



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

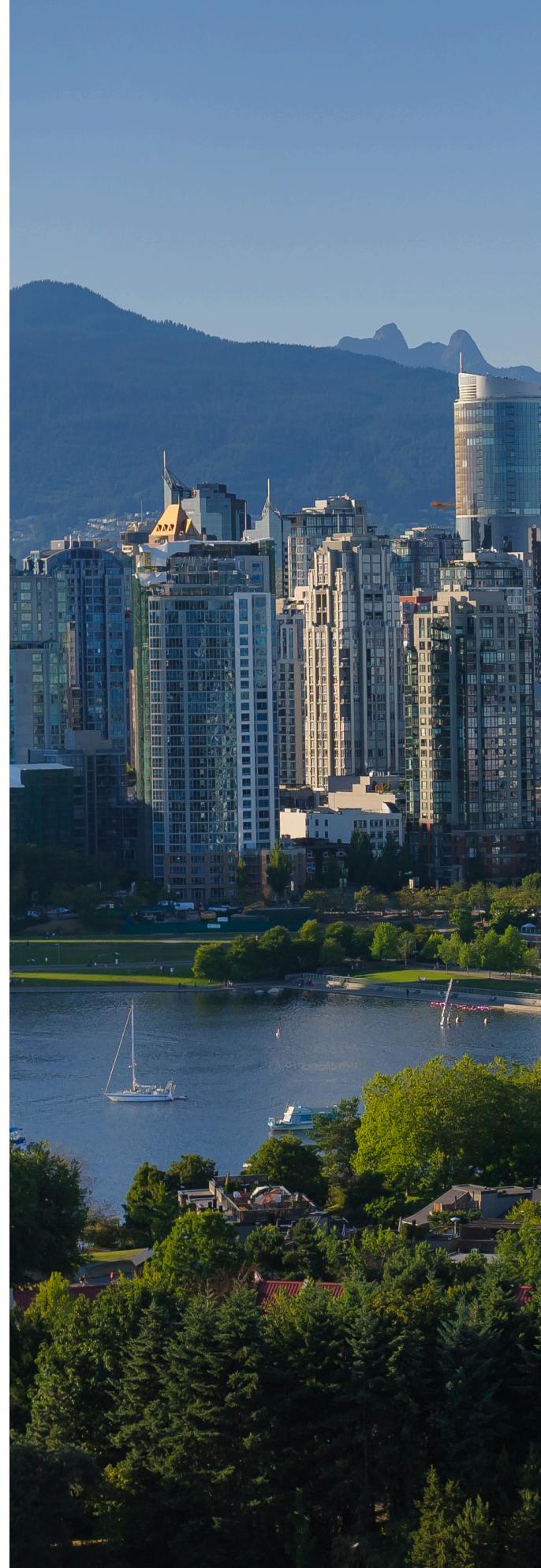
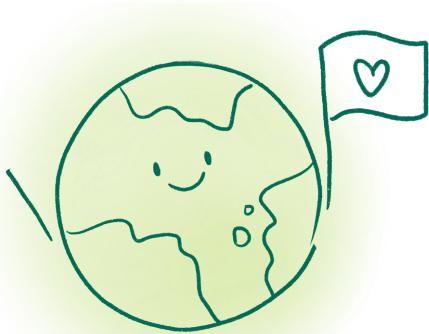


Practical Solutions, Sustainable Cities

SPEC is a charitable organization that promotes practical solutions in sustainable food systems, waste reduction, renewable energy, sustainable transportation, and community action, all through an intergenerational lens.

Since 1969, we've been empowering individuals and communities to take action for a greener future. We work with people of all ages, as well as organizations, to build community capacity and tackle sustainability challenges through practical, hands-on solutions.

This Annual Report highlights our activities and achievements from our fiscal year 2025 (September 1, 2024 to August 31, 2025). It highlights program updates, key metrics, and stories showing the impact we've made in the communities we serve.



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Land Acknowledgement

SPEC acknowledges that our work takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including q̓ic̓əy' (Katzie), q̓wə:ñəl̓ə' əñ (Kwantlen), kwikwəłə' əm (Kwikkwetlem), máthxwi (Matsqui), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), Semiahmoo, Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), scəw aθən məsteyəxʷ (Tsawwassen), səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and Stó:lō Nations. We recognize that Indigenous peoples have stewarded these lands since time immemorial and that their deep connection to the land is central to their cultural identity, knowledge systems, and well-being.

The Pacific Northwest is surrounded by extraordinary natural beauty - forests, mountains, rivers, and oceans that have nourished Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. Yet colonization, industrialization, and ongoing urban development have caused significant harm to these lands and disproportionately affected Indigenous communities and their ways of life.

SPEC believes that meaningful environmental work must be grounded in reconciliation. This includes upholding Indigenous rights and self-determination, supporting the protection of lands and waters, and amplifying efforts to revitalize Indigenous cultures and languages. We remain committed to continual learning, dialogue, and action to address the enduring impacts of colonialism and to build more just, respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Opening Reflection

This past year at SPEC has been an important reminder of what's possible when community members come together with a shared commitment to environmental justice. From schools to small urban farms, community centres to outdoor gatherings, people of all ages stepped forward to take meaningful action.

I have witnessed this energy firsthand throughout own journey with SPEC. Before joining SPEC as Executive Director, I first joined our community as a volunteer through the Zero Waste Committee and as a participant in the Master Recycler Program. Like many people who find their way to SPEC, I was looking for a place where I could contribute in a meaningful way but wasn't sure where to start. What I found was a welcoming, supportive community that made environmental action feel doable and practical. Joining SPEC has had a profound impact on me, underscoring the meaningful role it plays as a community organization. SPEC empowers individuals to start where they are, learn alongside others, and create positive change that radiates outward into families, communities, and ecosystems.

This year, that same energy showed up in many forms: children growing local food and connecting with nature, volunteers dedicating thousands of hours at Repair Cafes to give damaged items a second life, and Elders sharing inspiring stories that reached hundreds of thousands of readers across the country. Across all of these efforts, the common thread is a commitment to equity and lessening the impacts of human activity on our planet.

As you read this year's Annual Report, I hope you feel the depth of that collective effort. SPEC's impact has always come from people who believe that small actions can collectively shift social norms and create lasting change. Thank you for being part of this work and for helping build a future that is grounded in community, environmental well-being, and justice.

With gratitude,

Ashleen Montgomery
Executive Director



Our Programs

Waste Reduction

Zero Waste Committee

Promotes waste reduction and circular living through community education and volunteer action.

Repair Café

Brings neighbours together to repair broken items, share skills, and reduce waste.

Master Recycler Vancouver

Trains community members to become waste reduction leaders through in-depth education and volunteer action.

Intergenerational Climate Action

Elders Circle

Celebrates programming that celebrates Elder wisdom and fosters intergenerational dialogue for community-based climate action.

Elders in our Midst

Honours Elders' voices through e-book profiles that inspire learning, connection, and climate action.

Seniors for Climate Action Hub

A provincial network that supports seniors in leading and participating in community-based climate action.

Food and Biodiversity

School Gardens Program

Connects children and youth to nature, food, and community through hands-on learning in school gardens.

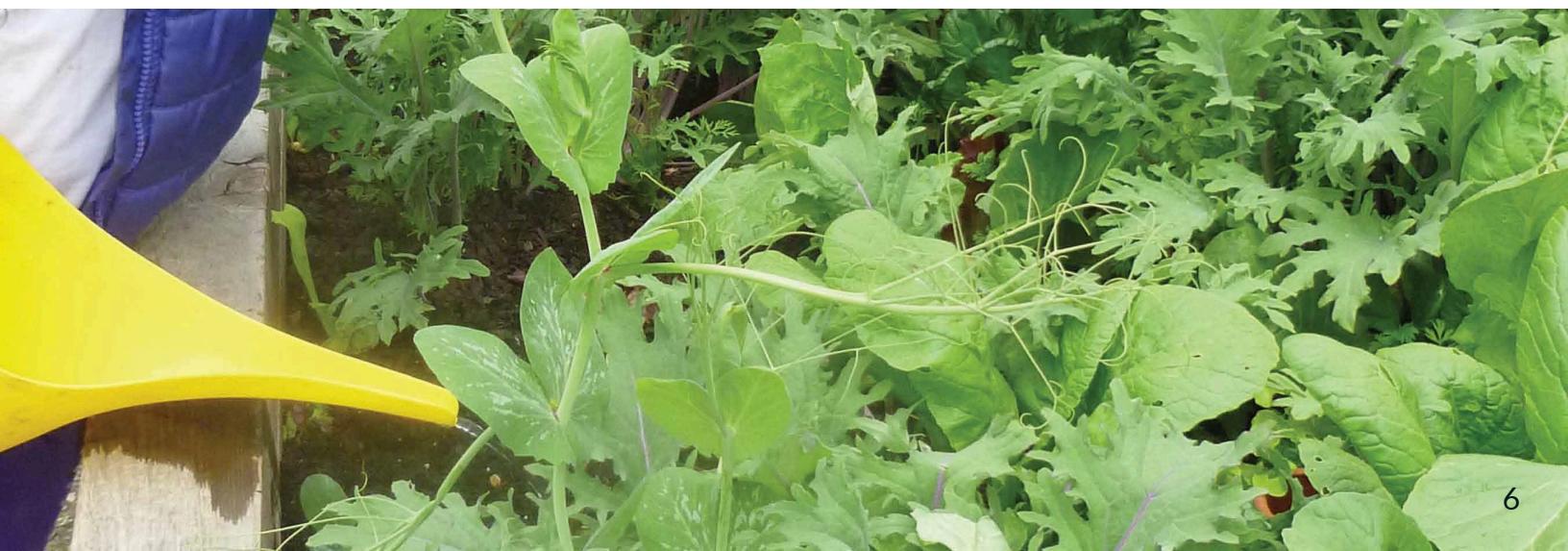
Farmland Ecosystem Services

Supports local farmers in enhancing soil health, biodiversity, and sustainable food systems.

Energy & Transportation

Energy and Transportation Committee

Our tREX Tour guides participants through local renewable energy sites to inspire learning and action on sustainable energy solutions.



Impact at a Glance

1,148

children and youth explored biodiversity through **gardening**, discovered where their food comes from, and connected to nature through SPEC's School Gardens Program.



1,002

items were brought in for repair at SPEC's **Repair Cafés**, keeping useful goods in circulation and out of the landfill.

400,000

readers were moved by **Elders' stories of wisdom, resilience, and care for the Earth**—voices shaping a more compassionate response to climate change.

70%

of schools supported by School Gardens Program are located in vulnerable communities, where garden-based education **fosters food security, wellness, and hope**.

18,000+

volunteer hours repairing, teaching, and building **community** at Repair Cafés.

2,500 lbs

of cover crop seed helped 17 small-scale farmers **strengthen biodiversity and soil resilience**.

4

tREX tours connected residents with Vancouver's renewable energy innovations, inspiring **learning about solar power, passive design, and sustainable infrastructure**.

Guiding with Wisdom, Growing through Connection

Amplifying Elder Wisdom and Intergenerational Connection

Through the **Elders in Our Midst project**, stories of ten remarkable Elders were brought to life, each one a reflection of courage, care, and commitment to community. Two young storytellers joined the project, bridging generations as they listened, learned, and shared these journeys with heart and respect.

Eight of the profiles were later published in Canada's National Observer, reaching over 400,000 readers and amplifying the voices of Elders across the country. All ten stories were also transformed into **accessible eBooks** on SPEC's website, ensuring their teachings continue to reach and inspire communities well beyond the circle in which they were first told.

Honouring Indigenous-Settler Collaboration

A chance connection between SPEC's Elders Circle and Albert Marshall, co-creator of Two-Eyed Seeing, ignited an **intergenerational collaboration** that helped shape a new land-based learning initiative, culminating in a pilot university course launching in Fall 2025 at St. Francis Xavier University.

Weaving a National Tapestry of Elder Climate Leaders

Together with the Suzuki Elders, SPEC helped launch the **Seniors for Climate BC Hub** and co-organized the national Seniors for Climate Action Day, mobilizing communities across British Columbia and amplifying the voices of older adults calling for climate justice.

Redefining Aging Through Elder Leadership

Through Elders Circle initiatives, SPEC empowers Elders as mentors, knowledge keepers, and climate advocates, reclaiming their voices in shaping a just and sustainable future. These efforts affirm that inclusion and intergenerational learning are essential to community resilience, with Elder wisdom guiding and strengthening collective action.

SPEC Elders Circle Founder and Board Member Carole Christopher represented SPEC at three major gatherings—the UBC Emeritus Faculty AGM, the United Way of BC Provincial Summit on Aging, and a Co-op Radio broadcast—sharing the vision of Elder leadership with more than 1,000 participants and listeners. Her presence and voice carried a powerful message: that aging is not withdrawal, but a deepened contribution to community and environmental well-being.



Where Children Grow Alongside Their Gardens

Re-connecting children with nature and gardening

Hundreds of children took their learning outside this year through SPEC's **School Gardens Program**, which connects students to their food, classmates, nature, and community. These living classrooms inspire curiosity and care for the environment as children explore biodiversity, plant life, biological cycles, and food literacy. Gardening nurtures mental, physical, and emotional well-being—teaching patience, teamwork, and the joy of making healthy, sustainable choices.

We are thrilled that three new schools joined us this year and that we are able to bring this program to many children in Metro Vancouver, including those from vulnerable communities.

"Our students absolutely love gardening time! Most of our students live in apartments and do not have backyards or gardens. They have a very limited understanding of where their food comes from, yet alone how it is grown. There is an opportunity for all students to learn at their own level in a hands-on way. It is always a highlight of their school year!"

Teacher of a Grade 1/2 split class

"I have seen first-hand how the program builds confidence, sparks curiosity, and encourages student-led learning and teamwork. I cannot say enough good things about the program as a volunteer, it greatly benefits the school and surrounding community, the students, and the volunteers."

School Gardens Volunteer



Empowering Local Farmers to Steward the Land

Supporting Farmers in Building Healthy Soils

This year, SPEC's **Farmland Ecosystem Services** Soil Testing Support program reached a record number of applicants, helping small-scale and under-supported farmers access cost-shared financial support for soil analysis. By empowering farmers to make data-driven decisions, the program helps prevent runoff and water contamination from fertilizer overuse, and strengthen environmental stewardship across local food systems.

Through the Cover Crop Support program, SPEC distributed over 2,500 pounds of seed to 17 farms across Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island. In partnership with the South Island Farmers Institute for the third consecutive year, the program helped small-scale farmers build soil fertility, reduce erosion, and support biodiversity, one field at a time.



Teaching, Farming, Building Community

In March, SPEC and UBC Farm hosted Small Farm Sessions, a day of learning, collaboration, and shared nourishment, marking the first in-person gathering since 2020. Farmers and researchers came together to explore topics such as farm finance, soil health, and ecological practices that foster on-farm biodiversity. Through open dialogue and community connection, participants strengthened their collective capacity to build resilient, living landscapes that support both people and the planet.

What Our Community is Saying

"Really appreciate this program! This was my first time trying cover cropping and I'm not sure it would have made sense to try it without SPEC's support"

"I just wanted to thank you again for all the hard work you put into hosting such an amazing day of workshops. I learned a lot and came away with such a full heart..."

"Thank you for putting together this lovely event. I left feeling so filled up with inspiration and excitement... As I still feel so new to farming, it's these kinds of community building/networking/knowledge sharing things that feel really important as I navigate this newfound farm journey"

Creating a Culture of Repair

472 volunteers spent over 1800 hours helping their community through the SPEC Repair Cafés

Through the SPEC **Repair Cafés**, volunteers empowered community members to see everyday items in a new light, valuing repair over replacement. Their efforts kept hundreds of items out of the landfill, reduced waste, and built practical skills that inspire long-term behaviour change. Beyond the repairs themselves, these gatherings nurtured connection, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose in creating a more sustainable and caring community.

Sharing Skills and Building Community

Repair Cafés are a vibrant intergenerational space where seasoned fixers mentor apprentice repairers of all ages, helping them build confidence, skills, and a sense of belonging. This shared learning strengthens community bonds and fuels a growing culture of repair that keeps items, and knowledge, circulating for years to come.



Embracing Circularity, Connection and Community through Repair Cafés

SPEC Repair Cafés allows community members to bring bicycles, small appliances, textiles, and electronics to be diagnosed and repaired with no cost to the participant, building community and decreasing items sent to landfill.

This year, community members brought 1,002 well-loved items to 11 Repair Cafés. Thanks to our volunteers' skill and dedication, 661 were successfully repaired, while many others received guidance and encouragement on the next steps needed to complete their repairs.

What Our Community is Saying

“The 2 people working on the radio were extremely knowledgeable... They persevered and fixed it. I’m so impressed with the event and service.”

“The team was nice and knowledgeable. They involved me in the repair—I even saw kids get involved! I’m extremely happy to have this unit repaired and not in the landfill.”

“It was a great collaborative experience. It’s my 3rd time at the repair cafe and the volunteers each time have been helpful. Very generous with their time. It’s nice to know less stuff is going into the landfill, thanks to these cafes.”

Where Education Meets Action for Real-World Waste Solutions



Empowering Community Waste Reduction Leaders

With 18 participants completing the 2024–2025 cohort, this year's class has already put their learning into action logging 252 volunteer hours in just a few months. Their commitment reflects the heart of the Master Recycler movement: community-led solutions with real impact.

With 228 graduates over ten years, **Master Recycler Vancouver** has nurtured a strong network of local changemakers who amplify SPEC's zero-waste mission in their workplaces, neighbourhoods, and beyond.

Community Voices for a Cleaner Region

Metro Vancouver once again entrusted MRV to lead public engagement for the regional Solid Waste Management Plan update, including two facilitated focus groups and a community-wide survey. This marks our third year supporting the region in shaping future waste strategies.

Zero Waste Committee Meetings: Building Connections through Shared Values

SPEC's Zero Waste Committee Meetings continued to bring together passionate community members, professionals, and advocates committed to reducing waste and pollution. Through open dialogue and collaboration, participants exchanged ideas, shared resources, and strengthened a network of changemakers working toward a circular, waste-free future.

Learning Together for a Circular Future

Our January 2025 Master Recycler Conference brought together zero-waste practitioners, alumni, and community members for workshops, panels, and peer learning. The event strengthened MRV's growing network of community leaders advancing a more circular Metro Vancouver.



Get Involved



Volunteer your Time

Whether you join a Zero Waste Committee meeting, lend a hand at a Repair Café, or participate in an Elder Learning Circle, there are many ways to get involved and make a difference.

To connect with us, email info@spec.bc.ca



Donate

Individual donations make our work possible. They are the most reliable and sustainable source of funding we have, allowing SPEC to remain resilient and less dependent on the shifting availability of government and foundation grants. Every contribution truly matters, no gift is too small, and all donations over \$20 receive a tax receipt.

spec.bc.ca/donate



Learn

SPEC's workshops, activities, and events connect and inform individuals, families, groups, and businesses, offering practical tools and inspiration for sustainable urban living and community climate action.

Information and calendar listings can be found at spec.bc.ca



2025 Staff and Board of Directors

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Ashleen Montgomery

Executive Director

Ashley Parshyn

Communications and
Fundraising Coordinator

Sharlene Singh

School Gardens Program
Coordinator

Crysta Lehmann

Farmland Ecosystem Services
Program Coordinator

Emily McGill

Master Recycler Co-Founder
and Facilitator

Alexandria Wiedeman

Grant and Programs
Coordinator

Sheila Rodriguez

Elder Circle Program Coordinator

Kira Gawenus

Elders Circle Project Assistant

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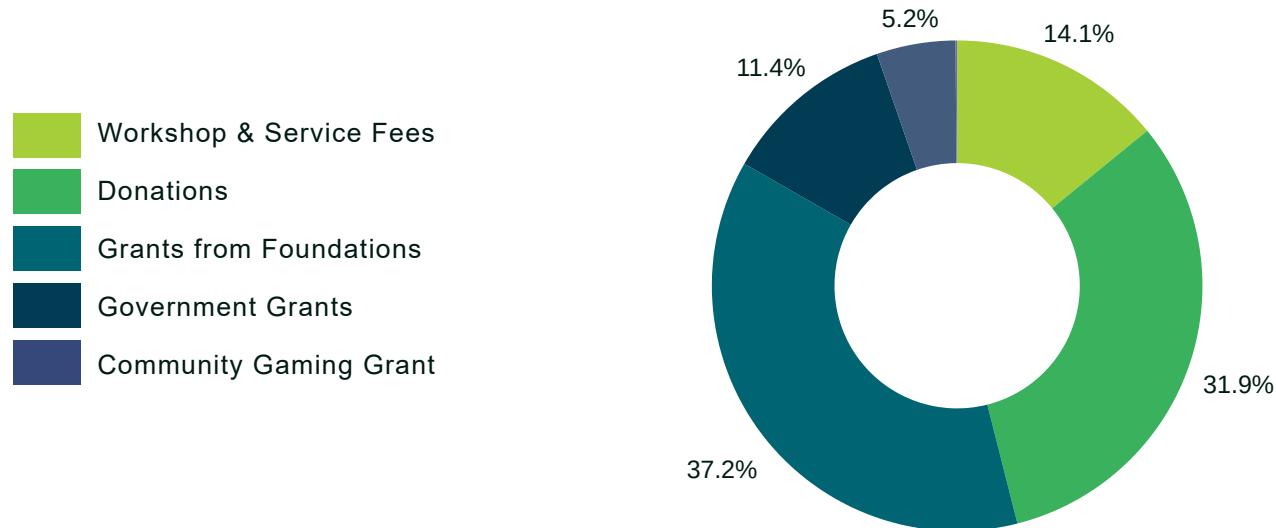
Director

Skye Noh

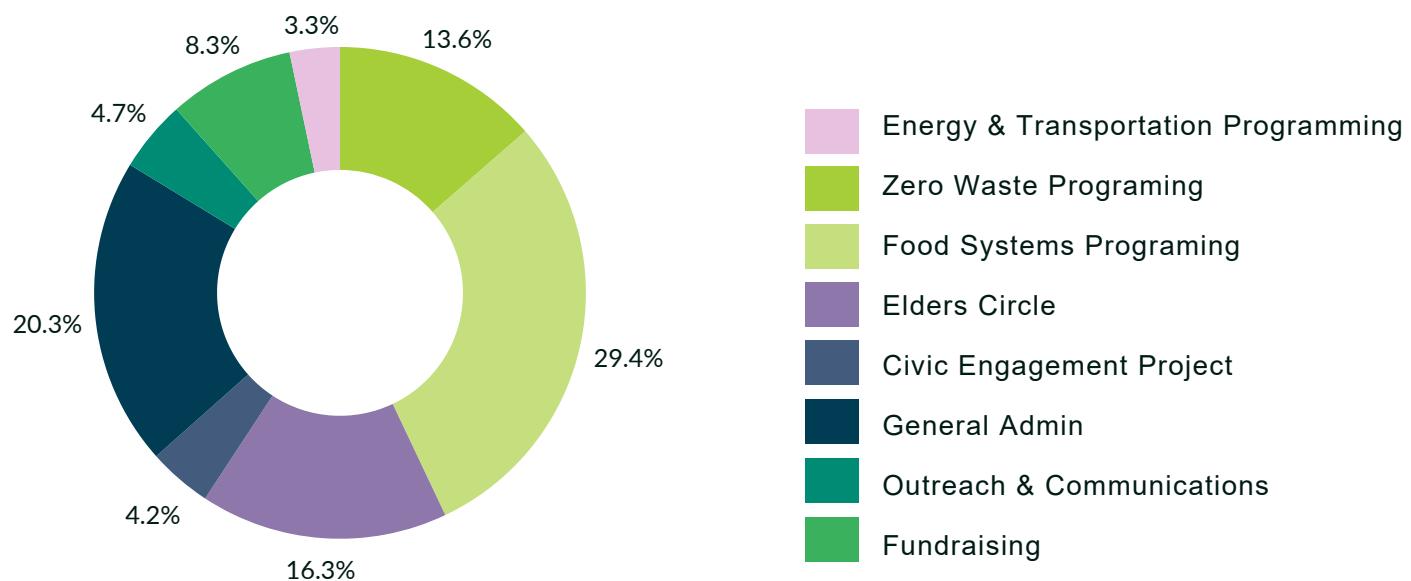
Director



Financial Highlights



Total Revenue for 2024: \$ 312,288



Total Expenditures for 2024: \$303,591

Our Supporters

Our achievements are a reflection of your generosity and belief in this work

Funders

City of Vancouver
Endswell Foundation
Government of Canada
Horizons Foundation of Washington
Metro Vancouver
Petersen Turofsky Charitable Foundation
Province of BC (Community Gaming Grant)
Raymond James Canada Foundation
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
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Tides Foundation
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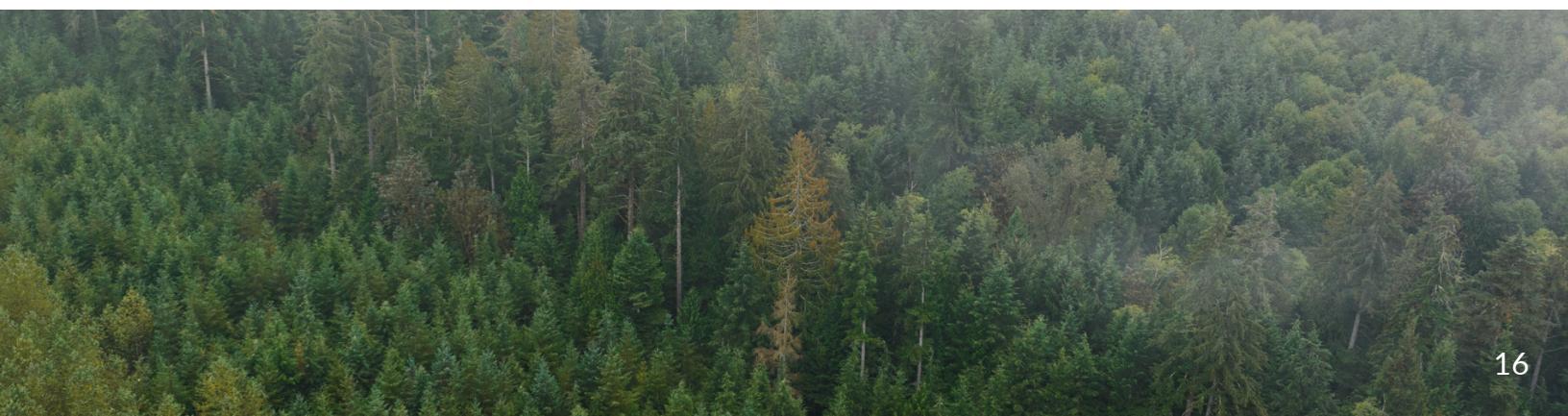
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BC Housing
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Cedar Fundraising
Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm
Copley Community Orchard
Kitsilano Neighbourhood House
KPU Sustainable Agriculture and KPU Farm
Richmond Addiction Services Society
Seniors for Climate
South Island Farmers Institute
Suzuki Elders
Trellis Social Enterprises Inc.

We are filled with gratitude for every SPEC donor and volunteer who makes our work possible!



Ways to Support

Ways to Give:



Donations can be made through our website:

www.spec.bc.ca/donate

Via credit Card or
Visa Debit Card



Payable to "SPEC"

Mail to the office:

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Contact Us



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