in my daily life more than I did before.”

- **Wetland project in Strathcona.** In partnership with Strathcona Community Garden Society, EYA youth and Strathcona gardeners continued to steward the year-round wetland by removing invasive species and planting native plants. We co-hosted a volunteer planting day with the Strathcona Community Gardeners where over 300 wetland plants were planted. Our partnership with Ancestral Foodways Collective Society continues to expand this wetland across the street at Strathcona Park. The project supports climate resiliency by reducing flooding, while enhancing biodiversity, and improving access to traditional foods and medicines.

“I learned that stewardship is fun when you do it with friends.”

“After learning more about what nature does and how it impacts the world, I feel more empowered to take action to protect and heal the environment.”



Eco-Pavilion

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 Collective Society 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 Collective 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

We share plants, resources, and learnings, and collaborate closely to deliver youth programs and steward urban greenspaces.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

- Ancestral Foodways Collective Society
- CityHive
- Heron's Nest Education Centre for Young Parents
- Outreach Alternative Program
- Stanley Park Ecological Society
- Still Moon Arts Society
- Urban Native Youth Association

SITE PARTNERS

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

PLANT MEDICINE GIFT PARTNERS

- Downtown Eastside Women's Center
- Kilala Lelum
- Urban Native Youth Association
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Center

NATIVE PLANT GARDEN PROJECTS

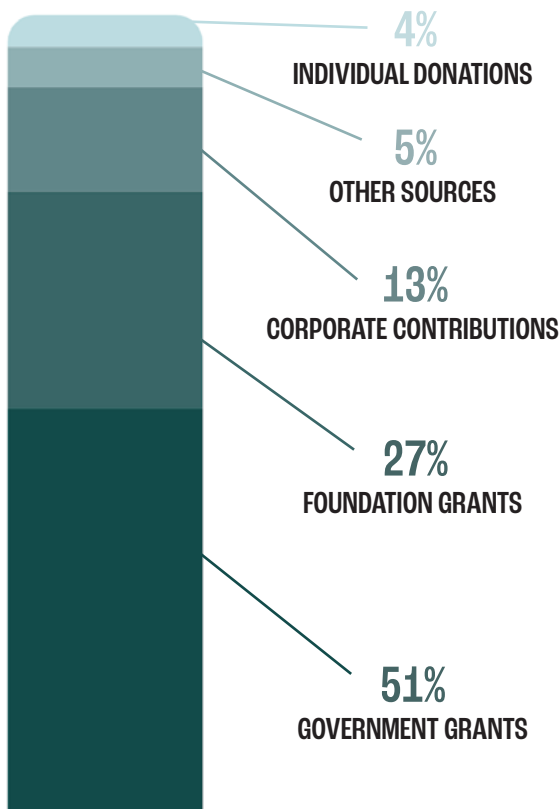
- AfroVan Connect
- Art Ecosystem Collective
- Ayas Men Men Child & Family Services
- Cedar Cottage Community Garden
- Copley Community Orchard
- Cottonwood Community Garden
- Earthand Gleaners
- Free the Fern Stewardship Society
- Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
- Gathering of Eagles Building
- Gordon 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



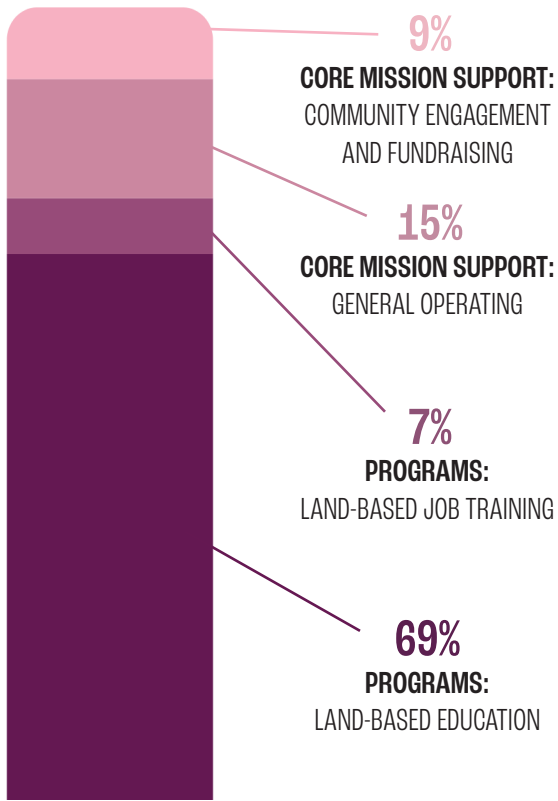
Finances

Donors continued to support youth from equity-denied communities to engage in land-based stewardship and education as individual and monthly donors. With the return of our Giving Tuesday matching campaign, succeeded in raising more funds for youth. **In 2025, our expenses were \$1,316,475 to deliver our programs.**

REVENUE



EXPENSES



“It makes my heart so full to see EYA continue to thrive - y’all are doing amazing work!”

- 2025 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.

- Abigail Speck
- Ariel Zhang
- Cease Wyss
- Daniel Rojas
- Hailey Matheson
- Ignacio Iturralde
- Ingrid
- Jared Bance
- Jaylen Bastos
- Jess Duncan
- Joshua Ralph
- Kalea Ranger
- karmella benedito de barros
- Kristen Penhall
- Leona Brown
- Lexi Mellish-Mingo
- Lori Snyder
- Luis Almazan
- Paige Hunter
- Rita Kompst
- Sayemin Naheen
- Una Liao
- Varsha Gill

GIFTS OF TIME

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

- Aida
- Amy
- Bonnie
- Cai
- Chantelle
- Chasity
- Dania
- Emirei
- Eric
- Hana
- Hector
- Kate
- Lanre
- Le Yi
- Jaime
- Mary
- Nikayla
- Soleilla
- Sophy
- Urohmwen
- Vaibhavi
- Winnie
- Zeenat



GIFTS OF DOLLARS

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

FUNDERS

- Aikenhead Family Community Fund
- BioTalent Canada
- City of Vancouver
- CLICK
- Commission for Environmental Cooperation
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Endswell Foundation
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Knifewear Foundation
- lululemon
- Metro Vancouver
- Mind On Development
- Province of British Columbia
- Reverb
- Social Venture Partners Foundation
- SpencerCreo Foundation
- Storman Foundation
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- Telus Friendly Futures Foundation
- Tweedledum Foundation
- Vancouver Foundation
- Wawanesa
- Zacks Family Foundation

ORGANIZATIONS

- Bedrock Sandals
- Blue Fern Forest Bathing
- Canadian Medical Association (CMA)
- Champlain Heights Community Association
- Charles Square Housing Co-op
- Columbia Academy
- Core Geoscience Services Inc
- Danaher
- Dr. Mildred Chang Inc.
- Dunbar Garden Club
- F. W. Howay Elementary School
- Fine Balance Counselling & Yoga Therapy
- Harmonic Arts
- Melnychuk Consulting Inc.
- Ooni

- Pure Freedom YYoga Wellness Inc.
- PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc.
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- Stratford Hall School
- The Cultivated Gardeners
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- Tourism Industry Association of BC
- Vancouver Film Studios
- Yumebau Inc.
- YWCA Como Lake Gardens
- YWCA xʷłəpicən

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- Varsha Gill
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- William Dunn
- Zen Xiao
- Zshu-Zshu Mark

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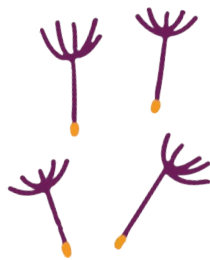
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***DID WE MISS YOU OR MAKE AN ERROR?**

Contact giving@eya.ca to let us know!



EYA Staff



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