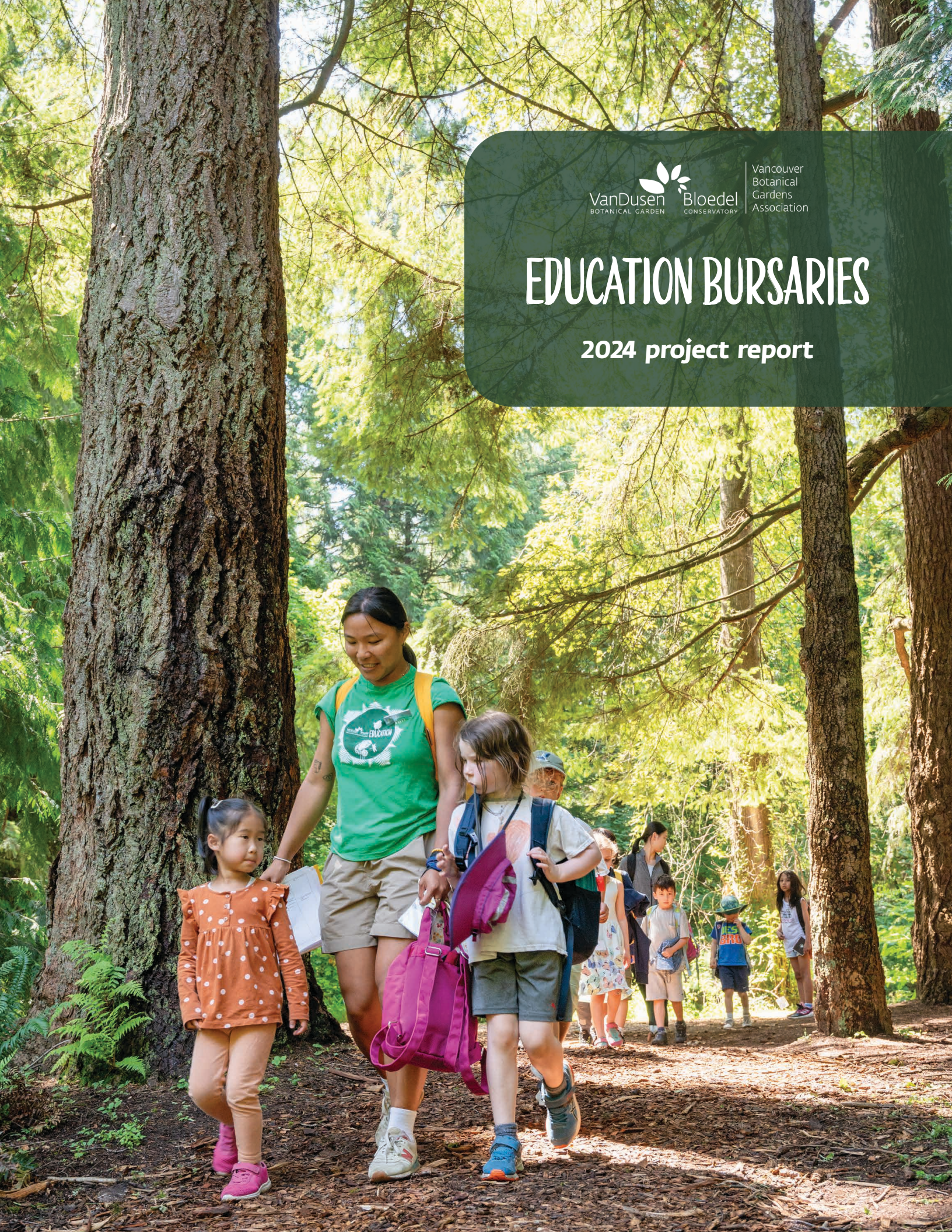




Vancouver
Botanical
Gardens
Association

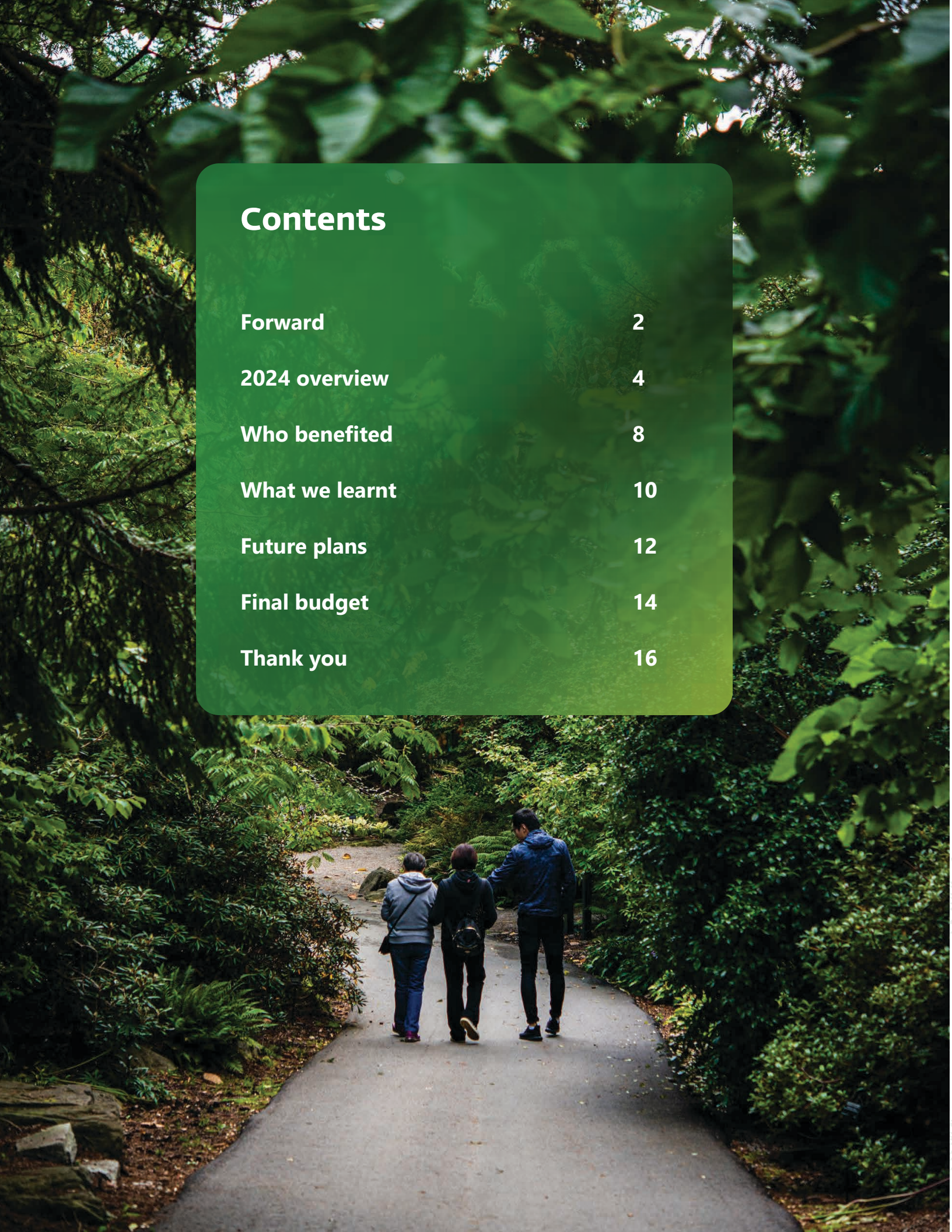
EDUCATION BURSARIES

2024 project report



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We live in a time when learning about nature is an integral part of every child's education. The world is changing, and the impact and relationship people have with plants will greatly dictate the legacy we leave behind for future generations.

Understanding and engaging with the natural world is, unfortunately, not something easily accomplished for many. The demographics in our city have shifted rapidly; simple acts such as playing in the garden or walking to your local park have been pushed further and further out of reach for thousands of low-income families.

VanDusen and Bloedel offer incredible quality educational opportunities and access to abundant natural beauty. Thanks to donors to the VBGA, this is something which people from all walks of life can participate in.

I hope that this short insight into the impact donor-funded bursaries have made inspires you - I know that it has done so for me. If you are one of the people who were responsible for these bursaries, please know that you have my deepest gratitude for making this all possible. You created learning opportunities which have not only impacted young people today, but helped bring about long-term change at a critical time.

Kind regards,



Chantal Martin,

Director of Education and Research,
Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association



***"This experience will undoubtedly
enrich their education, broaden
their horizons, and help bridge
the opportunity gap that exists
in our community."*** - 2024, Elementary
School Teacher



Overview

2024 saw the continuation of two major trends in environmental education in our community; a reduction in accessible green spaces, and the growing importance of quality environmental educational opportunities. It also saw one unexpected, but very welcome change, which I shall save till last.

With 53,660 new residents this year, Vancouver continues to grow at a rapid pace. In response, the City of Vancouver announced plans to build 83,000 homes in the next decade. While this decision is vital for the future of our community, it comes at the cost of green spaces. A child born today is less likely than in any other generation to have access to their own garden or spend meaningful time in nature, impacting their learning, mental health, and engagement in climate action.

At the same time, the planet continues to warm and weather patterns continue to change. This January, frosts killed thousands of trees across British Columbia, and wildfires once again laid waste to entire communities. In response to these challenges, green sector jobs are growing at a rapid pace, expected to employ over 630,000 people by 2030. However, these jobs require a highly educated workforce in order to succeed, just as an educated community is vital for reducing our climate footprint.

In light of our booming population and the immediate need for climate education, the VBGA play a vital role in our community; we protect a beautiful and ecologically important green space, and utilize it to offer top quality educational opportunities throughout the Lower Mainland.

1,222
Bursaries provided

19%
More bursaries
provided
compared to
2023

25+
Unique schools
and charities
supported

2,400
Hours of fully
subsidized
education

100%
Of funding came
from the public



"Just wanted to say, thank you for all your folks are doing at VanDusen, especially for an option to have a bursary. This was so helpful for our family this week and we are so grateful, as your bursary allowed me to continue the job hunt wrapping up with an interview today! We couldn't have done that without a safe and beautiful place for our children to come as we pivot in a time of uncertainty."

- 2024, Caregiver

In 2024, the VBGA saw a continued growth in demand for high-quality education with 10,683 people taking one or more courses so far this year. Education at the Gardens is multi-disciplinary, and goes far beyond than biology and horticulture; in 2024 students studied everything from art to sociology, learning everything from cooking skills to Indigenous history.

2024 also saw the completion of a major milestone in education at the Gardens; the completion of the Learning Garden. This long-awaited project allows for hands-on education, opening the door to countless new experiences. While this is a vital tool for all learners, it is especially valuable to the growing number of people in our community who lack a garden of their own, and for whom experiences such as these are otherwise out of reach.

And so finally I get to the last, least expected, and perhaps and most positive change to occur this year.

The VBGA are committed to the idea that quality environmental education should be for everyone, and so keep fees minimal and offer bursaries to those in particular need. Unfortunately, the

growth in demand on our services has, for a long time, become unsustainable and each year a growing number of people in genuine need were being turned away.


In 2024, thanks to the incredible support of our donors, I am delighted to report that the VBGA did not reject a single request for education bursaries due to financial need.

Not one.

Every person who wished to come to the Gardens to learn and grow was given that opportunity, no matter their circumstances. Whether they were an inner-city child who had an unforgettable summer camp experience, or a senior facing isolation who participated in a garden tour thanks to our newly created Older Adult Bursaries, 2024 was a transformative year.

The pressures on our city and the growing importance of education pose major challenges in the coming years. And yet, thanks to our donors, the VBGA are proud to have given hundreds of people the opportunity to learn and grow at the Gardens who would not otherwise have been able.





As a teacher in an inner-city school district, my students come from diverse backgrounds, including new immigrant families, refugees, and households with varying socio-economic statuses. Many of our families struggle to provide for their children's basic needs, making it difficult for them to participate in extra-curricular activities that could greatly enrich their educational experience.

- 2023, Elementary School Teacher

Who benefited from bursaries in 2024?

While donors to the VBGA have provided bursaries to help children access the Gardens for many years, 2024 marks the first year in which seniors were also given similar opportunities, all thanks to new designated philanthropic support. In total, 262 low-income seniors participated in VBGA programming, a number which is expected to grow in coming years.

The other 960 (79%) of bursary recipients were children ranging in age from 3-18, with the majority of those children in the 5-12 age category. By numbers, most of these children experienced the Gardens through a field trip (978) compared to Nature Camps (21). However, children attending Nature Camps did so for a cumulative 900 hours fully supervised by VBGA staff, compared to approximately 1,500 hours of field trips primarily supervised by teachers.

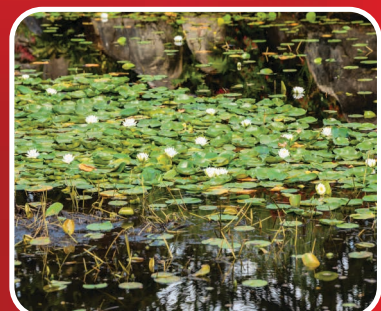
Over 80% of bursary recipients came from Vancouver, with the rest almost all from Richmond, Burnaby, North Vancouver, and Surrey. As the cost to live in Vancouver continues to rise, we

expect to see lower-income families move to neighbouring cities, although this trend has not yet been strong enough to make a large difference to our demographics.

While reasons for applications were varied, several common threads can be found. Among teachers, many identify their student's lack of access to nature and high rate of reliance on food assistance programs, as well as many new immigrants and refugees. For parents, low wages, a high cost of living, and the need to find stimulating activities for their children are key drivers.

Mental health or challenges with socialization were mentioned in over two thirds of all children's bursary applications, a notable increase from previous years. Virtually all carers who identified this need also highlighted the positive impact time outdoors had on their children.

Please note that we do not collect personal data such as ethnicity or gender of our bursary recipients.





"You think you've planned for everything - but nothing can find a flaw in a system quite like a five year old!"

**- Sangeeta Thomas,
VBGA Educator**

Trends & Learnings

Every year, we witness changes in the needs of our community and discover new ways to better serve them. In a year where our capacity to support environmental education has grown faster than ever before, both through the Learning Garden and through new donor support, we have also learnt a great deal.

Kids, especially those who attend on a bursary, *love* the new Learning Garden. We aim to feature it more prominently in classes throughout 2025.

Funding needs for Nature Camp Bursaries have almost doubled since 2022. Fortunately, this trend appears to be slowing (+70% in 2023 and +18% in 2024).

A growing number of children require specialist 1:1 support beyond what we provide. Carers may need to provide external specialists through external or new funding sources.

Parents and teachers frequently told us that children responded particularly well to outdoor learning at the VBGA.

As the demographics in British Columbia continue to change, there is a growing need for multi-lingual educators.

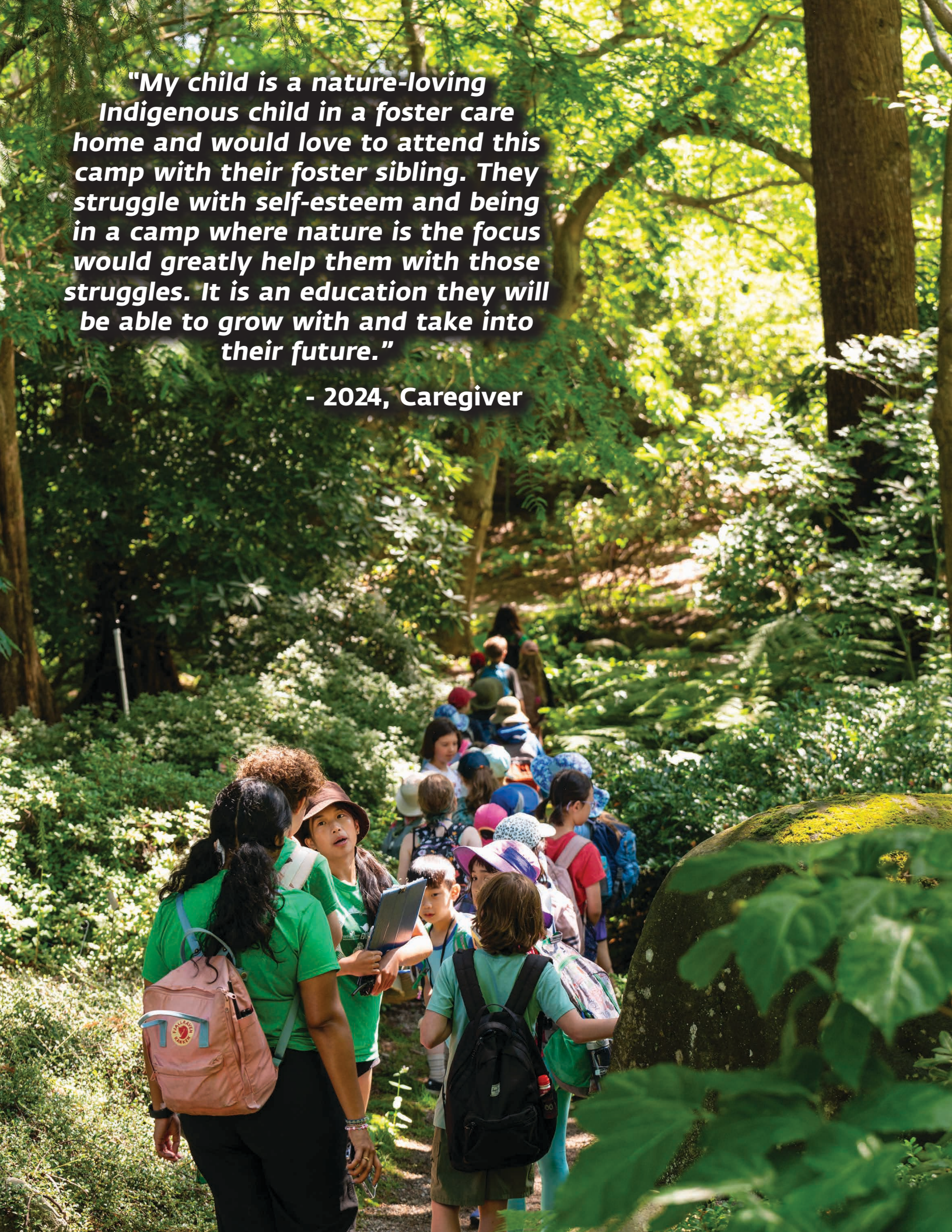
The new Senior's Field Trips have been well received so far, but are recognized as an area that will need continued innovation and experimentation to perfect.

There was a sizable increase in applications mentioning mental health and socialization.

Teacher professional development is a clear area of growth for the VBGA. Sessions have gathered consistently outstanding reviews, and it has already gone on to impact tens of thousands of children.

"My child is a nature-loving Indigenous child in a foster care home and would love to attend this camp with their foster sibling. They struggle with self-esteem and being in a camp where nature is the focus would greatly help them with those struggles. It is an education they will be able to grow with and take into their future."

- 2024, Caregiver



Looking to the future

The major trends we have witnessed this year; the growing number of applicants for bursaries, the impact time spent outdoors has on children's mental health, the looming threat of climate change, and the broadening demographics who we support, are not expected to change, but to accelerate. As our community grows and its needs shift, the importance of education at VanDusen & Bloedel becomes ever more apparent.

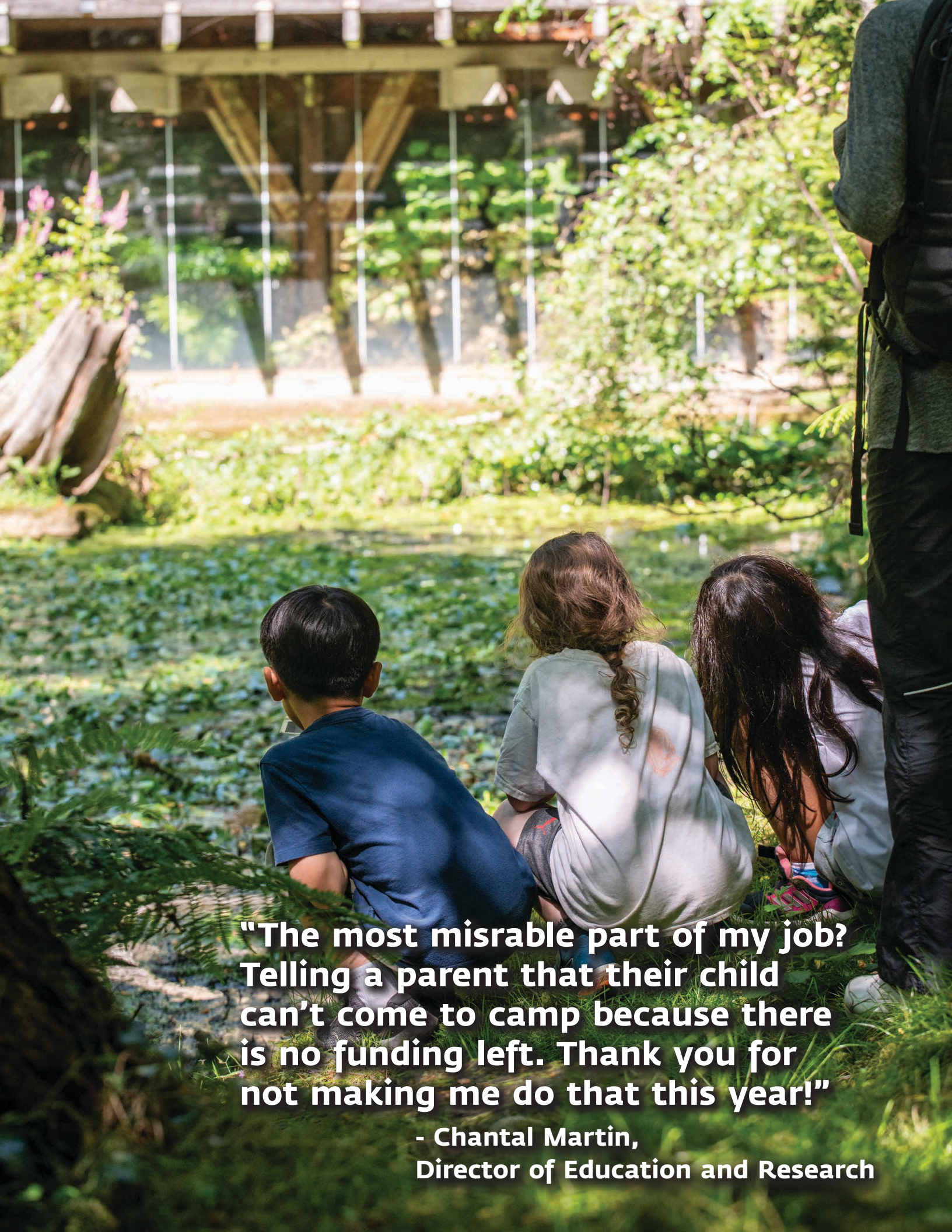
This was also a landmark year for hands-on education, thanks to the completion of the Learning Garden. The Learning Garden is a major step forward, and will improve the quality of education in future years, especially for those coming from low-income or inner city neighborhoods for whom growing, caring for, and harvesting plants is something they have only ever seen online. In 2025, the Learning Garden will further expand, both with new physical features such as sensory beds & educational signage, but also with a broader and more refined range of educational courses.

2024 was the first year in many where donors were able to support every family who needed help - a fact I draw enormous hope from. While donations often ebb and flow, from the discussions I have had with supporters, I get the sense that there is growing momentum and an understanding that these experiences are too important to let go. I am hopeful that this, too is a trend which continues.

While I am troubled by the growing need for bursaries and the rising number of children for whom access to nature is dwindling, the improvements to our education and the support of new donors gives me great hope for the future. Never before have the Gardens been more important to our community, but never before have we been able to provide so many bursaries and such high quality education.

The future will bring challenges, but I believe it will be bright.



A photograph of three children sitting on a grassy area, looking towards a garden. The child on the left is a boy with short dark hair wearing a blue t-shirt. The child in the middle is a girl with long brown hair in a braid, wearing a light grey t-shirt. The child on the right is a girl with long dark hair, wearing a light grey t-shirt. They are all looking towards a garden with various plants and flowers. In the background, there is a wooden structure with vertical slats, possibly a fence or a trellis. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a school garden or a park.

**"The most miserable part of my job?
Telling a parent that their child
can't come to camp because there
is no funding left. Thank you for
not making me do that this year!"**

**- Chantal Martin,
Director of Education and Research**

Final budget

This budget states our current and upcoming expenditures. In-kind donations such as volunteer hours and donated plants & seeds are not included.

To learn more or to provide support for these areas in 2025, please call: **250 397 0390** or email: **fundraising@vandusen.org**

Field Trips	\$8,760
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Transport Costs	\$5,600
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Nature Camps	\$10,214
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Senior's Bursaries	\$6,112
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VBGA Family Classes	\$7,440
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Teacher Pro-D	\$3,301
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Associated Costs	\$4,143
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Total	\$45,570
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Thank you

VanDusen Botanical Garden is a beloved cornerstone of our community, but would not exist today were it not for public support. From the visionaries who supported its construction, to those who keep the gardens alive through their annual donations, VanDusen stands testament to the dedication and generosity of our community.

It is also a garden for everyone, and is becoming increasingly relevant in a world with shrinking green spaces and few opportunities for our community to connect with nature.

This year more people than ever before were given an opportunity to discover the magic of the garden and to learn about the wonders of the natural world. Every single person who benefited did so because someone in our community chose to make a donation.

I had the privilege to watch hundreds of people from low-income households have transformative experiences at the garden, making memories which will last them a lifetime. If you were one of the incredible people who made that possible, you have my deepest thanks.



Chantal Martin

Director, Education & Research
Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association

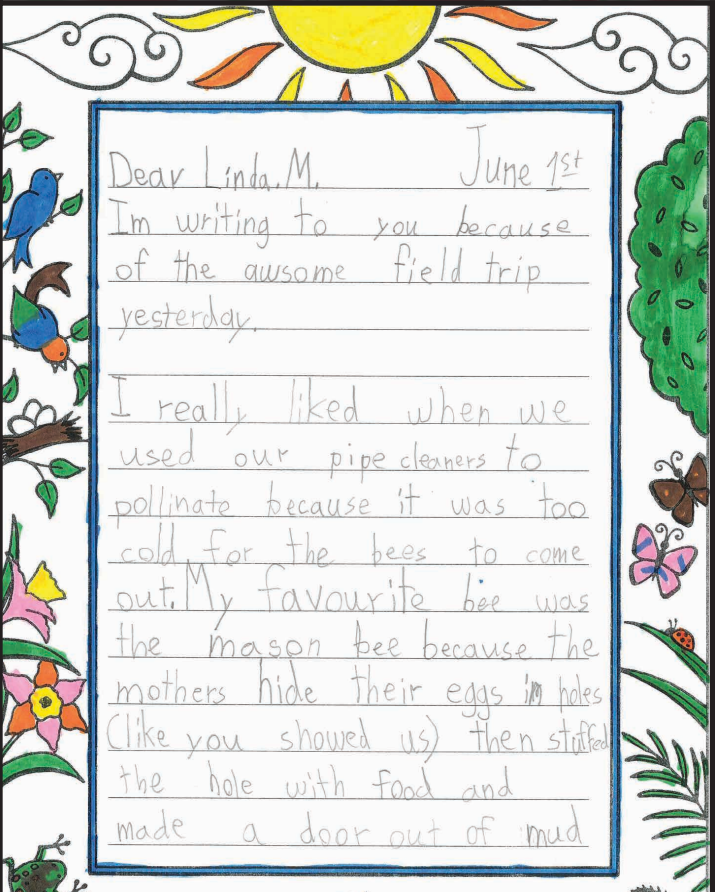
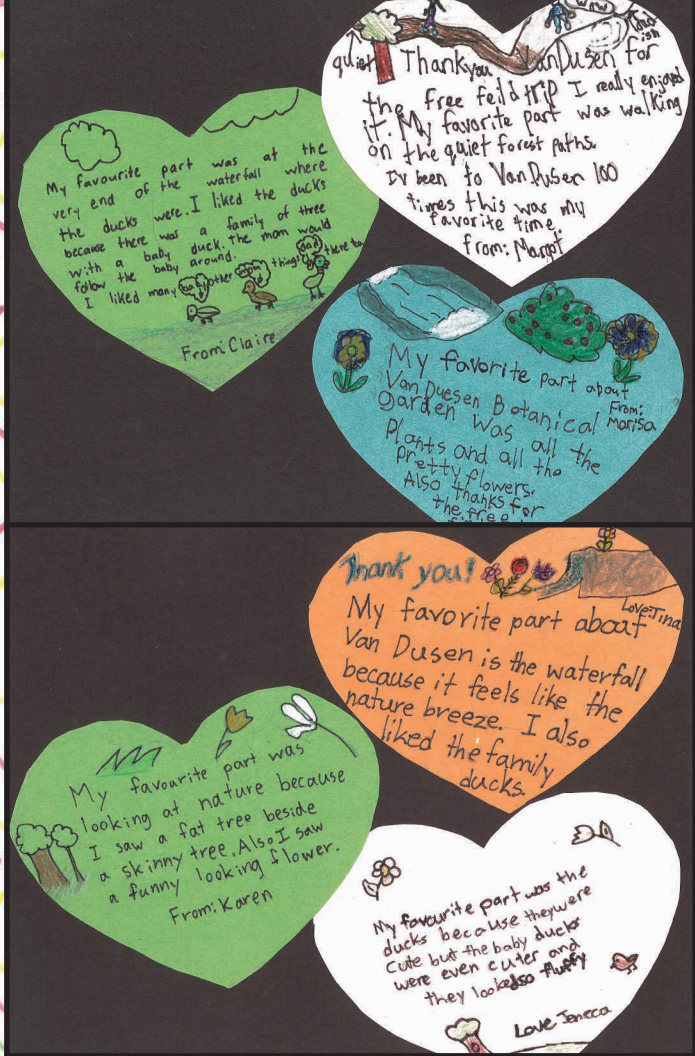




Dear Donors,

Thank you for the money. If you hadn't given us the money, we couldn't have gone. You gave us money so we could go. Thank you so much for the money!

From Aliyan,

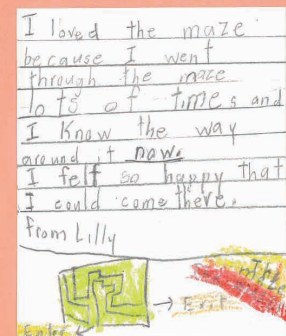
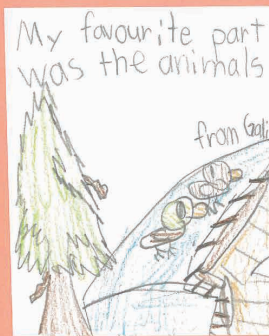
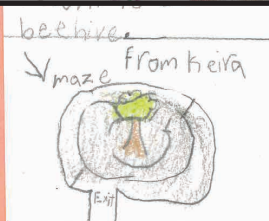


Dear Linda M. June 1st

Im writing to you because of the awesome field trip yesterday.

I really liked when we used our pipe cleaners to pollinate because it was too cold for the bees to come out. My favourite bee was the mason bee because the mothers hide their eggs in holes (like you showed us) then stuffed the hole with food and made a door out of mud

Thank you for paying the trip to Vandusen garden I loved the flowers they were so colorful. I felt so exited when I got there.



I love The maze because I always find my way out and it was fun.

I love the fountain. It was sprinkling.



