



NIAGARA
PARKS
FOUNDATION

YEAR-END IMPACT REPORT
2024/2025





A Caring Commitment



TO PRICELESS PARKLANDS

Our conservation work is driven by a caring commitment to the founding principles of one of Ontario's original environmental organizations.

The heart of our mission lies in supporting Niagara Parks' mandate to preserve the priceless nature and heritage along the Niagara River corridor for the enjoyment of the visiting public and future generations.

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A Message FROM THE CHAIR



Many individuals, companies and organizations generously supported the Niagara Parks Foundation this year. Your contributions have significantly helped our fundraising and programming efforts. Since our public launch in 2022, the Niagara Parks Foundation has been working to raise funds for environmental and cultural stewardship projects of the Niagara Parks Commission. *To date, we have raised more than \$2 million in cash and pledges. We thank all who are helping us achieve our goals.*

While the Foundation continues to support environmental and cultural stewardship projects across Niagara Parks, the development of a four-acre interactive Children's Garden is our priority project. As you will find detailed in this report, the Foundation has made significant strides over the past year toward raising funds for this important initiative, including securing our first \$1 million pledge toward the project.

On Earth Day, we announced the project publicly and hosted a tree dedication ceremony on the grounds of the Botanical Gardens. This meaningful event was also attended by students from the Royal Oak School in Niagara-on-the-Lake, who participated in a seed ball making workshop to assist with an interesting environmental stewardship project undertaken by Niagara Parks over the summer. In the fall, we were proud to host a groundbreaking ceremony for the Children's Garden at the Botanical Gardens.

Additionally, a number of focus groups were held with educators, along with information sessions with Indigenous groups and a public engagement survey that invited feedback from parents, grandparents, guardians and caregivers on the project. All of these valuable perspectives will be considered to ensure the Children's Garden is accessible and inclusive, as we move toward detailed design and construction in 2026.

We are grateful to everyone who has supported the Children's Garden in one way or another this year, whether that's attending a fundraising event, participating in an online survey or bidding on an item as part of our experiential silent auction. Each action, big or small, brings us closer to raising \$15 million to build this interactive living classroom that will connect children with the environment through play and nature-based learning, cultivating future generations of environmental leaders.

I would also like to thank my fellow board members for their dedication to the Foundation, including Sue-Ann Ramsden who was named Vice Chair this past year. I'd also like to thank Anne Charette for her contributions and time spent as Director.

Thank you as well, to the dedicated staff of Niagara Parks who support our efforts.

On behalf of our Board, thank you for joining us in our mission of supporting meaningful stewardship initiatives that will leave a positive legacy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Debbie Whitehouse
Chair, The Niagara Parks Foundation

Board OF DIRECTORS

The Niagara Parks Foundation Board of Directors consists of the following members:



**DEBORAH
WHITEHOUSE**
Chair



SUE-ANN RAMSDEN
Vice-Chair



DAVID ADAMES
Treasurer/Secretary



BLAIR MCARTHUR
Director



BOB GALE
Director



**MICHELE-ELISE
BURNETT**
Director



**SYLVIE
CHARTRAND-RAFI**
Director

Special Advisors to the Board of Directors also include Robert Brooker and Robert McIlveen.

[NIAGARAPARKSFOUNDATION.COM](https://niagaraparksfoundation.com)

E foundation@niagaraparks.com

about US

The Niagara Parks Foundation is a registered charity governed by a Board of Directors, established to raise funds to support and advance stewardship initiatives of Niagara Parks.

mission STATEMENT

Preserving and sharing the priceless nature and heritage along the Niagara River corridor for the enjoyment of the public and future generations: a caring commitment to priceless parklands.

land ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Niagara Parks Foundation wishes to acknowledge and honour the lands along the Niagara River corridor as the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. In both spirit and partnership, we recognize and thank the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabek, the Neutral Nation and all who provided stewardship of these lands over millennia.

What WE DO

The Foundation works collaboratively with Niagara Parks to determine priority stewardship projects and initiatives. The following have been identified as priority projects for the Foundation:



TREE
PLANTING



CHILDREN'S
GARDEN



OLD FORT ERIE
ARCHAEOLOGY
(1764 FORT)



RECREATION
TRAIL
REDEVELOPMENT



INDIGENOUS
PROGRAMMING
& NATURE
TOURS



CHILDREN'S
PROGRAMMING



2024/2025

highlights

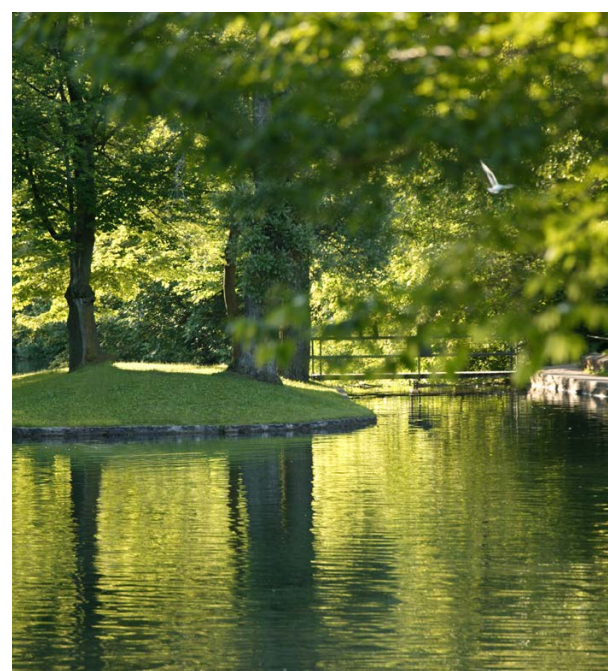
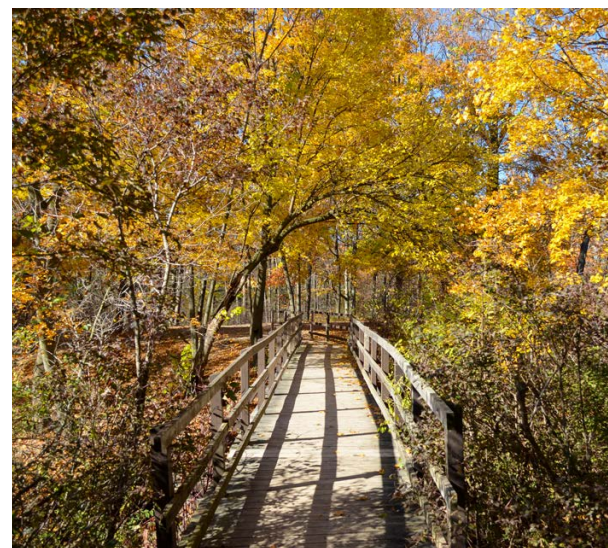
AT A GLANCE



Dufferin Islands

VISITOR EXPERIENCE & ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE

With a \$400,000 grant from TD Bank through their TD Ready Commitment program, the Niagara Parks Foundation has continued to support the Dufferin Islands Visitor Experience and Ecological Enhancement initiative, which just wrapped up the final year of its three-year plan.



The key priorities for the project include:

- Educational Opportunities that highlight Dufferin Islands' rich natural and industrial history through diverse media interpretations.
- Universal Access through enhanced trails with resurfacing, boardwalks and improved sidewalks to ensure accessibility while protecting habitats and minimizing maintenance.
- Environmental Protection by restoring habitats and aging infrastructure to prevent erosion and degradation.
- Support for the Winter Festival of Lights by preserving the area's environment and infrastructure to maintain its role as a key backdrop for this important regional event.

Dufferin Islands is a 16 hectare (40 acre) natural area/urban park located one kilometre upstream of Niagara Falls. This initiative aims to protect the site's sensitive natural environment while providing enhanced opportunities for recreation and environmental education.

Year 3 Highlights:

- Over 7,000 native trees, shrubs and wildflowers planted across Dufferin Islands, including shoreline areas.
- 2,000 trees and shrubs added along the upper moraine to expand the forest canopy and reduce erosion.
- Ongoing removal of invasive species, including phragmites, buckthorn and Tree of Heaven.
- Restored another 100 metres of eroding shoreline using bio-engineering techniques (e.g., root wads, aggregate and native vegetation).
- Continued monitoring of the eight beaver cones installed in year two, which have successfully prevented blockages, flooding and effectively mitigated beaver impacts while offering opportunities for wildlife management education.
- Installed signs to educate visitors about the harm caused by feeding wildlife.
- Completed restoration of one degraded island with soil addition and native vegetation planting.
- Resurfaced 500 metres of trail surface with limestone screenings. These areas were prioritized based on the High-Efficiency Trail Assessment Process (HETAP) that was conducted by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority.



Tree PLANTING

The Niagara Parks Foundation is dedicated to supporting Niagara Parks in achieving the goals set out in its 10-year Urban Forestry Management Strategy. Developed in response to threats such as climate change and invasive species, including the Emerald Ash Borer, which has decimated tens of thousands of trees within Niagara Parks' lands in recent years, the strategy includes research-based goals and approaches to foster healthier, more resilient urban forests. By 2028, Niagara Parks aims to establish 35% canopy cover across its properties by planting 5,000 trees each year to improve the sustainability and resiliency of its urban forests.



Trees FOR LIFE

In 2025, Trees for Life, a national charitable organization, selected the Niagara Parks Foundation as its official Planting Partner for 2025. As the official Planting Partner, Trees for Life provided \$70,000 in funding through the Federal Government's 2 Billion Trees Program, meaning that every dollar raised toward tree planting through the Foundation went even further to support Niagara Parks' annual goal of planting a minimum of 5,000 trees.

TOONIES FOR TREES

In 2024/25, the Niagara Parks Foundation raised over \$63,136 towards tree planting along the Niagara River. Through this initiative, guests to Niagara Parks are invited to contribute directly to tree planting by making a donation at their point-of-sale, whether at a Niagara Parks attraction, retail store or online. Guests have the choice of a \$2, \$6 or \$10 donation. These funds were a major contributor to tree planting at Niagara Parks this year, in partnership with Trees for Life, exceeding the annual goal with over 7,000 trees planted in 2025. Of the trees planted, approximately 2,000 were planted with volunteer support during community activations, including treeplanting events, school group visits and stakeholder partnerships.

COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING DAY

Each year, in collaboration with Niagara Parks, the Foundation supports the annual Community Tree Planting Day, with funds raised through the Toonies for Trees program, offering volunteers a meaningful opportunity to engage in local reforestation efforts. On October 25, the designated planting area at Legends on the Niagara Golf Course welcomed a group of community volunteers who worked alongside Niagara Parks staff to plant more than 800 native trees.

Over the course of 2024/25, over 7,000 trees were planted across the Niagara River corridor with support from the Niagara Parks Foundation and Trees for Life.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FOSTER *growth & sustainability*

MARCH 2025

In March, the Niagara Parks Foundation was proud to receive the Niagara Community Foundation's 2025 Environmental Grant. The \$20,000 grant funded the restoration of one hectare of forested habitat along the Niagara Falls Moraine. The project involved removing invasive species and planting over 7,500 native plants, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses.

APRIL 2025

To celebrate Earth Day 2025, the Niagara Parks Foundation publicly unveiled the upcoming Children's Garden project at the Niagara Parks Earth Day Celebration event. To mark the third anniversary of the Niagara Parks Foundation, a community gathering at the Butterfly Conservatory and future site of the Children's Garden included students from the Royal Oak School participating in eco-friendly activities, including a ceremonial tree-planting led by Nokomis (Grandmother) Cindilee and a seed ball making workshop for an upcoming reforestation project.

Attendees also explored the proposed location of the Children's Garden on the grounds of the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens, with a guided walking tour led by Charles Hunter, Director of Horticulture and Education for Niagara Parks.

JUNE 2025

From June 17 to 20, the Niagara Parks Foundation funded the return of the Green Grazer initiative at Gonder's Flats. Working with a local farmer, a herd of goats was brought to the recently restored Fort Erie wetland to graze on phragmites, a fast-spreading invasive reed that threatens local biodiversity of native plants. The initiative is part of Niagara Parks' environmental stewardship efforts to use a chemical-free, sustainable, low-impact solution for invasive species management. The presence of the goats also improves soil health and supports biodiversity.



MEMORIAL TREE AND BENCH PROGRAM

This program is an opportunity for members of the public to honour a significant person or event in their lives, while also supporting the Niagara Parks Foundation. Over the course of 2024/25, \$104,451 was raised through the Memorial Tree & Bench Program.



SEPTEMBER 2025

During the 21st annual Majestic Monarchs program at the Butterfly Conservatory on September 20 and 21, guests participated in a tag-and-release hands-on experience, tagging 300 Monarch butterflies. Monarchs are classified as a "species of special concern" under Ontario's Endangered Species Act, underscoring the importance of conservation efforts. The Majestic Monarchs program supports research by Monarch Watch at the University of Kansas that tracks the butterflies' 5,000-kilometre journey to Mexico, providing insights into population trends, migration patterns and conservation efforts. The Niagara Parks Foundation hosted an information table at this well-attended free species preservation event to raise awareness and collect donations to support other environmental projects at Niagara Parks.

OCTOBER 2025

On October 7, the Niagara Parks Foundation hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for the new four-acre Children's Garden.

The ceremony brought together Foundation representatives, donors and community partners to the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens. Niagara Parks Chair Bob Gale and Niagara Parks Foundation Chair Debbie Whitehouse provided welcome remarks about the future garden site. Students from Victoria Public School were also in attendance and participated in a seed ball making workshop, as part of one of the Foundation's restoration and tree planting projects. The event concluded with a visit to the Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory.



“ A CARING
commitment
 TO PRICELESS PARKLANDS ”

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NIAGARA PARKS FOUNDATION
 OR TO DONATE VISIT [NIAGARAPARKSFOUNDATION.COM](https://niagaraparksfoundation.com)

2024/2025

Financial
 STATEMENTS

2024/2025

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	YEAR TO DATE RESULTS 2025 (12 Months)	YEAR TO DATE RESULTS 2024 (12 Months) (As Restated)
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
REVENUES		
UNRESTRICTED CONTRIBUTIONS	\$79,855	\$54,294
RESTRICTED CONTRIBUTIONS		
TURBINE DONATION <i>received from ANDRITZ Hydro Canada Inc. & ANDRITZ Hydro Corp</i>	-	\$100,000
GRANT PROGRAMS	\$246,688	\$89,208
PRIORITY PROJECTS	\$3	\$5,580
MEMORIAL PROGRAM	\$71,581	\$91,247
INTEREST INCOME	\$8,403	\$6,978
TOTAL REVENUES	\$406,530	\$347,307
EXPENSES		
ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION	\$7,665	\$1,133
EXPENSES ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES		
GRANT PROGRAMS	\$246,688	\$89,208
PRIORITY PROJECTS	\$3	\$5,580
MEMORIAL PROGRAM	\$71,581	\$91,247
OTHER EXPENSES ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	\$13,835	\$1,065
LICENSES, MEMBERSHIPS AND DUES	\$6,168	\$2,212
INSURANCE	\$1,214	\$1,214
PROCESSING FEES	\$564	\$1,073
OTHER	\$102	\$178
PROFESSIONAL FEES	\$16,942	\$8,159
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$364,762	\$201,069
TRANSFER TO NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION	-	(\$100,000)
REALIZED GAIN ON SALE OF SECURITIES	440	-
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$42,208*	\$46,238*

*Funds held for future activities

2024/2025

FINANCIAL RESULTS

Funds Received: \$391,334

Expenses on Charitable Activities:

- Memorial Trees and Benches: \$71,581
- Other Activities: \$13,835
- Tree Planting/Canada Trees for Life: \$69,946

Operating Expenses: \$32,655

Grant Program Expenses: \$176,742

Excess of Revenue over Expenses: \$42,208*

Funds Held for Future Priority Projects: \$486,926*

*Funds held for future activities

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2025	2024 (AS RESTATED)
ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$433,575	\$207,378
Term Deposits	\$119,428	\$215,462
Accounts Receivable	\$104,382	\$154,672
Accounts Receivable	\$8,068	-
TOTAL ASSETS	\$665,453	\$577,512
LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable	\$63,068	\$10,541
Deferred Contributions	\$486,926	\$493,720
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$549,994	\$504,261
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$115,459	\$73,251
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$665,453	\$577,512

GRANT FUNDING

The Niagara Parks Foundation graciously acknowledges the generous support received through grant funding from the following organizations:

Spotlight

CHILDREN'S GARDEN AT NIAGARA PARKS

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS AND OTHER NIAGARA PARKS
FOUNDATION PROJECTS, VISIT [NIAGARAPARKSFOUNDATION.COM](https://niagaraparksfoundation.com)



Children's GARDEN

The Niagara Parks Foundation, in close collaboration with Niagara Parks, is embarking on an exciting journey to build a one-of-a-kind Children's Garden, a space that uses the power of nature to tell stories of the land and bring the wonders of the Niagara River corridor to life.

Over the 2024/25 fiscal year, a number of exciting milestones were reached, including a public announcement held on Earth Day, focus groups and public consultations, significant fundraising progress, including the first \$1 million pledge, as well as a groundbreaking ceremony.



TREE TOP WALK



THE HIVE



THE GORGE



TOP ROCK

A SENSORY-RICH OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Spanning four acres within the renowned Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens, the Children's Garden will be a transformative space for children of all ages and abilities to explore, wander, play, climb and connect in a safe, outdoor environment. The site features mature native trees and shaded green spaces, creating a calm and inviting environment for families to relax and connect with the natural world.

The planned Children's Garden will support:

- Physical health + wellness
- Mental health + resilience
- Curiosity + exploration
- Focus + attention
- Creativity + imagination
- Cognitive development
- Social + emotional skills
- Teamwork + problem-solving

Its strategic location leverages connections to the School of Horticulture and the Butterfly Conservatory, one of Niagara Parks' most popular family attractions, welcoming over 300,000 visitors annually. Convenient access to parking, public transit and guest amenities ensures an exceptional and inclusive visitor experience.

AN INTERACTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The Children's Garden will feature 12 interactive zones, each with deep connections to Niagara's rich culture and history. **Among the 12 zones, key highlights include:**

TREE TOP WALK

This accessible timber causeway will wind its way up from the garden, offering visitors of all ages an elevated view of Niagara Parks' tree canopy and the species it supports. This walk will help educate children about the Carolinian Life Zone, which supports the most productive and endangered assortment of plant and animal species in Canada.

TOP ROCK

This area showcases the unique geological wonders of Niagara with large, sloped slabs of limestone that mimic the stone at the base of the Niagara Gorge and the Escarpment, inviting all visitors to have a safe peek over the ledge. By introducing an element of risk and exploration, children can climb, relax or play in a natural setting.

THE GORGE

Layers of rock and replicas of fossils will allow children to pause in a significant moment of geological time. They'll discover 450 million years of natural history and how the power of the Horseshoe Falls was able to cut through the rock over 15,000 years ago to create this geological landscape.

BUDGET

The established budget to build the Children's Garden, which will be the first Children's Garden of this scale in Ontario, is \$15 million, with Niagara Parks Commission investing \$5 million. As of end of fiscal 2024/25, \$47,597 was raised to support the project through the Niagara Parks Foundation, in addition to a \$1 million pledge.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the 2024/25 fiscal year, Niagara Parks completed public engagement on the project, hosting focus groups, information sessions and online surveys to gather feedback to inform the development of the Children's Garden. Focus groups were held with educators and included a presentation about the concept plans for the Children's Garden, inviting participants to share their thoughts on the designs. All results were assessed by Niagara Parks staff and will be used to inform next steps, including the detailed design.

The community members and stakeholders who participated in the public consultations to date include:

- Local parents and guardians who visited Niagara Parks
- Educators from the District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board and Royal Oak Academy
- Education experts from Brock University's Department of Education
- Representatives from Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations
- Parents, grandparents, guardians and caregivers who participated in a comprehensive online survey (over 500 participants)

From these community engagement initiatives, an incredible amount of positive feedback was received. Community members helped identify what families need most in a Children's Garden for Niagara and Ontario. The results showed strong interest in hands-on learning and active play for kids of all ages, opportunities for unstructured and unscheduled play, and prioritizing amenities like accessible washrooms, shaded areas and convenient parking. With this input, the Children's Garden can be designed to meet these needs—a space where children can learn, play, grow and be inspired.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Additionally, the project has received support from the local medical community with an endorsement by Dr. Robin Williams, F.R.C.P., C.M. and Dr. Richa Agnihotri, F.R.C.P. The past President of the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS), Dr. Robin Williams is a prominent paediatrician and public health physician (now retired), known for her extensive advocacy for children's health. Dr. Richa Agnihotri is a practicing community pediatrician and mother of two based in Niagara, with a focused interest in child development, behaviour and mental health.

Excerpt from testimonial:

"Children are currently experiencing a mental health crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with problematic screen use, physical inactivity, parental stress, social isolation, food insecurity, and many other contributing factors at play. As paediatricians (one retired and one very active), we advocate for accessible services and spaces that provide children and families from all walks of life, opportunities for learning, enrichment of health and wellbeing, and connection.

This is why we are keen to support the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) and its Foundation for once again thinking of children and families with their latest initiative of building a Children's Garden next to the Butterfly Conservatory on the Niagara Parkway. This project has the potential to make a profound and magical impact on child and family health and wellbeing, today, tomorrow, and for generations to come." - Dr. Robin Williams, F.R.C.P., C.M. and Dr. Richa Agnihotri, F.R.C.P.

LOOKING AHEAD

With the support of our partners and donors, this visionary project is on track for construction to begin in 2026. Together, we will build a transformative space that inspires learning, exploration and connection to nature for generations to come.



WAYS YOU CAN *help*

Support the Niagara Parks Foundation in creating a legacy of sustainability for tomorrow's generations. Your contribution helps Niagara Parks continue its vital work in providing social, economic, environmental and community benefits that enrich all our lives.

Be A Part OF SOMETHING LASTING

Your donation isn't just a gift—it's a commitment to a more sustainable future.



ONE-TIME DONATION

Make a one-time gift online to support a specific priority project or contribute to the Foundation's broader mission to direct funds where they're needed most.



MONTHLY DONATION

Create a lasting impact with a monthly gift. Easily set up online, monthly donations provide ongoing support and you'll receive an annual tax receipt for your contributions.



COMMEMORATIVE TRIBUTE

Make a tribute gift to the Niagara Parks Foundation to mark a special occasion or to honour the memory of a loved one.

TOGETHER, WE CAN ENSURE THE BEAUTY, ACCESSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF NIAGARA PARKS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

[NIAGARAPARKS.COM/FOUNDATION](https://niagaraparks.com/foundation)



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