

AUTUMN 2022 UPDATE

What We Do

VBGA is committed to supporting program participants to create a lifelong relationship with the natural world within the urban setting of Vancouver.

Our work seeks to build an awareness and appreciation of biodiversity which ultimately may support finding solutions to environmental concerns and issues. Thanks to donors like you, we are able to continuously adapt our work to the ever-changing needs of program participants, whether responding to a global pandemic or integrating innovative new ways of teaching inspired by research, technology and other resources.

Importantly, we are guided by our recent public engagement research, which indicated that the Gardens are recognized as places of connection between people, community, plants and nature. Although different factors brought participants together, there was a collective value around how the Gardens are places where memories are made.

Please enjoy the pages that follow sharing highlights from our year so far. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or comments, and thank you for supporting the work of VBGA.

Planting Seeds for our Teaching Garden

VBGA is excited to be working with Vancouver Park Board to create a fully accessible Teaching Garden within VanDusen Botanical Garden. Recently approved for development by the VBGA Board of Directors, the Teaching Garden will provide a much-needed accessible space for hands-on learning in gardening, science, and plant-based literacy through education programs, events, and activities. We hope for this Garden to be open next summer (2023).

Throughout Metro Vancouver our local habitats are decreasing as a result of urbanization. This causes stress on native plants, pollinators and populations. As a living laboratory, the Teaching Garden will increase awareness of this issue, and will highlight the inter-connectivity of life to students.

"The Teaching Garden represents the first time that program participants can practice hands-on gardening skills in the dirt as they engage in environmental exploration and gain a more meaningful understanding of how we can all contribute to the sustainability of our planet."

- Chantal Martin, Director of Education, VBGA

In addition, the Teaching Garden will serve as an example for schools, supporting them to create their own gardens. We will use the space to show teachers how to build a garden in a way that promotes biodiversity and demonstrates the importance of native species. Our hope is to inspire future projects in environmental education around British Columbia and Canada in order to support our local ecosystem and natural world.



Supporting and Welcoming all Children

Since 2019, VBGA summer camps have hired a Special Needs and Inclusion camp leader. VBGA created this position in response to campers who are eager to participate, but experience barriers to their camp experience success. These leaders ensure children enjoy a successful camp experience through meeting all of their needs – including medical, emotional, mental, and physical.

This year’s Special Needs and Inclusion leader was Jocelyn Hashimoto. With a Bachelor’s degree in Child and Youth care, Jocelyn started working at VanDusen’s summer camps in 2020 as a junior counsellour. From the beginning, she admired the work of the Special Needs and Inclusion leader because the role caters to children who have specific needs and works to understand the root of their challenges and connect with them. She strives to find key moments to work with campers and bring them out of their shell as they discover the Garden.

“If you can support campers to become aware of their surroundings, it can really help. For example, we have so many different types of birds that they may not have heard before. So we try to ground them and get them ready for being in this environment.”

Jocelyn appreciates VBGA’s approach to support every child where they are. “Especially after COVID, a lot of campers were so used to being inside, with their parents or watching TV. So the idea was to slow things down for them and take time to explore the Garden. I take time to get to know their interests and connect it to what they might be learning throughout the day or to their craft.”

More than ever, we know how important it is to provide different options for each individual child. Jocelyn believes VBGA’s unique environment offers something beyond the standard summer camp experience. “We prioritize being outside more than anything. Some kids come in afraid of bugs, but at the end, we are able to get them to pet a worm or pick up a snail. I think we offer a program that really helps young people embrace nature. Even if they don’t want to do everything, we are able to keep them engaged and spark interest in nature.”

Feathers and Leaves at Bloedel Conservatory

Bloedel Conservatory is more than a conservatory, it is also an aviary. This tropical ecosystem is home to some 500 species of plants, shrubs and trees, as well as hundreds of free-flying smaller birds as well as several larger ones on perches throughout the facility.

Inviting pathways and helpful signage make it easy for visitors to explore the Conservatory on their own. But visitors always have another option: at any moment they can turn to a roving Docent and learn more.

Through that conversation, they engage with the visitors’ own curiosity and interests.

The core objective of this volunteer program is to help ensure a rewarding experience for every visitor. While Docents are highly trained and pursue on-going research, they offer visitors friendly conversation, not a lecture. Through that conversation, they engage with the visitors’ own curiosity and interests. They offer relevant data and anecdotes, tailor suggestions accordingly, and invite visitors to share their own expertise in return.

Docents, like visitors, have specialized interests. One docent jokes that her shift partner sends her the “feather questions” while she sends him the “leaf questions.” Recently she and a teenager compared notes. She told him where to find the Guinea Turoca and the Golden Pheasants; he showed her his photos of the Arboreal Dove and the Peking Robin.

Docents value these exchanges as much as their visitors. “I am grateful to have the opportunity not only to share knowledge about our wonderful birds and plants,” one wrote in a memo shared with colleagues, “but also to have a positive impact on many lives — and they on mine — while doing so.”

2022 Program Numbers

YTD

2,769
Students participated in
FIELD TRIPS 

1454
YOUTH ATTENDED CAMPS 

85
YOUTH WEEKEND NATURE CLUBS 

1261
Adults participated in
PROGRAMS 

158
Family program
PARTICIPANTS 

14,000+
MEMBERS 

275
ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS 

260,000+
VISITORS 

Indigenous Initiatives: Healing Together

Geronimo Alec (member of the Wet'su'wet'en Nation) recently joined VBGA as our Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator, a role which focuses on incorporating Indigenous teachings into our programming and educating teachers, camp leaders, students, and volunteers about how to share these teachings in a way that respects the traditional protocols and permissions for storytelling. Reflecting on the response to his work, Geronimo says, "It warms my heart how well-received my teachings are. I've seen some of the teachers in the Garden sharing information I shared, very comfortably, positively and respectfully. The Guides also share that the teachings enhance their tours."

Geronimo loves teaching youth, especially Indigenous youth, about the beauty of the culture. He is passionate about breaking negative stereotypes and focusing on the positive contributions of Indigenous people. He has a special message to share with Indigenous youth. "Don't be afraid to reach out for help. Don't be afraid to share your culture with your friends. Ignore the bullies and people saying you're not going to amount to anything. Our culture is still



strong, our people are still strong, and our teachings are very strong too." He is working to create a safe environment for Indigenous people to find refuge within the city, and to come connect with nature and their culture.

One of the keys to honouring truth and reconciliation is recognizing that we all need to heal together. Geronimo is heartened to note that "people want to change their own perspectives on things, and want to heal with us, and get out of that mindset that only Indigenous people need to heal. We're all on the healing journey together. We are all part of the Medicine Wheel. We all need to respect each other and treat each other as equals."

**Thank you for your support connecting people to
plants and protecting biodiversity for generations to come.**

For more information,

please contact Adina Spivak, Director of Philanthropy at aspivak@vandusen.org or by phone at (250) 397-0390.

**Vancouver Botanical
Gardens Association (VBGA)**
5251 Oak Street Vancouver,
BC V6M 4H1
vandusengarden.org

Land Acknowledgement

The Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association (VBGA) acknowledges that VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory are located on the unceded Ancestral shared lands of the x̱w̱məθkʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ / səlilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We are honoured to be on the lands where these Nations have lived since time immemorial, and where they continue to maintain stewardship and live in balance with nature.

Our work of promoting environmental sustainability and stewardship would not be possible without Indigenous perspectives and knowledge.