

ANNUAL
REPORT
2020



URBAN HORSE PROJECT

Empowering youth
through learning
with horses



OUR MISSION

is to provide connections with horses in inclusive community settings for personal and community wellbeing

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TEAMWORK
Youth learn
from the horse's
honest feedback

A year of surprise, challenge and changing lives of youth

We know empowering youth changes lives and improves society

Empowerment of youth is vital for strong communities. Yet many youth have limited opportunities for empowerment. Urban Horse Project is filling the gap by bringing equine assisted learning to diverse urban youth, and in so doing, helping develop the leaders of tomorrow.

2020 was a surprising and challenging year

We kept calm, stayed safe and when we had to, stayed home. This meant fewer programs than usual. We did much logistical problem-solving and safety planning so our fall programs could resume, which they did with a flourish. We also took time to get some of the important, behind-the-scenes administration work done to build our organization. We are ambitious, we plan to be around for a very long time, and we are setting things up right for the future.

We are thriving and building towards an exciting future

As we continue to expand our work, a priority this year was growing our program team. We trained extensively and have truly jelled as a positive force for good. Our fall programs were beautiful, and the demand for our spring programs is greater than ever. Our agency, programs and partnerships are well established. We are now enthusiastically working towards a covered arena for year-round programs.

Horses have an incredible ability to change a youth's life

We remain amazed at our good fortune in having the people, resources and opportunities come together to let us do such powerful work with these horses and youth. Our ongoing success is one we share fully with you -- our partners, donors, supporters, youth, families, friends, facilitators and keepers of the horses. You are instrumental to us being where we are today. We are gratefully looking forward to a promising year ahead.

Nancy McRitchie

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Joanne Hudson

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BOARD PRESIDENT

WHY HORSES

"The horse program feels like medicine to us."

- Staff, Urban Native Youth Association

"The calm nature of the horses is very important to the youth we bring."

- Jes Colorini, Burnaby Neighbourhood House

"You get to be friends with the horses."

- Youth participant

"I believe there are tremendous benefits to this initiative. It gives many of our indigenous youth the opportunity to connect with animals and nature in ways that are culturally healing."

- Cheryl Robinson
A/Executive Director
Urban Native Youth Association

"Courage! The program gives you courage if you are scared of horses."

- Youth participant

"We are grateful for this program as it fills a gap in desperately needed services for the youth and families we work with in Vancouver."

- Jen Donovan, Youth Addictions & Prevention Services
Vancouver Coastal Health

Horses are natural teachers

"If you truly understood horses and how they live in the herd, you would understand why our program works."

- Gayle Cartier, Cartier Equine Assisted Learning

Horses are large, powerful animals that inspire

our full attention. They have a unique ability to connect and respond to humans, and have been our friends for thousands of years. Horses and humans have many inherent similarities, and humans naturally identify with horses, relate to them and respect them.

Horses appreciate and teach teamwork

To survive in the wild, as prey animals, horses need to work together, looking out for the safety and well-being of all the members of the herd.

To feel safe, horses look for and appreciate good leadership, and are willing to follow only after they find confidence, trust and respect. For these reasons, horses are masters of teamwork, and they excel as teachers of this and of the art of communication.

Horses have easy-to-read body language

Horses are very social and communicative and always respond honestly. They easily recognize the difference between calm, non-threatening energy and tense or anxious energy. They have easy-to-read body language that we can learn from.

Horses reward improvements in our communication and leadership skills with immediate, positive feedback. Their responses help us become more self-aware. Horses don't judge, they can't overthink, and they tend to be forgiving and kind. Their large hearts can attune with ours. Simply being in their presence often brings feelings of calm and happiness.

OUR PROGRAMS

We bring equine assisted learning into the city

Urban Horse Project is an innovative community initiative that connects youth and horses in programs that are new to Metro Vancouver. We are filling a gap in needed services by bringing suitable horses and an established, successful program right into the city.

Our programs are based on the innovative, award-winning Cartier Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) program. This experiential, detailed life-skills training program is delivered by skilled facilitators who are trained and certified by Cartier EAL in Vancouver trainings at Southlands Riding Club.



Most youth have never interacted with horses before

Before Urban Horse Project, this program did not exist locally. Through significant community collaboration, led by Urban Horse Project, new and growing opportunities are now here. Our free, inclusive programs go beyond handling horses to a way of teaching empathy, self-awareness, and boundaries. There is no riding in our programs. No prior experience or confidence with horses is needed.

Our programs are provided for free to youth

We focus on including diverse youth, and we work with many youth-serving organizations to reach and support youth who might especially benefit. The equestrian community has warmly welcomed this initiative and kindly shares space and knowledge. Other equine programs share expertise and passion for bringing this powerful work with horses forward.

Youth in our programs develop their strengths and abilities

Programs of weekly training activities

Sessions are 1.25 hours, for groups of up to ten. Sessions start with briefing on the day's learning goals, then hands-on learning with the horses in small teams, then group reflections and finally handouts to support the learning. Each week builds on learnings of prior weeks. Lessons include relationship-building, common sense, building trust and appreciating self and others.

We help youth build their self-esteem

By approaching youth with encouragement and respect, we help to increase self-esteem, well-being and development of essential life skills.

Youth increase confidence and skills

By working with our horses and each other in our training activities and then reflecting on their experiences and accomplishments, youth increase their confidence, empathy, communication, teamwork, problem-solving and leadership skills. Participant progress is easy to see, and we are thanked daily.

Horses help youth develop resiliency

Happiness, time in nature, and bonding with horses happens every day in our programs for youth who face many challenges. Youth tell us connecting with the horses is very meaningful.

Teacher praises how students gain essential connections

I WAS VERY IMPRESSED

"Across the board, student attendance and engagement at Urban Horse Project was better than at school, and behaviours we often see (avoidance, procrastination, distractibility, defiance) were essentially non-existent there.

I was very impressed with the efforts the students and families made so they could attend the program, often taking transit for 45 minutes or more each way.

The UHP staff were very perceptive and excellent at reading the students, engaging them, and providing just the right amounts of challenge and encouragement. I can't say enough good things about this program!"

-- Jessica Reid, teacher
Vancouver School Board

"One of my students, Jayda, only attended school a handful of times in the fall, yet she attended every session of the horse program. She is highly socially anxious and selectively mute but was so motivated in the program that she was able to speak with staff, engage with other students, and even offer "words" at the group session wrap-ups.

Jayda had a special connection with her preferred horse, Curly, and they completed various challenging tasks successfully. This was a real source of pride for her and gave her a feeling of confidence and accomplishment.

In the last week of the UHP program, Jayda attended school 3 times – the most yet this year, which I attribute to her participation in Urban Horse Project and being able to build connections with school program staff and students, making it easier for her to attend school."



COURAGE and LEADERSHIP

These brothers, working with horses for the first time, learn about confident leadership

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



In 2020 we rose to the challenge

Like everyone, we were surprised and impacted by the world pandemic and the restrictions it brought. Spring programs, already planned, were cancelled and we adjusted to new realities. We pivoted to create safety, maintain our team and do other important work to strengthen our organization for our vibrant future.

We weathered the storm and came out stronger

While getting through the pandemic, we:

- learned Zoom and stayed connected
- built our COVID-19 safety plan and stayed well
- completed our Human Resources policy handbook
- deepened our partnerships and program plans
- grew our financial resources and sustainability

Our fall programs were filled and ran beautifully

We were able to provide three days per week of programs in fall 2020, after much problem-solving to address transportation barriers to youth participation. We delivered 40 percent of our planned 2020 programs, and prepared for more program growth in spring 2021.

Every program day we saw youth connect with nature and our horses, show curiosity and empathy, and gain confidence and life skills. Our programs were and are impactful and much appreciated.

We grew and strengthened our facilitator team

Collectively we undertook 380 hours of training time in: equine assisted learning facilitation, trauma awareness and healing, and understanding and working with horses.

We also ran our first adult workshop for social workers of one of our important referring partners. We have plans and resources in place for a spring 2021 equine assisted learning program for young mothers.

43 diverse youth were active in ongoing experiential learning programs connecting with nature and building essential skills for life

402 new horse/ human experiences this year for those who almost never get the chance to connect with horses and this powerful way of learning

13 youth-serving agencies actively helped youth participate in the horse programs

**OUR
SURVEY
RESULTS**

85%
of participants felt
happy, calmer and/or
more relaxed

100% of partners said the
program helps youth

- make positive connections
- learn useful life skills
- feel good about themselves

LOOKING FORWARD



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

As an established organization we are ready to scale up our work

We see tremendous potential for our work to grow

A SOLID FOUNDATION

Since our first pilot programs in November 2017, we have grown year by year, and have gained greatly in confidence and capacity. We have demonstrated that by working together, using this proven program model, diverse urban youth can have free, inclusive horse programs that help them change their lives.

Urban Horse Project is organized and inspired, with extensive leadership experience and deep knowledge and relationships within community services and equine assisted programming.

To date, over 270 youth have participated in our ongoing programs, with a total of 1,626 powerful, life-changing youth / horse experiences.

While we had reduced programming in 2020 due to the pandemic, we made good use of our time and strengthened our organization, our partnerships and our financial resources. Plans for expanded programs are in place and we are ready for a very promising 2021.

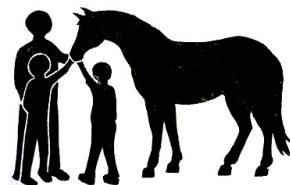
Urban Horse Project plans to create many more opportunities for the community to connect with, enjoy and learn with horses in inclusive spaces.

Right now we run our programs outside, and so our offerings are seasonal and weather dependant. With funder and community support, we are now enthusiastically working towards having suitable covered space for year-round programs.

We are just getting started

There is tremendous potential for equine assisted learning programs to grow significantly and be part of core services for youth and others.

Equine assisted learning programs are beneficial for people of all ages, abilities and walks of life. We plan to bring this program to many new groups. We are committed to helping horses help people increase their wellbeing and capacity.



OUR FINANCIALS



RICHNESS

Some of our facilitators and horses appreciating nature, friendship and our wealth of opportunities

Steady, significant growth

Our financial picture is solid, thanks to our generous and committed supporters. We have grown quickly in our first few years. Our first budget was \$33,000. Three and a half years later, our budget is \$270,000 and set to grow again. We are stable and ready to build for the future.

Financial statements

Summarized statement of revenue & expenses for years ending March 31

	2020	2019
Revenue		
Province of BC	21,004	52,870
Grants	177,723	88,761
Donations	7,758	105
Program User Fees	17,500	2,370
Total	\$223,985	\$144,106
Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits	101,460	40,086
Program Delivery	55,501	24,206
Overhead and General	18,949	13,306
Communications	850	5,321
Training and Development	12,904	21,507
Total	\$189,664	\$104,426
Surplus / Deficit:	\$34,321	\$39,691

Statement of financial position as of March 31, 2020

Assets	
Cash	245,711
Restricted Cash	9,591
Accounts Receivable	7,900
Property and Equipment	9,256
Total	\$272,458
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	24,983
Deferred Revenue	173,546
Total	\$198,529
Net Assets	
Property and Equipment	9,256
Internally Restricted	25,000
Unrestricted	39,673
Total	\$73,929



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



CHAMPIONS FOR YOUTH

Our work is only possible thanks to the generous support of committed individuals, foundations and partners

Our funders, partners and supporters are very generous

By generously sharing time and resources, you give diverse youth opportunities to explore their powerful selves, build their confidence and gain skills to better achieve their potential in life.

Witnessing positive impact

"I support and volunteer my time with Urban Horse Project as an EAL facilitator and I've witnessed first hand the positive impact Urban Horse Project has on participants' confidence and self esteem.

I love sharing my love of horses with others. Horses are amazing teachers, and have given these kids hope and have changed their lives for the better."

- Jill Diamond

Commitment to access and inclusion

"The Lake Family's All One Fund at Charitable Impact is proud to support Urban Horse Project on an annual basis because of their high quality and unique programs. UHP demonstrates exceptional leadership and management and delivers rich learning experiences like no other.

We admire UHP's commitment to access and inclusion, as they enhance the health and happiness of individuals and communities."

- Jessica and Scott Lake



Jill Diamond



Jessica and Scott Lake

Thank you for sharing your space!

Urban Horse Project wishes to especially thank the members of Burnaby Horsemen's Association and Southlands Riding Club for so generously sharing your space, so that our programs are possible for diverse urban youth who otherwise lack such opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to our first and continuing funders, our partners, horses and facilitators, our volunteers, members and friends. **You the community have generously enabled important new programs to get started and established here in Metro Vancouver. Thank you!!**

Our program partners

- Burnaby Neighbourhood House
- Burnaby Horsemen's Association
- Cartier Equine Assisted Learning
- Little Mountain Neighbourhood House
- Ministry for Children & Family Development
- Southlands Riding Club
- The Children's Foundation
- Urban Native Youth Association
- Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Support Services
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Vancouver School Board

Our program facilitators

Urban Horse Project is proud of our facilitator team, and the caring, skills and commitment to program excellence that each facilitator brings every day

- Deborah Bell
- Jessica Blois
- Bianca Bologea
- Carrie Campbell
- Brenda Crump
- Jill Diamond
- Penelope Harper
- Joanne Hudson
- Nancy McRitchie
- Dan Siney



Remembering Richard Yates

Urban Horse Project wishes to acknowledge our founding board member Richard Yates, who was a guiding force in our early years. Richard's love of people, community and horses made him a natural fit with our values. He generously shared with us his unique wit, compassion and wisdom, that we might grow well and develop our capacity to help others.

Richard's ability to communicate warmly and directly was a personality trait that defined him and made him a joy to be around. Richard passed last year. He is fondly remembered and greatly missed.

Our funders, current and first

- Central City Foundation
- CKNW Kids' Fund
- Diamond Foundation
- Ministry for Children & Family Development
- Private Foundations
- Province of BC - Community Gaming Grant
- Province of BC - Employer Training Grant
- Social Venture Partners Vancouver
- TELUS Community Fund Vancouver
- The All One Fund

The horses

Our program horses are owned and well cared for by Back in the Saddle Again Trail Rides

- Curly
- Dawson
- Flash
- Flint
- Missy
- Quinn
- Sherry
- Trouble





GET INVOLVED

Help us empower youth
by donating, volunteering
and sharing your ideas



URBAN HORSE PROJECT

We are training the leaders of tomorrow

Join us as we bring a proven and highly effective lifeskills training and wellness program into Metro Vancouver. Our program helps youth gain self-awareness, confidence, positive connections and important communication, problem solving and leadership skills needed in life.

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