



High Park Initiatives

Annual Report

2010



Message from the Chair

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It has been another successful year at the High Park Nature Centre. The demand for the Nature Centre’s educational programs continues to grow, revenue earned from program fees has steadily increased and we have added additional staff to support this growth.

Although the High Park Initiatives faced some challenges during the year due to the a transition of the Board of Directors, the current board is dedicated to our mission to protect, preserve, restore and respect the natural environment in High Park by creating awareness, educating and inspiring action.

I sincerely want to recognize and thank the staff and volunteers for their dedication, efforts and contributions over the past year.

With the departure of Nature Centre Director Diana Teal, Coordinators Katie Krelove and Sarah Halonen have stepped up, faced the increased demands made of them head on and continue to deliver superior environmental educational programs to nature lovers across the city.

It is through the generous support of members of the Friends of High Park, private donors and our funding partners, including the City of Toronto, the John & Pat McCutcheon Charitable Foundation, Pratt & Whitney Canada and the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, that we continue to take great strides in preserving and enhancing High Park’s natural environment through park stewardship and education.

Robin Sorys
Chair and Director of Human Resources

High Park Nature Centre Staff

- Diana Teal, *outgoing Director*
- Katie Krelove, *Coordinator*
- Sarah Halonen, *Coordinator*
- Jon Hayes, *Nature Interpreter*
- Emily Leslie, *Naturalist Intern*
- Zak Smith, *Naturalist Intern*
- Christianna Facey-Crowther, *Naturalist & Welcome Centre Intern*
- Rebecca Lee, *Administrative Assistant*

Board Members

- Angie Begitsch
Treasurer
- Lisa Clarkson
Director of Policies and Practices
- John Cleary
Secretary
- Jerold Hodge
HPCAC representative and Director of Programs
- Kara Lysne-Paris
Director of Marketing and Communications
- Judy Malone,
outgoing Director of Marketing and Communications
- Patrick Parent
outgoing Director of Strategic Planning
- Jane Schmidt
outgoing HPCAC representative
- Robin Sorys
Chair and Director of Human Resources
- Helen Sousa
ex-officio, City of Toronto representative
- Andrew Young
outgoing Director of Programs



7085

participants

1210

teaching hours

452

educational programs

95

hands-on programs

2010 Award of
Excellence recipient
Green Toronto Awards:
Environmental
Awareness Category





School Programs

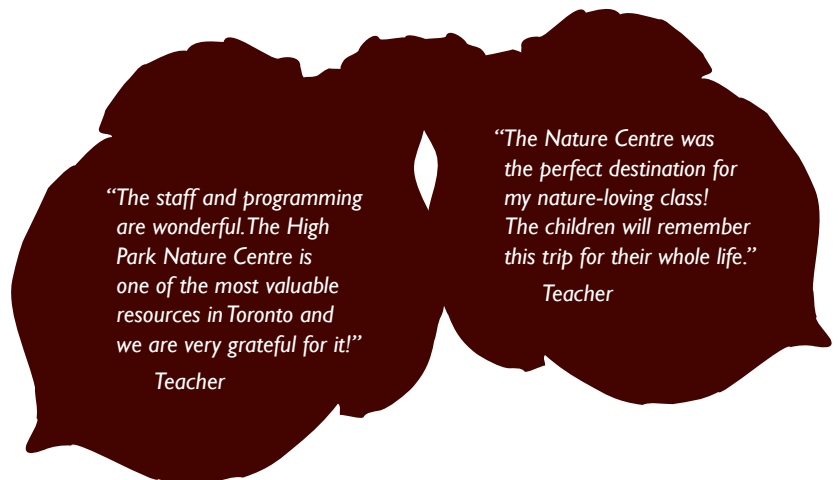
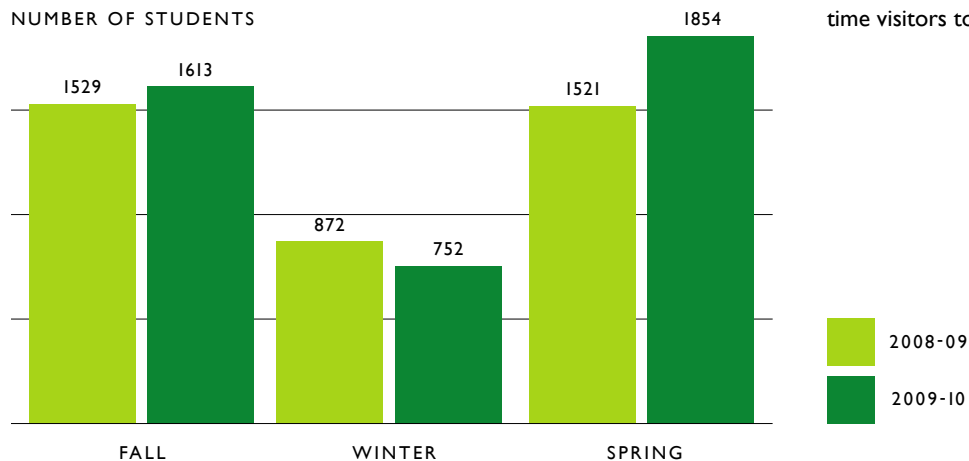
Each school year, the Centre's nature interpreters deliver a diverse assortment of seasonally-based, curriculum-linked outdoor adventures that promote respect, appreciation and stewardship of the natural environment. Whether planting native seedlings in the park's rare black oak savannah, feeding a chickadee from the palm of their hand or dip netting for aquatic insects on Grenadier Pond, student visitors are reconnected to the natural world around them through our hands-on programming.

School Year Statistics

During the 2009/10 school year, a total of 4238 students participated in the Nature Centre's 29 different programs for elementary, intermediate and secondary schools, an 8% increase from last year.

The total of programs delivered to school groups increased by 11% from 2008/09. There was a notable increase in the number of local Montessori and private school classes, most of which were first time visitors to the Nature Centre.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS





School Programs

Highlights: Spring School Programs

With 1855 children attending programs, spring 2010 was the Centre's busiest season of school programming on record. The Centre was double booked for 40% of the month of June and an additional staff member was hired to teach additional classes. A new program, "Spring has Sprung", was developed to accommodate a large volume of teacher requests for an early spring program. Delivered to 220 students in 11 classes, the program celebrated the arrival of spring blooming plants, animals emerging from hibernation and spring bird migration.

Secondary School Programs

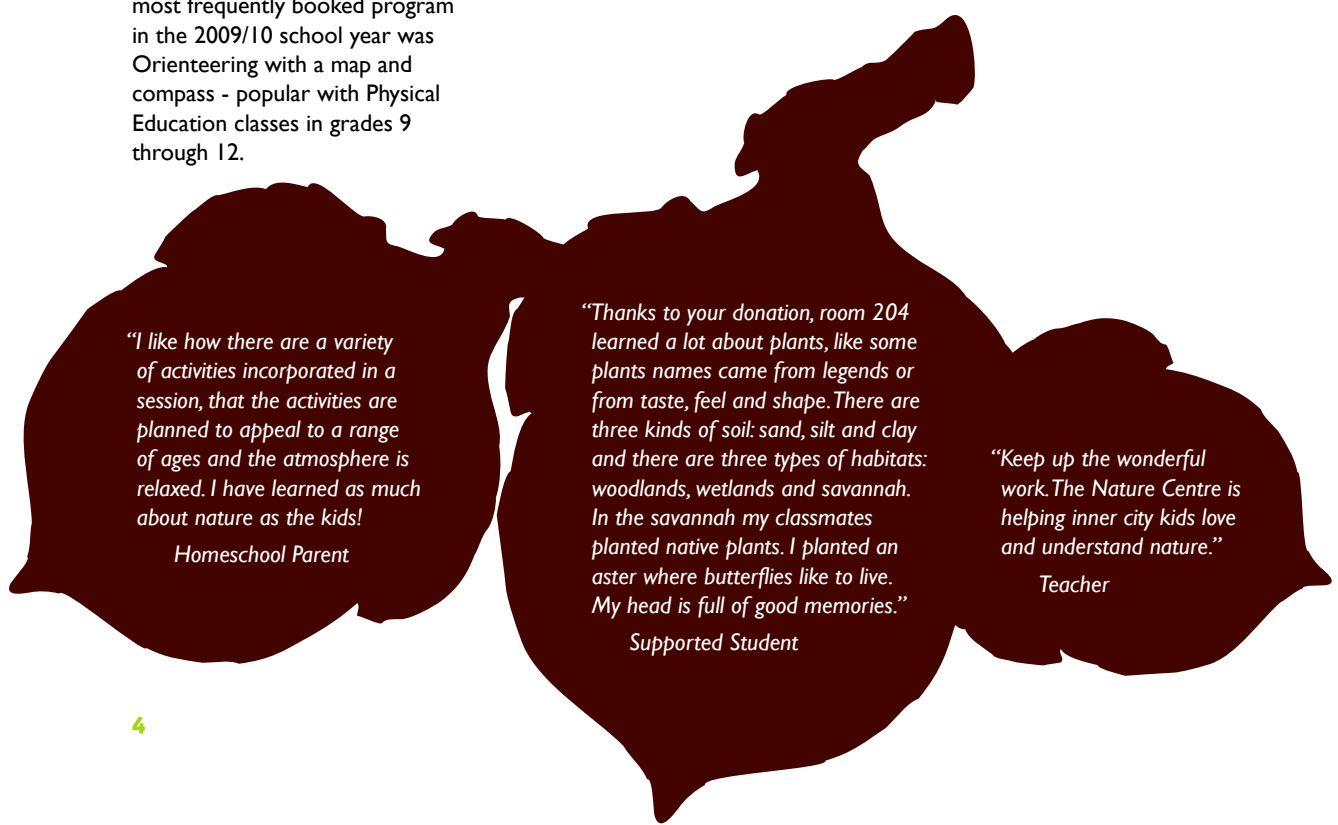
Secondary school program attendance increased by 57% since the fall 2008 program launch. The most frequently booked program in the 2009/10 school year was Orienteering with a map and compass - popular with Physical Education classes in grades 9 through 12.

At Home in High Park

19 children, eight younger siblings and their parents met every second Monday from October 2009-May 2010 for the Nature Centre's new "At Home in High Park" program for children who are home schooled. The program was developed at the request of and with the help of a local home schooling group, who already attended Nature Centre programs but wished for a year-round program. Participants discovered the cyclical interconnections between plants and animals and tracked changes through the seasons. The program culminated with a park stewardship project that included invasive species removal and native plant community restoration in the savannah.

Supported Programs

In 2009/10, 486 children from high priority schools across the Greater Toronto Area participated in a Nature Centre school program free of charge. Thanks to our programming partners, Ducks Unlimited, 10 classes were selected to explore the diversity of aquatic and terrestrial life in and around Grenadier Pond with the Centre's interpretive staff. Pratt and Whitney Canada continued to show their support for the Nature Centre's "Nearer to Nature Adopt a Class" program, enabling 245 students to participate in spring planting programs that focus on the stewardship of the park's black oak savannah.



"I like how there are a variety of activities incorporated in a session, that the activities are planned to appeal to a range of ages and the atmosphere is relaxed. I have learned as much about nature as the kids!"

Homeschool Parent

"Thanks to your donation, room 204 learned a lot about plants, like some plants names came from legends or from taste, feel and shape. There are three kinds of soil: sand, silt and clay and there are three types of habitats: woodlands, wetlands and savannah. In the savannah my classmates planted native plants. I planted an aster where butterflies like to live. My head is full of good memories."

Supported Student

"Keep up the wonderful work. The Nature Centre is helping inner city kids love and understand nature."

Teacher

Club and Camp Programs

The Nature Centre's Naturalist Clubs for Kids and Summer Day Camp programs aim to inspire the next generation of naturalists and environmental stewards. Key themes of respect, wonder, appreciation and exploration set the stage, and outdoor adventures abound. There are programs designed for every age from 3 to 12 years so that participants can hone their observation, identification, and environmental stewardship skills over time. Children are mentored by the Nature Centre's skilled staff and immersed in the incredible ecology of High Park as they come into their own as young naturalists.

"On rainy days at Nature Nuts, they don't just put all the kids in front of a movie, we actually still get to do stuff."

Camper



Watching a spider eat its prey



Club and Camp Programs

Highlights: Summer Camps

2009 was a very busy summer at the Nature Centre! It all started on camp registration day, when over 100 parents braved the February cold to line up on the front porch of the Centre by 7 AM. By 8 AM, all camps were sold out! With long waiting lists for Nature Nuts and the Knee High Naturalists Parent and Child program and many pleas from parents, the summer schedule was reorganized and additional sessions placed on the calendar. In no time, all camp sessions were fully booked... and still had waiting lists! Nature Nuts camp attendance grew by 47% and Knee-High Naturalists enrolment doubled from 2008/09! Thanks to generous support from Canada Summer Jobs / Service Canada and the City of Toronto, the Nature Centre staff was able to grow from four full-time to seven full-time staff to accommodate additional programs and participants.

Knee-High Tuesday Club


Warmer than usual weather may have prompted a 56% rise in attendance in the winter 2010 session of the Knee-High Naturalists Tuesday Club for children 3-5 years of age... more likely, it is the incredible instructors and programming that engages children AND their parents in the wonders of winter in High Park. Fall and spring sessions remained booked to capacity with a waiting list.

Saturday Morning Naturalist Clubs

Enrolment in the ever-popular Saturday Morning Naturalist Club for Kids (ages 6-8) increased by 50% in fall 2009. An additional program instructor was hired to maintain the Nature Centre's high ratio of adults to kids. Winter and spring sessions were booked to capacity. The Rambler's Hiking Club for children 8-10 years of age attendance remained steady at 15 children per session. The majority of the Ramblers Club participants are children who have attended Nature Centre programs for four to five years, and are highly knowledgeable young naturalists who are experts at navigating High Park's trail system.


Tuesdays at the Pond with Jon Afterschool Club

Requests for an after school program prompted the development of the "Tuesdays at the Pond" series in spring 2010. 14 children met from 4-6 PM on a bi-monthly basis from April to June. Based on the same child-centred teaching philosophy as the Ramblers Hiking Club, the Afterschool program focused on what the children wanted to learn about Grenadier Pond. Among the activities chosen by participants were: dip netting for aquatic insects, catch and release fishing, nature photography, raft building out of natural materials, bird watching and mapping.



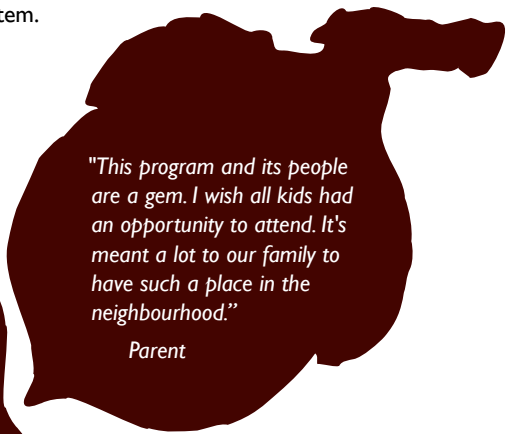
"I was entirely impressed with the Knee-High Naturalist program - the leaders were outstanding. They had an incredible amount of knowledge to share with the children and taught them in a very suitable manner. This was our first time and we will definitely register again. Bravo!"

Parent



"Congratulations on a well-organized and engaging program. This is my son's third session and he's asking for more!"

Parent



"This program and its people are a gem. I wish all kids had an opportunity to attend. It's meant a lot to our family to have such a place in the neighbourhood."

Parent



Public Programs

Many urban families cannot afford to leave the city to experience nature, leaving many children and youth to grow up without the physical and psychological benefits of experiences in the natural world. The Nature Centre's Public Programs aim to provide families with access to wild nature in their city through programs designed to bridge the gap between the natural world and urban dwellers and increase understanding of the critical importance of ecological restoration and stewardship of biodiversity in Toronto.

With the key goal of increasing accessibility in mind, the Nature Centre's public programs are offered free of charge or on a donate-what-you-can basis.



Family nature walk



Public Programs

Highlights:



Moth night

Seasonal Family Nature Workshops

The Nature Centre's 6th Annual "Decorate a Tree for the Birds" workshop was held in December 2009. 105 children and adults celebrated the holiday season with High Park's flocks of winter birds in mind, making edible decorations and hanging them on trees in High Park. Attendance at the 3rd Annual "Earth Hour Celebration and Lantern Walk" was steady at 110 this year, with adults and children alike creating beautiful glass jar lanterns out of recycled materials and hiking the trails of High Park by candlelight.

"Wild in the City" Nature Awareness Lecture Series

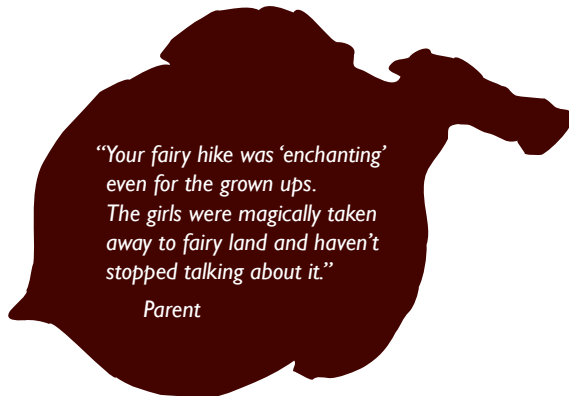
This brand new donate-what-you-can lecture series, funded by the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation, invited experts from local environmental organizations to teach participants aged 10 years and up about urban nature. Lecturers included Nathalie Karvonen of the Toronto Wildlife Centre, Pollination Canada's Maria Kasstan and Michael Mesure of the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP).

Family Nature Walks

The generous support of the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation enabled the Nature Centre to expand our line-up of Family Nature Walks AND offer them free of charge! Thirteen walks were offered from April through September and were attended by 460 people of all ages – a 37% increase from 2008/09. Evening walks were added, including "Bat Night" with bat expert Dr. Brock Fenton from the University of Western Ontario and "Moth Night" with the Toronto Entomologists Association. Eight afternoon walks rounded out the schedule. For the third year in a row, the afternoon "Fairy Hike" program attracted the most participants, leading us to believe that Torontonians must believe that fairy folks really do live in old oaks...

Open House and Earth Week Celebration

Approximately 120 adults and children dropped in to the Nature Centre's Open House to go on a guided hike, make a nature craft or hear a very special reading by local "Trilogy of the Tree" author Sean Dixon.



"Your fairy hike was 'enchanted' even for the grown ups. The girls were magically taken away to fairy land and haven't stopped talking about it."

Parent



Community Programs

Highlights: Organized Groups

During summer and school breaks throughout the year, the Centre's educational programs for community groups such as day care and youth groups were attended by 217 children and youth. The Centre's 3-year partnership with Project CANOE, a summer canoe camping program which assists youth, ages 13 to 18, who are striving to overcome social, emotional and economic challenges. As part of CANOE's year-round program developed to keep youth engaged in the experience of outdoor activities and leadership skills building, participants visited the Nature Centre for two workshops during March Break 2010.

Guiding and Scouting Programs

Since the launch of badge-related programs for Girl Guides of Canada and Scouts Canada groups in 2008/09, attendance has risen by 41%.

Birthday Parties

Birthday parties at the High Park Nature Centre are designed for families who would like to celebrate their child's special day exploring High Park and learning about nature. Over 650 children attended 40 parties, an increase of 38%. Fall 2009 and spring 2010 parties were a sold-out success. We have received high praise from participants and crossover to other programs such as the club and camp programs.



"Clearly a lasting lesson and impression. Well done."

Brownie Troop Leader

*"My daughter and her Brownie unit had a blast last night on our Savannah Stewardship outing at the Nature Centre. I just had to share what happened last night after the program. I was reading my daughter her bedtime story. We read the words on the page...
the earth was soft, the grass was green and tall, the flowers had many colours and the trees were very big...
She looked at me and said, '..that's the Savannah, Mommy.'
And she was right."*

Parent

"I want to thank you for helping make my daughter's 5th birthday an absolutely wonderful experience. A special thank you to our nature interpreter. She had the most amazing talents of enthusiasm, knowledge, kid-centred-ness and love of what she is doing."

Parent

Stewardship and Ecological Restoration Work

One of the Nature Centre's main goals is to give people the chance to do something positive to help the earth. As such, we guide our participants in their exploration of the park's nationally rare black oak savannah, examine effects of stress on the ecosystem and encourage them to get their hands dirty planting seedlings that are indigenous to the park and removing invasive species that threaten the savannah's health.



Restoring the black oak savannah understorey with native plant seedlings

Highlights:

- ✿ Over 1000 native plant seedlings planted by students and 150m² of High Park's rare Black Oak Savannah understorey restored.
- ✿ 1300m² buckthorn removed in park management unit 7B by 220 students in "Buckthorn Busters" school and community programs.
- ✿ 50 volunteers from OMERS Canada participated in a savannah stewardship event, removing buckthorn and tossing native plant seed balls.



Outreach

Highlights:

Website

A new High Park Nature Centre website was launched in October 2010. www.highparknaturecentre.com features regularly updated Nature Centre events and programs, a Donor Recognition page as well as blog posts from staff that share park happenings and “Field Notes from High Park”. There is also a link to a virtual tour of the Nature Centre building.

Social Networking

The Nature Centre established a higher profile on the internet in 2009/10 through the launch of a Facebook page, Twitter page and a Flickr photo pool. These websites have allowed the Nature Centre to network with other Toronto non-profits, extend the reach of the Centre’s mandate, increase awareness of Nature Centre events and provide seasonally-based natural history information about High Park.

Electronic Newsletter

The first monthly issue of the “Nature Centre News” was sent out in December 2009 to the 675 contacts on the Nature Centre’s mailing list and to the members of the Friends of High Park.

High Park Welcome Centre

On July 1, 2010, High Park Initiatives launched the “High Park Welcome Centre”, a new pilot project designed to promote awareness of the park’s natural environment and to provide general park information to the public during peak summer hours. Located in a small booth on the busy front patio of the Grenadier Restaurant in the centre of High Park, Welcome Centre staff and volunteers greeted and served over 1400 visitors. The Welcome Centre was developed and delivered in partnership with the High Park Community Advisory Council, Service Canada, the Grenadier Group and the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation department.





Green Toronto Awards

The High Park Nature Centre was a finalist for a Green Toronto Award in spring 2010 in the Environmental Awareness category. The Nature Centre was judged on its leadership in the community, effectiveness in achieving goals over the past year and its innovation, creativity and originality. The High Park Nature Centre proudly accepted top honours with an Environmental Award of Excellence!

“What’s common to all of the Green Toronto Award finalists is their extraordinary leadership, creativity and passion for a cleaner, greener Toronto. In big ways and small, they are greening our neighbourhoods, communities and businesses and helping us create a more livable city.”

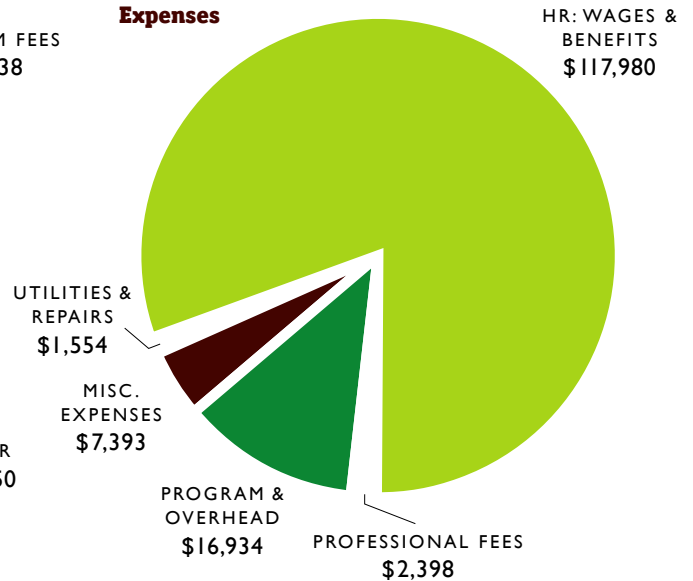
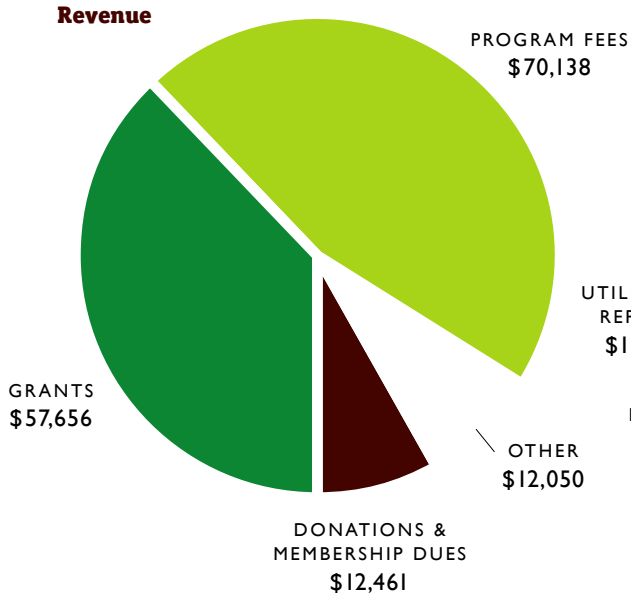
David Miller



Jon, Sarah and Katie with the Centre’s Green Toronto Award



Financials



Revenue

Grants	\$57,656
Donations & Membership Dues	\$12,462
Program Fees	\$70,138
Other	\$12,050
	\$152,305

Expenses

HR: wages & benefits	\$117,980
Program & Overhead	\$16,934
Professional Fees, Consultant	\$2,398
Utilities & Repairs	\$1,554
Misc. Expenses	\$7,393
	\$146,259

Statement of Financial Position

(unaudited) May 31	2010	2009
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 78,272	\$ 87,047
Accounts receivable	359	144
Prepaid expenses	1,554	1,554
	\$ 80,185	\$ 88,745
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 2,840	\$ 2,406
Deferred program fees	29,995	17,569
Deferred contributions	4,890	32,316
	37,685	52,291
NET ASSETS		
Internally restricted	10,277	6,838
Unrestricted net surplus	32,223	29,616
	42,500	36,454
	\$ 80,185	\$ 88,745

The complete unaudited financial statements can be obtained through HPI. The unaudited financial statements contain notes and additional information relevant to the financial information in the annual report.



Fundraising Highlights

In 2010, HPI raised over \$70,000 through foundation grants, governmental grants, charitable donations and "Friends of High Park" membership dues. Thank you for your generous support!

Thank you to Barbara Fraser, Alecia Greenfield, Kathleen O'Keefe and Diana Teal, for their hard work on the High Park Initiatives Fundraising Committee.

Canada Running Series Pancake Breakfast

On April 2, 2010, the HPI Board of Directors served a post-race pancake breakfast and promoted HPI to runners and walkers in the 8km and 5km Harry's Spring Run-Off marathon in High Park. 400 pancakes were served and over \$1200 was raised!

Canada Summer Job / Service Canada

Thank you to Gerrard Kennedy, MPP for his support of the High Park Initiatives application to fund three summer intern positions at the Nature Centre and the Welcome Centre.

Totstock 2009

On Saturday, June 21st, 2009, The Little Paper, Pages Bookstore and Bunch teamed up to present "Totstock", a festival of music, stories and crafts for kids and parents in support of The High Park Nature Centre. The main stage featured music from The Blue Bin Band, Garden Jane's Cirque de Dirt and a theatrical reading of The Lorax by Dave Wall. High Park Nature Centre staff and volunteers designed to deepen their connection to the natural world. Over 1100 children and adults attended the event, raising \$2000 for the Nature Centre!

THANK YOU!!!





Donors, Supporters and Partners

High Park Initiatives and the High Park Nature Centre extend an extra special thanks to our generous donors, supporters and partners who make it possible carry out our mission.

Donors

- Canada Running Series
- City of Toronto
- The John and Pat McCutcheon Foundation
- Kiwanis Club of Casa Loma
- Pratt and Whitney Canada
- Service Canada / Canada
- Summer Jobs
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation

In-Kind Supporters

- City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- City of Toronto, Natural Environment and Horticulture
- Steven Favier
- Mountain Equipment Co-op
- No Frills
- Starbucks
- Sweet Potato Market
- Wild Birds Unlimited
- Bob Yukich

Community Partners

- CNIB
- Canada Running Series
- City of Toronto
- Grenadier Group
- High Park Children's Garden
- High Park Community Advisory Council
- The Little Paper

Programming Partners

- Brett Tyron, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- Colborne Lodge
- Dr. Brock Fenton, University of Western Ontario
- Ducks Unlimited
- Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP)
- Greater Toronto Hawk Watch
- Pollination Canada / Seeds of Diversity Canada
- Royal Astronomical Society of Canada - Toronto Central
- Toronto Entomologists Association
- Toronto Wildlife Centre



Volunteers and Interns

Each season, we actively recruit and train volunteers from the local community as volunteer Nature Interpreters, Welcome Centre docents and working committee members. We strive to provide a valuable working and learning experience to volunteers, students and interns engaged in the fields of environmental studies, education, stewardship and child care.

Thank you to you all – we could not do it without you!

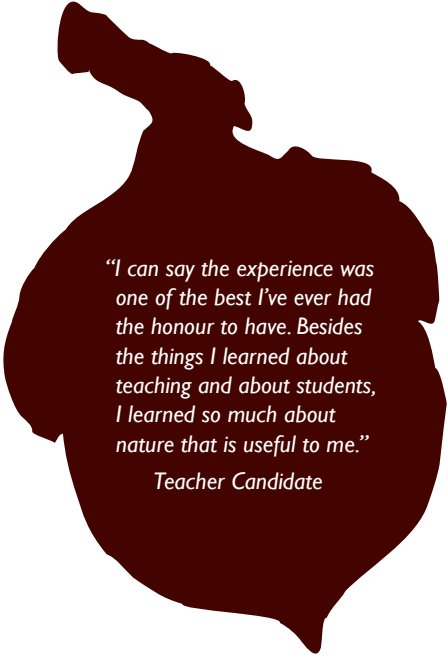
Louie Fan
Jennifer Felguerias
Kevin Kanhai
Shaminithiri Thiyagalingham
Asante Tracey

York University,
Bachelor of Education
program

Jana Miller
York University,
MES program

Lorraine Guevara
University of Toronto,
Work Placement program

Viviana Astudillo
Jennifer Barratt
Emily Bennett
Daniel Breyer
Jacqueline Capule
Gabe Comozzi
Lynda Curnoe
Hanh Doai
Richard Domsy
Ellen Dooley
Barbara Fraser
Elham Goldoz
Alecia Greenfield
Zazhary Guttman
Margaret Hawthorn
Alain Heese-Boutin
Kevin Lee
Megan Merrick
Kathleen O'Keefe
Caitlin O'Rourke
Alexa Pompilio
Sarah Rafols
Ben Rayner
Julia Rybinka
Neil Shore
Liam Silvera
Mairead Stewart
Sjaah Vijay
Chris Wai
Gloria Worth
Nataliya Zlotnikov



"I can say the experience was one of the best I've ever had the honour to have. Besides the things I learned about teaching and about students, I learned so much about nature that is useful to me."

Teacher Candidate



High Park
Nature Centre

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