



BECOMING CHALLENGE-DRIVEN IN A CHALLENGING WORLD

Evergreen Canada | 2019 Annual Report





Geoff Cape

Geoff Cape
CEO and Founder,
Evergreen Canada

A Message From the CEO

Cities in Canada are facing ever-increasing challenges and it is vital that we build solutions. These challenges started before we felt the effects of COVID-19, and they'll persist after. Evergreen's three-year strategic plan, Building Cities of the Future, launched in 2019, and is built around addressing critical urban challenges, preparing us to meet them head on.

In 2019, Evergreen was able to successfully begin building on the four challenges outlined in the strategic plan, which you will learn about throughout this report. A fundamental component of this process was re-establishing our core organizational values. Using feedback from our supporters and our staff, we unveiled three new values: Connection, Innovation and Sustainability. With these new values, we are committed to prioritizing relationships – person-to-person, person-to-place and person-to-planet – working together to learn, adapt and scale effective solutions, and enabling a future where all can thrive.

Every program and project – whether connecting with communities across the country, helping to drive innovation on the ground or supporting urban sustainability initiatives – comes together to make a great impact and improve the quality of life in cities for tens of thousands of people. But change cannot happen without passionate people pushing it all forward, and we are very lucky to have some of the best in our corner. Thank you for a successful 2019 and your continued work to create livable, green and prosperous cities across Canada.





YEAR IN REVIEW

The support of our donors, visitors and volunteers helped us to achieve so much over the course of the year. In 2019 you helped us to:



Showcase placemaking and urban innovation to **500,000 visitors** at Evergreen Brick Works



Support farmers, local food and small businesses in the city by welcoming over **200 vendors** at the Farmer's Market and Artisan Market



Create meaningful opportunities for over **1,900 volunteers**



Teach **9,326 students** how to be stewards of the environment in our Visiting Schools Program, and provide **3,884 bursaries** to students from low-income communities



Host over **700 attendees** and **102 speakers** at the Future Cities Canada Summit to learn, share and discuss solutions to our city's biggest challenges



Shape and improve green spaces at **485 schools** from coast to coast through our School Ground Greening program and consulting initiatives



Work with over **150 communities and municipalities across Canada** through the Community Solutions Network, to build capacity and improve the lives of residents through innovation, open data and connected technology



Convened over **350 stakeholders from not-for-profits, governments and corporations** to move forward diverse sectors and perspectives, to think about, discuss and create prototypes for social change in our cities



Photo courtesy of Aphria Inc.

CHALLENGE 1

STORIES OF IMPACT

Infusing Evergreen Brick Works with the Power of Plants

When Evergreen Brick Works first opened, one of our primary goals was to create a space where residents and visitors could experience sustainable practices first-hand. The urban agriculture program is a key part of that mission, and Isaac Crosby – Evergreen’s Lead Hand of Urban Agriculture – has designed and nurtured both the gardens and activations with a level of care that has earned local and national recognition.

The summer of 2019 saw the unveiling of six new garden spaces at Evergreen Brick Works, adding more than 50 varieties of native plant species and over 2,000 plants to existing gardens across the site. All of this was completed as part of Evergreen’s Plant Positivity Gardens, a partnership with Aphria Inc. The gardens are designed as a sensory experience that encourage people to think more deeply about the impact that plants have on their well-being and that of the planet.

Advance Evergreen Brick Works as an internationally recognized community hub and demonstration centre for urban innovation.

From the Children’s Garden, to on-site urban agriculture, to the quarry, Evergreen Brick Works serves as a unique place to experience urban innovation in action.

Throughout the year, we focused on continuing our work to build a site that is a leader in sustainability, inclusive and internationally recognized for knowledge-exchange and learning.

For Isaac, the partnership with Aphria Inc. has meant that the vision for urban agriculture at Evergreen Brickworks has finally come to life: “The funding improved what was already there, because those areas were neglected. Aphria Inc. saw the potential and knew what plants could do. The ability for people to come and learn about native species plants - for medicinal value, for eating – is amazing.”

The gardens serve as a unique educational tool: to showcase Indigenous farming techniques alongside European techniques. They are a place to share Indigenous history, to learn about sustainable urban gardening and to grow food that nourishes the community. The gardens invite visitors to dig their hands in soil, eat fresh-cut broccoli, and learn about plants’ healing powers. Together they’re a vital part of creating a sustainable and thriving future.

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- Isaac Crosby,
Lead Hand of Urban
Agriculture, Evergreen



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #1 Bringing Arts and Culture to Life

Experiencing beauty, joy and wonder through dance, music, and performance is a beautiful and necessary part of human connection. Thanks to Presenting Sponsor Bank of America, Evergreen Brick Works visitors experienced a unique variety of music and dance performances through the Cultural Performing Arts Series. Indigenous performers, a rousing folk band and a renowned dance performance from Citadel + Companie, made the magic and excitement of music and dance accessible and available to all EBW visitors

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #2 Empowering Our Future Generations

The beloved Children's Garden has always been a place for children to explore, test their limits and get their hands dirty. We know how important it is for children to have a safe place where they can take healthy risks, experiment with their abilities and skills, and be empowered to make their own decisions. After nearly 10 years, it was time for an update of the Children's Garden, so in 2019 four new features were unveiled: Mint Mountain, the Wolf Den, the Beaver Lodge and the Waterworks Studio.

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CHALLENGE 2

Create, improve, and revitalize public spaces across Canada.

Communities across Canada want more vibrant public spaces where people can engage with each other and with nature, and where they have a say in how those spaces are used.

Through a variety of initiatives, we worked collaboratively to increase the quality of public spaces in Canada.

STORIES OF IMPACT

Exploring the Don River Valley Park

An important element of our placemaking has been the animation and activation of the Don River Valley Park through art, guided ravine walks and stewardship initiatives. Despite its beautiful green expanse and important ecosystems, the Don River Valley Park has often been overlooked. Evergreen has worked tirelessly to bring attention to this essential natural resource.

A popular way to explore the Don Valley is through Evergreen’s guided nature walks. In 2019 we offered 24 walks exploring different ravine experiences, from Bat Walks to Indigenous Medicinal Walks. The walks provide a fun, educational and unimimidating way to learn about the Ravine and the wildlife and plants in the area.

Meredith Kay, an Evergreen Park Advocate volunteer, has been engaged with the Don Valley for almost 8 years and has seen first-hand the impact. “I’ve seen new immigrant families join us in the Ravine and at Ravine Day activities and witnessed their excitement at having the Don Valley be a space where they are welcome to learn, be together and experience nature. It’s a wonderful introduction to our city.” It is vital, in our increasingly urban and tech-heavy society, that we continue to have opportunities to connect with nature and with the history of the land. Evergreen strives to bring life to the Don Valley and make it accessible for all.

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I’ve seen new immigrant families join us in the Ravine and at Ravine Day activities and witnessed their excitement at having the Don Valley be a space where they are welcome to learn, be together and experience nature. It’s a wonderful introduction to our city. - Meredith Kay, Evergreen Park Advocate Volunteer



Photo courtesy of Mike Derblich



Photo courtesy of Megpie Photography

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #1

Park Play

Parks are important hubs in urban settings, yet are so often under-utilized. Over three years, Evergreen (in partnership with the City of Kitchener) transformed two parks in the downtown core into community hubs of play and exploration. With the goal of engaging more families with their community and nature, the project utilized the core elements of; animators, loose parts, and child-led play, all in consultation with the parents and children who use the park. Over the course of the project, 5,146 children and 2,205 caregivers were given a safe place for immersive and explorative play.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #2

When Art and Nature Collide

Art plays a vital role in creating conversations. When art is in public spaces, it can help to make cities feel more inclusive, safe and vibrant. The Don River Valley Park Art Program exists for this very reason, and 2019 marked the third year of unexpected performances, murals, installations and educational programs. Three new pieces were unveiled throughout the year, such as Nadia Belerique's photography exhibit titled *above and below and so on forever*.

Thank you to the Advisory Committee who provide vision, funding and invaluable support to the art program in the Don River Valley Park: Michelle Koerner (chair), Rui Amaral, Rebecca Carbin, Catherine Dean, An Te Liu, Judy Matthews, Alissa North, Frances Price, Brenda Webster, Robin Young.

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CHALLENGE 3

STORIES OF IMPACT

Transforming Canadian Cities

Last year, the Community Solutions Network, a program of Future Cities Canada, provided knowledge, expertise, experience and guidance to communities of all sizes to build internal capacity to navigate the smart cities landscape, with the end goal of increasing outcomes for residents across the country. With funding provided by Infrastructure Canada, Evergreen worked with lead technical partner Open North and a host of other implementation partners to connect with municipal and community leaders across the country.

Throughout 2019, over 150 communities across Canada were engaged through either advisory services, the Community Solutions Portal, or through event-based programming such as Idea Camps, Collision Days or Community Roundtables. As one event attendee shared, “We were able to understand the importance of a Smart City approach in creating innovative and creative solutions. Most importantly, we were given the opportunity to talk about the various issues facing our communities and realized that by breaking down silos and working together, we can create a better reality for all.”

Convene and activate national cross-sectoral networks.

To solve the complex issues facing our cities, we need collaborative tools and a cross-sectoral exchange of ideas to influence policy and action. In 2019, Evergreen continued to build on our work of becoming a leading convener to create, adapt and amplify urban development solutions that make cities more livable, green and prosperous for all.

Much of this work was done through Future Cities Canada – founded in 2017 in partnership with the Community Foundations of Canada, Maison de l’innovation sociale, McConnell Foundation, and TD Bank Group.



”

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- Attendee,
Kelowna Collision Day

A key component of this initiative is the Community Solutions Portal, a digital hub for sharing knowledge and resources, that brings together communities from across the country. The portal also houses many inspiring stories of resilience.

In northern Manitoba, the Town of The Pas, Opaskwayak Cree Nation and the Rural Municipality of Kelsey came together to address community needs around food security, community health, and climate change. Fresh vegetables are scarce and expensive because of the remote northern location, so the community launched a pilot project utilizing LED smart farm technology. The community now has access to locally grown produce on a regular basis. Sharing this story allows other Northern and remote communities access to inspiring ideas, contacts, and the knowledge to carry out the project for themselves.

In collaboration with Spacing we also launched a series of podcasts to explore how data and tech are transforming communities across Canada. Each episode of The Future Fix delves into an idea or innovation that seeks to address a community challenge – from disaster mitigation to broadband access to public transportation in the suburbs.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #1

Youth Creating Networks For Change

An exciting new initiative was launched in 2019, engaging youth ages 18-29 in developing work-ready skills, building their networks, and improving the health of their city. Championed by RBC Future Launch, in partnership with Evergreen and YouthfulCities, 150 youth from Vancouver, Calgary, Hamilton, Toronto and Halifax worked on developing ideas to improve resilience in their home cities. The winning teams, such as the Feed Your Flat team from Calgary, received financing to turn their ideas into reality.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #2

Creating Canada's Cities of the Future

The Future Cities Canada Summit convened for its second year in 2019 with over 700 attendees and more than 100 speakers. The Summit explored many topics and ideas within the theme of Catalyzing Community Solutions, and focused on the importance of knowledge-sharing and the need for diverse voices in city building. Local and global change-makers such as Gabriella Gomez-Mont, of Mexico City's Laboratorio para la Ciudad, and Toronto City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, explored how history, innovation, and technology play key roles in the cities of tomorrow.

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Photo courtesy of Cole Burston

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #3

Inspiring Innovation

In 2019, in partnership with TD Bank Group, Future Cities Canada hosted four TD Speaker Series events designed to inspire and provoke conversations about the challenges our cities face. Held in the TD Future Cities Centre, members of the public had the opportunity to hear from leading minds in urban innovation and city building. Five international experts and educators shared insights on urgent topics such as Indigenizing Cities: Honouring the Truth and Reconciling for a Collaborative Future with Douglas Cardinal, and Turning Spaces into Places: Making the Most of our Social Infrastructure with Eric Klinenberg and Tamika Butler.

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CHALLENGE 4

Develop the Evergreen Process as a demonstration of urban innovation and a key market differentiator

We spent 2019 evaluating how we do our work, identifying areas of strength and working to refine areas for growth. We have used case studies and journey mapping internally to truly understand where we've been successful in our process, and to understand and learn from our failures. The result of this work will be a codified "Evergreen Process".

STORIES OF IMPACT

Challenge-Driven from the Inside Out

The Evergreen Process is meant to capture the unique way the Evergreen team looks at the problems facing our cities, how we explore potential solutions, and how we move from idea to action. Innovation can be complicated, indirect, and non-linear – clarifying how we work will help ensure a consistent level of rigor is brought to our projects. However, a process is only as good as the team that executes it. This year we focused on building internal capacity to ensure Evergreen flourishes.

One of the first pieces in the process has been refreshing our organizational values. Evergreen has evolved since the original values were set in place, and it was important that they be updated to reflect where we are now, and where we are headed in the future. A committee of Evergreen staff came together to discuss, brainstorm, and then draft the new set of values, which were then shared with the entire staff team for feedback and input. The process of involving employees from all levels of the organization was as important as making the shift in our values. Evergreen is proud to stand behind our new values of Connection, Innovation and Sustainability.





Additionally, Evergreen re-enforced our commitment to diversity and inclusion at Evergreen.

Throughout 2019, we continued to work towards our Progressive Aboriginal Relations certification, which challenges Evergreen to a holistic commitment to the prosperity of Aboriginal communities. In line with this, Evergreen placed a renewed emphasis on our internal Indigenous Inclusion Working Group, which provided staff with opportunities to learn about and discuss allyship. Nicole Alie, Senior Lead, Strategic Initiatives at Evergreen attended the Working Group sessions and found they “helped to broaden my perspective and made me more aware of the voices and views that have historically been decentered. It also helped me collaborate with my colleagues in new ways and allowed me to learn from their expertise and lived experience.”



Connection

We prioritize relationships, person-to-person, person-to-place, person-to-planet.



Sustainability

We enable a future that is livable, green and prosperous where all can thrive.



Innovation

We work together to learn, adapt and scale ideas that create effective solutions.

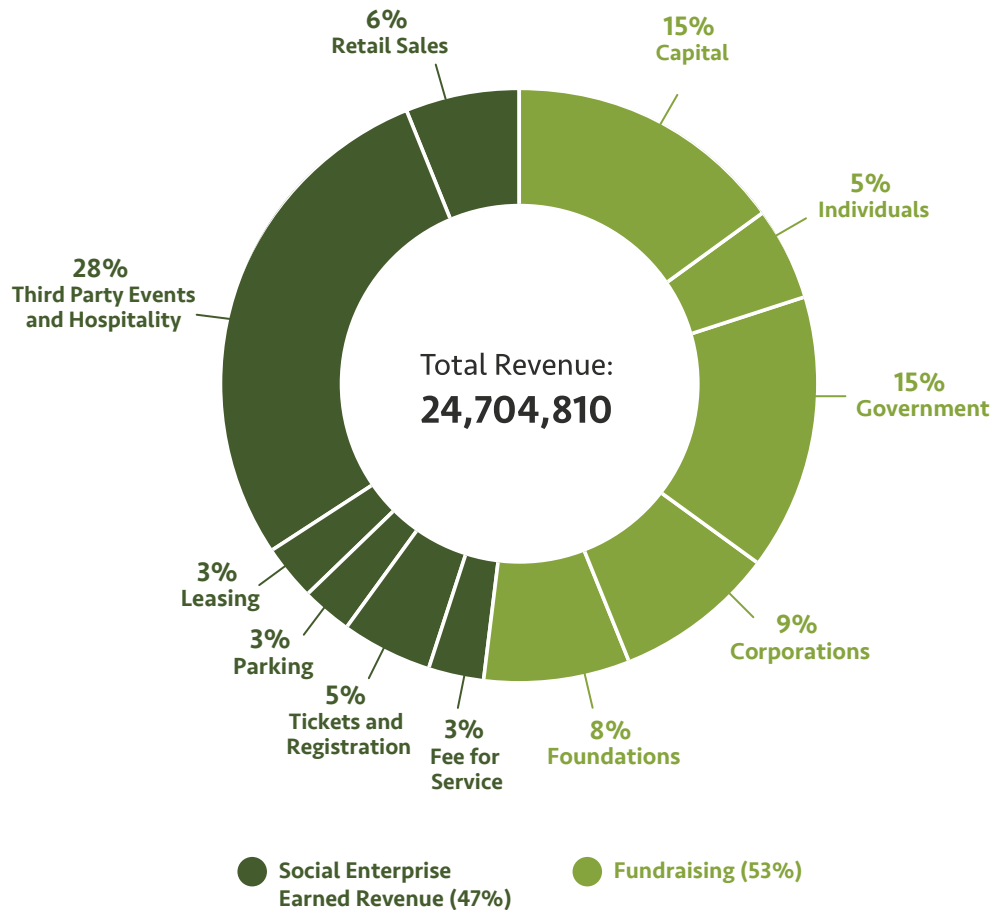


The Indigenous Inclusion Working Group helped to broaden my perspective and made me more aware of the voices and views that have historically been decentered. It also helped me collaborate with my colleagues in new ways and allowed me to learn from my colleagues’ expertise and lived experience.

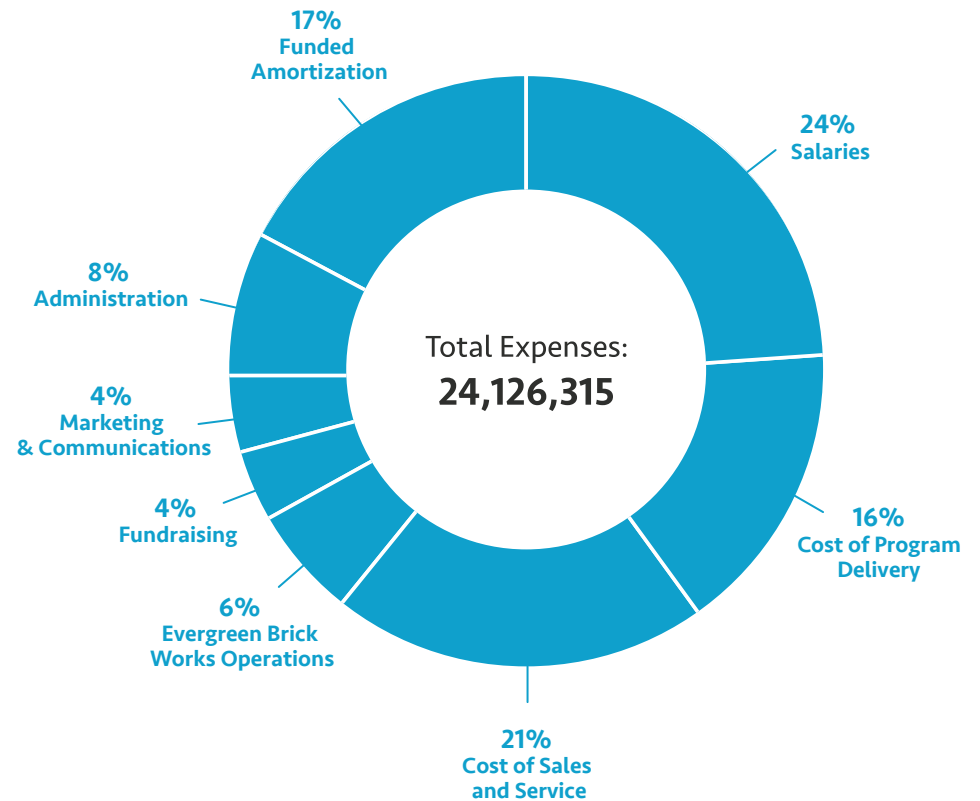
- Nicole Alie, Senior Lead Strategic Initiatives, Evergreen

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