



ANNUAL REPORT 2019

HIVESFORHUMANITY.COM

**S O C I A L
I M P A C T
T H R O U G H
T H E
B E E S**



Hives for Humanity builds connection through bees and the gardens that surround them. We empower community members in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) to foster inclusion and safety in their spaces, share their unique stories and skills, and bolster their self-worth. We work to dismantle stigma and break cycles of violence through building relationships of dignity, trust and respect. We create bridges between communities through the shared humanity that is our connection to nature.

We build together, comb by comb, a healthy hive.

We manage 21 Therapeutic Apiaries and 8 garden spaces through our work, and each location creates opportunities for mentorship training and work experience, access to nature and community, advocacy and awareness, and both forage and habitat for wild and managed species of bees and other pollinators.

We work alongside those who are considered “hard to reach” – meeting them exactly where they are at – offering supportive and inclusive opportunities that value the contributions of each participant. Our core tenet is respect: for the people, plants and pollinators.

Every week we work with a core team of 18 Downtown Eastside (DTES) community members who volunteer their time with our organisation in exchange for access to training, work experience, community and honey!

At every location we offer a series of workshops throughout the year to teach about the magic of the bees and share practical skills and tools for supporting the health of people, plants and pollinators in our city and beyond. We do this with a core team of 2 full-time staff, 2 part-time staff, 1 seasonal staff, and a budget in 2019 of \$391,000. We funded this through: 36% goods (i.e. honey, candles); 43% services (i.e. programming workshops, speaking engagements); and 21% fundraising (grants, donations, events).

We believe that every moment counts; that there is hope and light amidst the despair and darkness; and that together, valuing and including each other, and interconnected with nature, we might have social and environmental justice.



COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Hives for Humanity (H4H) is a non-profit organization that builds community connections through apiculture, more commonly known as beekeeping, and pollinator gardening. Through mentorship-based programming we create flexible opportunities for people to engage in the therapeutic culture that surrounds the hive; we foster connectivity to nature and to each other; we participate in local sustainable economies; we support at-risk populations of people who reside in the DTES, and we do so with respect and joy.

Our programming is designed to be no-barrier, so that participants can enter one of our workshops directly from the street, wherever they are at. As our members grow in connection and stability, we co-create opportunities for them to take on more responsibility and leadership while scaffolded by H4H staff. Through this we support connections to other resources, through deep and participatory partnerships and collaborations, including health care, housing, advocacy and education.

As pollinators, bees (both wild and managed species) play a crucial role in a wide range of diverse ecosystems worldwide. They support the reproduction of many plants, which in turn provide food and shelter for creatures large and small. Similarly, the people who H4H hires, mentors, and serves play a crucial role – taking leadership roles in environmental stewardship, fostering urban connection through nature and providing added sustenance and opportunity for the complex ecosystem of the DTES.

Our community exists in a context of concurrent drug policy and housing policy crises on stolen land. Our participants experience systemic exclusion and stigmatization, discrimination, criminalisation and blocked access to dignified health and housing. There is an ongoing legacy of colonisation: alienation and dislocation from land, food, community and

culture, enforced violently, for economic profit, power and control.

As we go back to the land in our practice, for connection, knowledge and healing, we support old ways of knowing and being that foster diversity and offer dignity. As we seek to heal ourselves and our land, we must dismantle the systems and structures that exclude, extract, and erase.

Connection to land, and the empowerment of other ways of knowing and being, is critical in our work together, so that we may each carry our unique gifts with pride, and so we may move towards futures of social and environmental justice.

To do this we must weave ourselves back together and build systems that are grounded in reciprocity and respect.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY GROWTH

Over the past three years as an organisation we have:

- 1** Made the strategic decision to focus on deepening our connection through **people and partnerships**;
Bees, gardens and other activities are modes or vectors - they are access points for people, who are at the centre of our work.
- 2** Pursued the goal to deepen our board, including bringing **people with lived experience into our organisational governance structure**, an ongoing process;
- 3** Developed our **financial tools** for assessing our impacts and staying true to our mission of building connection through the bees;
- 4** Developed our **evaluation tool**, collecting and processing feedback from our community members and partners;
- 5** Developed our **Theory of Change & Logic Model** tools to understand our components and activities and to inform our strategy;
- 6** Built protocols and terms of reference for our **team and individual meetings**, committees and Board;
- 7** Moved our location to:
1245 Glen Drive for our workshop and home base, colocating with **Wood Shop Workers Cooperative** and **Victory Gardens Cooperative** to deepen our supportive network and create opportunities for continued work for our members.
610 Main, Spencer Creo Centre where we access office space and our members access wrap-around support from the Spencer Creo staff, including advocating for housing, attending court dates, and offering support in crisis.
- 8** Developed our **Therapeutic, Mentorship and Educational Programming** through our community partnerships to include 21 Therapeutic Apiary locations containing 8 pollinator gardens and 50 hives – that’s about 2,500,000 honey bees and 3,000 lbs of honey – and one additional apiary in Richmond for livestock support and honey production.



We are deeply grateful to the support from our community of participants, volunteers, partners, funders, donors, sponsors, retailers, and restaurants, through which we create transformational opportunities.

Therapeutic Apiary Partnerships:

Through partnership, we are able to create and enhance green spaces that reflect our values of opportunity, joy and inclusion. In 2019, and going forward into 2020, this included the following locations and partners, workshops, gardens and participation:

Hastings Folk Garden (PHS Community Services Society - PHSCSS)

- 2 colonies
- 8 workshops with 337 participants
- weekly gardening sessions with 10 participants
- gatekeeper program with garden opened additional 10 hrs/wk
- one community celebration event
- space of community memorial
- 5,000 sq.ft of pollinator garden

Hugh Bird Residence (PHSCSS)

- 2 colonies
- 100 sq.ft of resident-tended vegetable garden

Chartrand Place Modular Housing (PHSCSS)

- 2 colonies
- 5 workshops with 10 participants
- weekly gardening sessions with 5 participants
- one community celebration event
- 530 sq.ft of pollinator garden

Alexander Street Community Housing (PHSCSS)

- 2 colonies
- 2 beekeeping workshops with 13 participants
- weekly gardening sessions with 5 participants
- 3,000 sq.ft of pollinator garden

Sorella Housing for Women (ATIRA Women’s Resource Society - ATIRA)

- 2 colonies
- 6 workshops with 20 participants

Aneki Place Modular Housing for Women (ATIRA)

- 2 colonies
- 6 workshops with 13 participants
- one community celebration event
- 280 sq.ft of pollinator garden

Yukon Transitional Housing & Shelter (Lookout Society)

- 2 colonies
- 5 workshops with 17 participants

First Place Residence (Lookout Society)

- 2 colonies
- 6 workshops with 37 participants

Marguerite Ford Apartments (RainCity Housing Society)

- 2 colonies
- 4 workshops with 17 participants

Budzey Housing (RainCity Housing Society)

- 1 colony with 80 sq.ft. of pollinator gardens across the street at Princess Rooms

Steeves Place (BC Housing)

- 2 colonies
- 2 workshops with 11 participants

Culloden Court (BC Housing)

- 2 colonies
- 3 workshops with 52 participants

MacLean Court (BC Housing)

- 2 colonies
- 3 workshops with 15 participants
- additional 2 workshops with 9 participants at other BC Housing locations
- 250 sq.ft of pollinator garden

Sole Food Urban Orchard (Sole Food Street Farms and Vancity Environmental Sustainability)

- 2 colonies
- 2 workshops with 29 participants

Catherdal Square (Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association)

- 2 colonies
- 5 workshops with 70 participants
- 2,000 sq.ft of pollinator garden

Italian Cultural Centre

- 6 colonies
- 13 workshops with 156 participants

Dunbar Community Centre

- 4 colonies
- 6 workshops with 79 participants

Vancouver Convention Centre

- Green Roof
- 4 colonies

Fairmont Waterfront

- Chef’s Garden, North-West Coast Garden
- 4 colonies
- 200 meals shared at our Hastings Folk Garden Harvest Celebration
- 1,750 sq.ft of pollinator garden

Science World

- Observation Hive and 2 rooftop colonies
- 1 workshop with 30 participants

VPD

- 2 colonies
- 1 workshop with 15 participants

In addition to workshops at these apiary sites, we hosted 16 team-building workshops with 489 participants at businesses, community centres and shared spaces across the city, and 3 community workshops with 32 participants in community spaces in the DTES.

This totals in 2019 to: 99 Workshops with 1,441 participants and 13,000 sq.ft of pollinator gardens!

Funders and programming partners:

Through grants and matching funds we are able to offer programming in communities that otherwise would not have access to our services, and to grow our collaborative network in community through creative projects, celebrations and advocacy.

City of Vancouver:

- **Homelessness Action Week** gave \$3,000 to support our new gardens and apiaries at Chartrand and Aneki. **Lush Cosmetics** matched this with volunteers who brought soaps and honeys and food to share with the residents at each of these modular housing locations.
- **Community Economic Development** gave \$3,050 in matching funds for us to increase the Interpretive Signage at the Hastings Folk Garden. Through this we partnered with Gallery Gachet to create a mural of art, sharing what the garden means to artists in the community, and placed signs naming the medicinal, pollinator and fibre use plants that grow in our garden. We also partnered with Earhand Gleaners Society to learn how to weave a willow fence to define our pathways and welcome people in.
- **Neighbourhood Matching Fund via Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation** gave \$9,000 matched with \$10,000 by the Downtown Vancouver BIA Sustainability Fund to raise awareness about pollinators and what we can do in public green spaces to support them, through inclusion of people and celebration of diversity in our neighbourhoods.

TD Bank:

- **Friends of the Environment** gave \$10,720 to support the work of sharing knowledge and fostering community at our Hastings Folk Garden, building up our fencing, pathways, garden beds, pollinator habitat and therapeutic apiary.
- **Park People** gave \$2,000 to support our workshops between the Hastings Folk Garden and connecting to our other sites like Cathedral Square and **Carnegie Community Centre**. Through this we connected with **Nature Valley** who gave \$3,000 to support our year-end community celebrations.

Vancouver Coastal Health: One Time Opportunity grants gave \$2,808 to support the gardens at Alexander Street Community, allowing us to build Indigenous plant gardens and Therapeutic Apiary.

Vancity Community Foundation: Social Enterprise Development gave us \$10,000 to work with a consultant to further our Strategic Marketing and Customer Relationship Management.

Central City Foundation gave \$3,000 to support the development of our wax program, building work opportunities and diversifying our revenue to support programming.

UBC Partnership Recognition Fund gave \$4,000 over two projects to support pollinator and wax workshops with their community members.

SFU Vancity Office of Community Engagement gave \$4,000 to support our project of Empowering Informed Consent in Cultural Production which resulted in additional support from **UBC Learning Exchange**, and UBC STOREE project of \$5,000 as well as an SFU Department of Psychology contribution of \$5,000.

Pacific Centre for Isotopic and Geochemical Research and the **Bee Hive Research Cluster** supported our involvement in research through a \$20,000 grant to collect and assess data, create educational opportunities and raise awareness about the impact of industry on environment. Studies have included assessing levels of heavy metal in urban honey (far below levels of concern and also show a pattern along industrial routes), pollinators (what are they feeding on, what diversity exists) and the impact of fungicide use on blueberries for bees.



Sponsors

Each of the following sponsored one or more of our Therapeutic Apiaries at \$5,000 annual contribution – making possible the workshops, participation, pollination and more, that build inclusion, offer meaningful opportunity and connect people in community: **DP World, Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation, Spencer Creo Foundation**, Anonymous Donor, **Senft Family Foundation, Earnest Ice Cream, Hockey Helps the Homeless** (via RainCity Housing), **PARQ Casino** with Honey Salt Restaurant.

Donors

We had donations from 131 individuals ranging from \$10 (given to us at one of our free public workshops by a DTES community member who wanted to support the work and thank the bees) up to \$2,960.

- **“Hey Honey!”** donated \$561: two grade 12 students who raised awareness through their campaign about wild and managed bees and sold t-shirts to support our work;
- **“Make Lemonade”** donated \$600: a classroom of Grade 5s who made and sold lemonade to support our work;
- **Jonathan Jakes** donated \$1,000 to support one of our beekeeping workshops in the DTES;
- The Lived Experience Team at **Hootsuite** donated \$2,960 through a swag sale and a summer mixer;
- **Tacofino** donated \$1,800 through a honey featured taco and beer special;
- **It’s About Thyme and Artisan Soil** donated \$400 through their Pumpkin Carving fundraiser;
- **Alexander Academy** donated \$200 and Sunflower Seeds which they grew for our Pollinator Meadow.

Total donations 2019: \$48,712.57 by 131 people and organisations.

We also had in-kind donations of high quality seed from **West Coast Seeds, Salt Spring Seeds, UBC Farm** and **BC Eco-Seed Coop** to our DTES Seed Library which is in its 6th year of providing seeds to encourage and support both pollinator forage and food autonomy. Our friends at the **Edible Garden Project** provided vegetable starts for our social housing gardens, and we had an in-kind donation of space from **Alveole** for bottling our 2019 honey.

Restaurants and Retailers

Shops

East Van Roasters
 Edible Canada
 Charlie & Lee
 Good Omen
 Harlow Atelier
 Hometown Glory
 Museum of Anthropology, MOA Shop
 Nada
 Neighbourhood Quality Goods
 Organic Acres Market
 Plenty + Spare Naturals
 The Birds + Beets
 The Polygon Gallery
 The Wild Bunch Floral Studio
 The Window Community Art Shop
 Second Nature Home Boutique

Restaurants

Autostrada Osteria
 Bandidas Taqueria
 Bartholomew
 Cabrito – Tapas Bebidas
 Cartems Donuts
 Coquille Restaurant
 Earnest Ice Cream
 Hunnybee
 L’Abattoir
 Longtable Distillery
 Parq Vancouver
 Save on Meats
 The Diamond
 Wildebeest Restaurant

Volunteers

We are graced by the support of our incredible volunteer team, guest facilitators and board members, whose depth of generosity continues to astound us, support us, and make all of our work possible: from the gardens to the bees – in our programming and our governance – thank you for giving your time and love to this work:

Jim McLeod	Ian Oakes	George Philippides	Sheri Weichel	Clara Stewart
Kevin Sleziak	Daikole Frazier	Alysa Garza	Shelley Bolton	Kaley Young
Mark DenBak	James Harley Prosper	Carol Smith	Paul Van Westendorp	Sarah Schaffer
Marc Lawrence	Dennis Gates	Bernadette Reid	Tara Taylor	Stacey Spring
Ali Kenny	Horace Daychief	Melanie Kwan	Natalie Cushing	Devorah Tradburks
Flo Hodgeson	Theresa D. Grey	Mark Winston	Kristyna Vogel	Green Bee’s Darwin
Wilma Morris	Robbie Panteluk	Heather Higo	Brietta Stewart	and Michi
Cate Wikelund	Elias Billy	Caitlin Hurley	Cera Cruise	
Edie Wild	Rob Alexcee	Krista Loewen	Christina Wong	

And to everyone in between who keeps us festooned together in our bee space – thank you – we are stronger for your contributions of love, time and care.



We also ask our core participants for feedback on our programming, and these are some of the reflections we have gathered looking back at 2019.

“The honorarium is an incentive to jump onboard - the money makes me feel valued. But I learned that the joy I get from the work makes the money less relevant. I like doing random acts of kindness and not looking for anything in return - makes me feel good. Especially when I've wronged someone, doing something good makes me feel better - if I can't reconcile with the person, doing something good is the next best thing and it lifts my spirits.”

“I like being involved with different personalities and different ways of being and doing work. Finishing something is very motivating. Beauty for me is that I like what I do and I feel respected - we're doing something beneficial. Good training for people who haven't been part of the workforce before.”

“People are interested in what we do and they learn from us and then they want to research how they can help the plants and pollinators. I like receiving compliments on what I'm doing and I feel proud of myself.”

“I give myself a pat on the back. My dad was a mentor and a teacher - I learned from him. I'm good at what I do and I'm proud.”

“I learned to make perfect candles and lip balms. I learned some plant names. I am writing and sharing poetry and sharing my dream catchers.”

“I feel like I contribute to my community and that makes me feel good.”

“I enjoy the responsibility - people trust me and know I'm reliable - it's good; its recognition. I get a sense of achievement but sometimes above the work is a sense of duty - If nobody else does this work we will all be naked and hungry. We should all take responsibility for our environment and making sure it's healthy. Without it we will die.”

“I've learned how to maintain a hive. I completed the Beginner Beekeeper course. I've learned how to be more flexible and play with others better. I think I perceive things differently and I get to share this with others. Being here makes me a better person. I'm becoming an old dog and it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks but I'm learning.”



"I like being an ambassador for Hives and for local honey. Buying local is important."

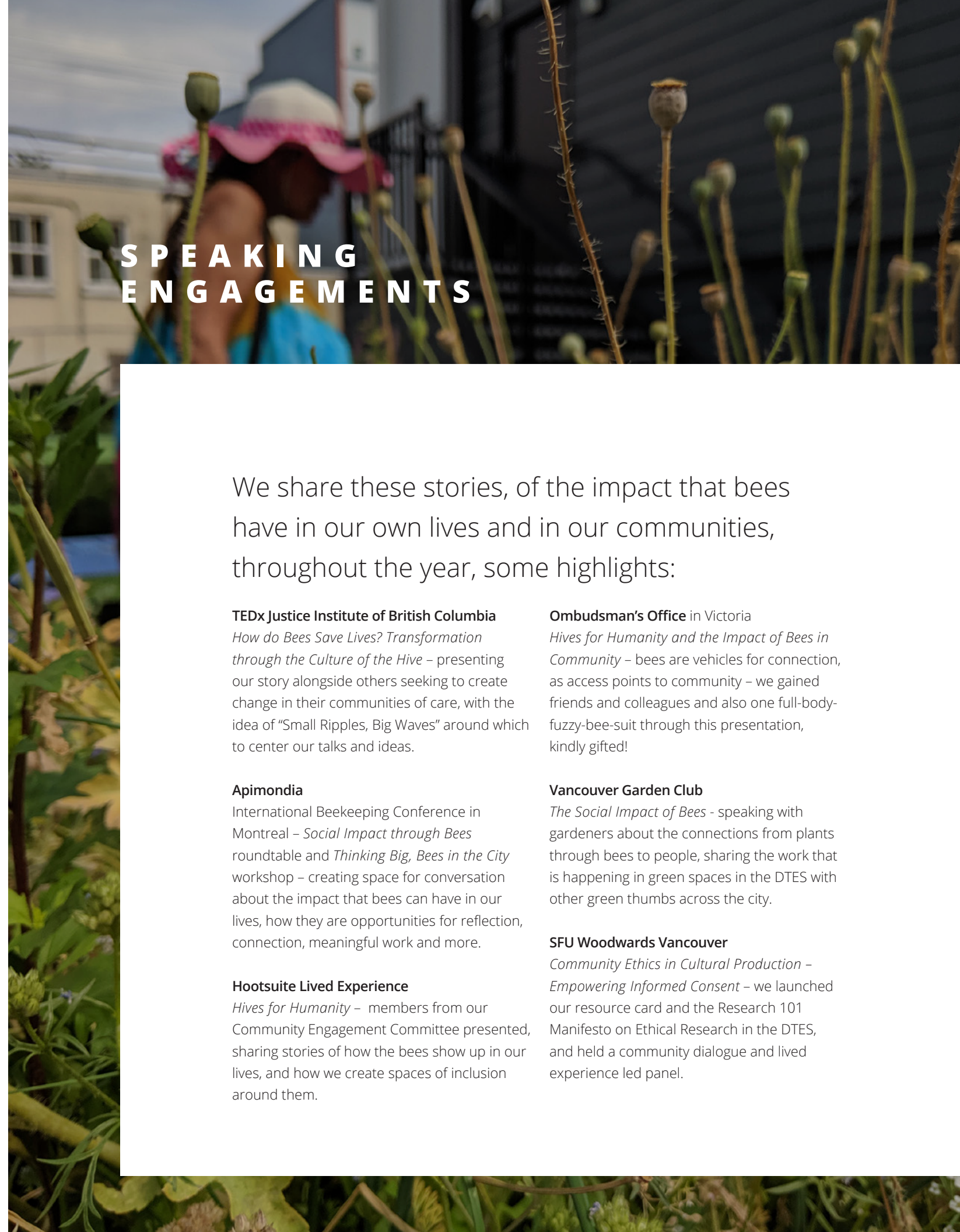
"I learned a lot about respecting the bees. When I was younger I used to throw rocks at the bees and run away as fast as I could. Now I know about honey and wax and how the bees don't let anything go to waste. I miss hunting ... the land I used for hunting and trapping has all been logged and there's nothing there anymore."

"I learned a lot about bees ... larva ... which ones are healthy and which ones aren't. Watching them hatch. I rent videos at the library too to learn more about bees. It's neat to learn about different types of bees."

"I share my work with my family ... my brothers, my cousins. I told my brother the difference between ants and bees."

"It's nice to know that the seeds end up being flowers and food. It's very gratifying. It makes me feel the work is meaningful. Even though I'm on welfare I like doing volunteer work. Being paid makes me feel honoured and gives me self-worth."

(continued on back cover)



SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

We share these stories, of the impact that bees have in our own lives and in our communities, throughout the year, some highlights:

TEDx Justice Institute of British Columbia
How do Bees Save Lives? Transformation through the Culture of the Hive – presenting our story alongside others seeking to create change in their communities of care, with the idea of “Small Ripples, Big Waves” around which to center our talks and ideas.

Apimondia
International Beekeeping Conference in Montreal – *Social Impact through Bees* roundtable and *Thinking Big, Bees in the City* workshop – creating space for conversation about the impact that bees can have in our lives, how they are opportunities for reflection, connection, meaningful work and more.

Hootsuite Lived Experience
Hives for Humanity – members from our Community Engagement Committee presented, sharing stories of how the bees show up in our lives, and how we create spaces of inclusion around them.

Ombudsman's Office in Victoria
Hives for Humanity and the Impact of Bees in Community – bees are vehicles for connection, as access points to community – we gained friends and colleagues and also one full-body-fuzzy-bee-suit through this presentation, kindly gifted!

Vancouver Garden Club
The Social Impact of Bees - speaking with gardeners about the connections from plants through bees to people, sharing the work that is happening in green spaces in the DTES with other green thumbs across the city.

SFU Woodward's Vancouver
Community Ethics in Cultural Production – Empowering Informed Consent – we launched our resource card and the Research 101 Manifesto on Ethical Research in the DTES, and held a community dialogue and lived experience led panel.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

We are proud to share our financial statements for transparency and accountability. As we learn more about our work and how to sustain it in meaningful and ethical ways that center community, we see our values and work reflected in the numbers.

We finished 2019 with an \$8k surplus. All profits from programs, goods and services, and any potential year-end surplus is re-invested into our programming to create opportunities for meaningful work, connection to nature, and inclusion in community. In 2019, we directed profits into \$38,925 via weekly work opportunities for 18 core and 35 total participants, supporting our 21 program locations and participation of 1,441 people in workshops over the year. We seek to add 5 more people and 2 more locations into our core participants annually, building opportunities for meaningful work and public engagement and awareness through workshops and events that connect people to nature—land, food and community. We have seen this to be transformational for communities and individuals alike, and we are committed to creating these meaningful opportunities through bees and gardens.

The unreliability of grant-based funding has been a theme throughout our work, as it is throughout the non-profit sector, and we have been steadily moving away from reliance on grants to navigate this tension. In 2017, 60% of our revenue was generated from services and goods, with the remaining 40% from grants and donations. We moved to an 80%:20% split in 2019, resulting from the strategic decision to move away from the uncertainty of grants. We are focusing

on our services, which provide social impact, raise awareness and build connectivity. Services also have a higher profit margin and are more sustainable than our goods, which have higher costs, more competitive markets, and lower reliability due to seasonality of production.

This year we began to return the initial investment that was made by our Co-founder Julia Common, reducing our organisation's liabilities through a move of mutually assessed inventory of livestock and equipment and through initiating a liability repayment plan. We paid a significant portion (46%) of the investment back in 2019, beginning to return the investment that launched our work, which made our first expansions of apiaries and programming possible.

2019 YEAR END SUMMARY

INCOME	
Earned Income	
Services	166,699.75
Sales	147,702.65
Other Earned Revenue	21,891.67
Earned Income	336,294.07
Grants	
Grants	30,668.74
Donations	48,712.57
Other Revenue	6,381.78
Total Income	422,057.16
Cost of Goods Sold	
Program Expenses	43,964.13
Total Cogs	43,964.13
Gross Profit	378,093.03
EXPENSE	
Compensation & Benefits	276,983.11
Human Resources	40,253.86
Office	41,284.14
Communications	4,472.73
General	6,707.06
Total Expense	369,962.01
Net Income	8,131.02

2019 YEAR END BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Chequing/Savings	
Banks	2,625.09
Petty Cash	(1,805.88)
Total Chequing/Savings	819.21
Accounts Receivable	
Accounts Receivable	47,724.15
Total Accounts Receivable	47,724.15
Total Current Assets	48,543.36
Fixed Assets	
Office Equipment	
Office Equipment	1,066.22
Acc Amort F&E	(912.07)
Computers	3700.06
Accum. Amortization - Computers	(2,035.03)
Total Fixed Assets	1,819.18
Total Assets	50,362.54
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
Accounts Payable	7,993.13
Total Accounts Payable	7,993.13
Credit Cards	
Visa Desjardins	1,017.15
Total Credit Cards	1,017.15
Other Current Liabilities	
Payroll Liabilities	3,279.59
Accrued Vacation Payable	9,487.28
GST/HST Payable	3,139.23
Total Other Current Liabilities	15,906.10
Total Current Liabilities	24,916.38
Long Term Liabilities	
Loans	36,714.94
Total Long Term Liabilities	36,714.94
Total Liabilities	61,631.32
Equity	
Retained Earnings	(19,399.80)
Net Income	8,131.02
Total Equity	(11,268.78)
Total Liabilities and Equity	50,362.54



REPORT FROM THE GARDENS AND SEED LIBRARY

As we moved away from our Hastings Urban Farm location and into satellite gardens throughout the DTES community, the focus of the garden program similarly shifted from growing vegetables and fruit to a stronger focus on flowers, pollinators and people. Our weekly visits to housing locations were welcomed by residents who joined the gardening crew in planting, pruning, weeding and watering. We grew wildflower meadows, native perennials and nectar-rich flowers to attract bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. As these flowers turned to seed heads, we collected the seed for drying and packaging to be returned to community via the gardens and the Downtown Eastside Seed Library. Among the lavenders, foxgloves, calendula, forget-me-nots and poppies, tomatoes, squash, peas, beans, greens and herbs also thrived. The summer BBQ at Chartrand featured vegetables and herbs all grown on-site from seed from the seed library and from transplants donated by our farming friends — a beautiful cycle of nature and nurture.

At Alexander Street Community, we introduced hops to the third-floor garden and renovated the eighth-floor Indigenous Garden from an overgrown, weedy, and underused site to a habitat of native plants to provide forage for our honeybees and native pollinators. We look

forward to Spring to see what wildlife will be attracted to the pearly everlasting, woolly sunflower, oceanspray, mock orange, camas, nodding onion, and yarrow.

Our public workshops at the Hastings Folk Garden and Cathedral Square built bridges between communities who live and work downtown, sharing knowledge and experience among those who have been tending the gardens for years and those visiting for the first time. Newcomers expressed awe at their discovery of a thriving ecosystem in the heart of the city's busiest neighbourhoods, while our gardening crew took pride in sharing their work. We also shared our work with the chefs and guests of the Fairmont Waterfront, providing annual vegetables and herbs for the kitchen and augmenting the North-West Coast Garden with a new willow fence and nurse log, beautifully demonstrating the natural cycles and native plants of the temperate rain forest we are so fortunate to share.

Our garden program forms a foundation for our people and pollinators to thrive through plants. People often ask us how they can save the bees, and we share our garden story every time: Create and care for green spaces that offer a diversity of forage and undisturbed habitat to a diversity of bees, centering around education and community wherever you can!



REPORT FROM THE BEEKEEPING PROGRAM

Our therapeutic apiaries in the DTES and throughout Vancouver provided meaningful opportunities for both residents and passersby to glimpse and connect with the mesmerizing world of the honey bee. Participants in beekeeping workshops donned protective veils and joined our beekeepers in inspecting the hives and learning about many different aspects of the honey bees' lives. Thirteen community members attended a 6-week beekeeping course in the Spring, taught by our Chief Beekeeper and supported by our beekeeping mentorship team; these attendees were mentored by H4H beekeepers throughout the year, continuing and extending their learning through hands-on experiences in the field.

Other workshops at our therapeutic apiary sites gave residents and staff opportunities to engage with the products of the hive, from honey to propolis to wax. Participants extracted honey, rolled candles, and made lip balm and salve from beeswax and medicinal herbs

harvested from our gardens. Workshop participants and residents at our therapeutic apiary sites grew in their knowledge of and deep appreciation for bees and pollinators, and many have become outspoken advocates for these threatened and essential creatures.

In 2020 we are reducing our country beekeeping yards, pollination and research work, to focus on our Therapeutic Apiaries and programming in the city. Our Chief Beekeeper, Julia, has retired from her work with us to follow her passion for furthering the health of bees through research partnerships and through her practices and approaches to beekeeping founded around the nutrition of the hive as a basis for health. This is an understanding that grew through her work with people living in the DTES – the parallels of human and community health with that of the colony. She will remain a mentor to our team and will forever be honoured as co-founder of our Society, known as Queen Bee to many of our community members.

MEMORIAL AND CHANGE

We have the honour to work alongside people in the DTES who are generous, loving, creative and skilled, who keep the gardens and feed the bees, and who make our programming possible through the time, energy and understanding they contribute. We have lost many community members over our years working together in gardens, and we remember them all when we gather together to share stories of our work and our reflections of what it is to spend time with the bees. This year from our core team, Edie Wild passed – her memory is in every bouquet we gather, in her friends, and in the bee and flower themed art she created to decorate

our space. Many of our volunteers have lost people close to them, people they loved and shared time with. There is a tradition in the DTES to say the names of the people we have lost out loud, a tradition shared by the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users and practiced in many community spaces, like the Megaphone Speaker's Bureau. So, wherever you are, let's take a moment together to pause here and speak the names, remember the love, carry forward the lessons and through that to know you are not alone. We are all connected, through the growth of seeds, the dances of bees, the flows of streams, shared life, and shared loss.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GROWTH

Our deepest successes have been where we have forged strong partnerships for our programming – strengthening communities of care that already exist, building on relationships of trust and dignity that offer access to health and housing, training and work experience.

We will continue to expand this network strategically, looking to other programs and organisations in the community that have the capacity to connect their community members to our workshops, training and work opportunities.

We continue to work towards a model that centres our community members, scaling our project deep for impact through existing projects and partnerships; scaling our project out to access community at other locations who are seeking connection to land, food, and

community; and scaling our work up to impact policy through advocacy and narrative change.

In this context of ongoing and escalating crises of housing, overdose and environment – where poverty is further entrenched by systemic, racist, classist and violent extraction of resources from land and community – where we hold up profit and power as success – where we rank some people as less deserving than others – how might we move towards social and environmental justice? We can name the tensions we feel, question the systems we are a part of, and weave together spaces where we practice connection, honour the land and each other, share our unique skills and experiences, and build inclusion of all ways of knowing and being.



“

“I’ve learned more patience and I’ve learned how to save a life. My friends thank me – a lot of women from the women’s centre visit the garden or sit close to it.”

“Volunteering my time gives me a reward. I’m with people and I’m giving back – it feeds my spirit.”

“I enjoy communicating with others in the garden – It relieves stress. Pruning! Love it. And I love getting feedback from others – when people say “you did a good job”.”

“I’ve shared bee knowledge in the community. I share knowledge around seeds and medicinal plants.”

“I used to be a workaholic – when I was injured I couldn’t work and felt useless and trapped. I got depressed. All the work here makes me feel useful and gives me self-worth.”



We acknowledge that we are working, gardening, beekeeping and fostering connection to land and community, on the unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Səl̓ilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations of the Coast Salish peoples.

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