



NIAGARA  
PARKS  
FOUNDATION

# YEAR-END IMPACT REPORT

2023-2024



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 preserving the priceless nature and heritage along the Niagara River corridor for the enjoyment of the public and future generations.

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## A MESSAGE FROM *the Chair*

I would like to thank the individuals, companies, and organizations that 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 \$1 million.

As you will find detailed in this report, the Foundation once again supported several important initiatives this past year.

Our Toonies for Trees program had a record year, raising more than \$40,000. The popular program invites guests to contribute directly to tree planting efforts when visiting Niagara Parks' attractions, retail, and online store. The Toonies for Trees program funded a public tree planting day in October near Old Fort Erie where community members joined us to make a difference for the environment.

Year Two of the Dufferin Islands Visitor Experience and Ecological Enhancement Initiative was completed including significant work in the following focus areas: land and habitat management; infrastructure renewal; trails and accessibility improvements and education, interpretation and monitoring. This initiative is generously funded by TD Canada Bank's Ready Commitment program which provided a grant of \$400,000 through the Niagara Parks Foundation.

In the spring, the Foundation provided funding for the launch of an Indigenous Audio Tour - Rekindling Our Relations, curated by Michele-Elise Burnett, a respected member of Niagara's Indigenous community. The annual Majestic Monarchs butterfly release program took place in September at the Butterfly Conservatory raising awareness for both species preservation and the work of the Foundation, as well as \$800 in donations.

For 33 years, I worked with the Niagara Parks Commission, dedicating my efforts to preserving, enhancing, and maintaining our precious parklands. Now in my role as Foundation Chair, I am excited to share some news for 2025. Plans are underway to build Niagara's first Children's Garden. Through hands-on learning and nature-based play, the Children's Garden at Niagara Parks will promote mental and physical health and wellness in children and young adults, while inspiring future generations to cultivate a lifelong connection with nature. You will be hearing more about this exciting project in the coming months.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Foundation board members and staff, who continue their work to support these ongoing efforts. I'd like to note the contributions of Robert Orsini, who departed the board in 2024, and we appreciate the addition of Niagara Parks Chair, Bob Gale, as well as Michelle-Elise Burnett and Sue-Ann Ramsden as Board Directors.

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



**DAVID ADAMES**  
Treasurer/Secretary



**MICHELE-ELISE BURNETT**  
Director



**ANNE CHARETTE**  
Committee Chair -  
Communications + Marketing



**SYLVIE CHARTRAND-RAFI**  
Committee Chair -  
Fundraising



**BOB GALE**  
Director



**APRIL JEFFS**  
Director



**BLAIR MCARTHUR**  
Director



**ROBERT ORSINI**  
Vice Chair  
Until August 2024



**SUE-ANN RAMSDEN**  
Director

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

[NIAGARAPARKSFOUNDATION.COM](http://NIAGARAPARKSFOUNDATION.COM)

E [foundation@niagaraparks.com](mailto: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.

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## mission STATEMENT

Preserving 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.

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## 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



INDIGENOUS  
PROGRAMMING  
& NATURE



CHILDREN'S  
PROGRAMMING



2023/2024

*highlights*

AT A GLANCE



## *Rekindling All Our Relations*

### AN INDIGENOUS AUDIO TOUR OF THE NIAGARA GLEN

In June, a ceremony celebrated the launch of a new Indigenous audio tour, *Rekindling All Our Relations*, the first of its kind in Canada. Supported by the Niagara Parks Foundation, Indigenous Tourism Ontario and the Federal Economic Development Agency of Ontario, this free, self-guided tour of the Niagara Glen was curated and produced by Michele-Elise Burnett, President of Kakekalanicks Indigenous Consulting Company and Landscape of Nations 360. The tour takes visitors on a journey, exploring Indigenous culture and connections to the natural world.

This project highlights the Foundation's commitment to showcasing Indigenous culture and history across the Niagara River corridor. Audio-engineered by William Riech Jr., *Rekindling All Our Relations* blends music from renowned Indigenous artists with narratives rooted in Indigenous teachings. To date, the audio tour has been downloaded by over 1,100 users.



## Dufferin Islands

### VISITOR EXPERIENCE & ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE

Thanks to a \$400,000 Grant through TD Canada Bank's Ready Commitment Program, the Niagara Parks Foundation continues supporting the Dufferin Islands Visitor Experience and Ecological Enhancement initiative, which just wrapped up year two of the 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 sensitive natural environment of the site while providing improved opportunities for recreation and environmental education.

**Year 2 Highlights:**

- Ongoing removal of invasive species including phragmites, buckthorn and Tree of Heaven.
- Eight beaver cones installed to prevent blockages and flooding and effectively mitigate beaver impacts while offering opportunities for wildlife management education.
- Five wildlife feeding signs installed/reinstalled, educating visitors on the harm caused by feeding wildlife.
- Restored 100m of eroding shoreline using bio-engineering techniques (e.g., root wads, aggregate and native vegetation).
- Over 5,000 native trees, shrubs and wildflowers planted across Dufferin Islands, including shoreline areas.
- 2,000 trees and shrubs were added along the upper moraine to expand the forest canopy and reduce erosion.
- Completed restoration of three degraded islands with soil addition and native vegetation planting.
- Vineland Research and Innovation Centre conducted a soil health analysis for species selection and soil amendments along the upper moraine.
- A Landscape Architect is redesigning the central picnic area to address stormwater runoff and high pedestrian traffic.



## 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 like climate change and invasive species such as the Emerald Ash Borer which decimated tens of thousands of trees within Niagara Parks lands in recent years, the strategy includes research-based goals and approaches that will help foster healthier and 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.

## TOONIES FOR TREES

The Niagara Parks Foundation is thrilled to have exceeded its fundraising goal by raising over \$40,000 toward tree planting along the Niagara River. Through this initiative, guests to Niagara Parks are able 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, which exceeded the annual goal of 5,000 and resulted in 7,351 trees planted in 2024. Next year, the goal is to raise \$75,000 through the Toonies for Trees program to support tree planting at Niagara Parks.

## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FOSTER *growth & sustainability*

### MAY 2024

As part of a school project, 10-year-old Twenty Valley Public School student, Reaghan Bucknall, chose to raise funds for the Niagara Parks Foundation. Niagara Parks Chair Debbie Whitehouse met with Reaghan to accept her donation in person, which resulted in the planting of 12 new native tree saplings. The story generated positive local media attention and awareness for the Niagara Parks Foundation.

### AUGUST 2024

Through a partnership with the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and with support from the Niagara Parks Foundation, a new Soil Analysis Program was launched to further improve Niagara Parks' tree planting program. Over 100 soil samples from seven future planting sites guided the selection of tree species and necessary soil enhancements to ensure optimal growing conditions.

### SEPTEMBER 2024

In preparation for the hosting of Rendez-vous Canada conference, Canada's top tourism conference, Niagara Falls Tourism donated funding through the Niagara Parks Foundation to plant 1,100 trees. This funding was used to leverage an additional \$16,000 grant from Canada Trees for Life and their 2 Billion Trees Program. These funding programs resulted in 2,000 trees planted between Dufferin Islands and the Rapidsview Park area. To assist with the planting, 25 environmental sustainability students from Brock University were recruited to plant 250 trees.

### OCTOBER 2024

On October 17-18, 2024, the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects (OALA) held their annual conference in Niagara Falls. Niagara Parks Senior Director of Planning, Environment and Culture Steve Barnhart was the recipient of the OALA Presidents Award for 2024. The Association also made a \$750 donation to support tree planting through the Foundation.



## COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING DAY

In partnership with the Niagara Parks Foundation, the annual Community Tree Planting Day provides an opportunity for volunteers to directly participate in a local reforestation project in their community. On October 26, 2024, at a planting site near Old Fort Erie, a diversity of volunteers, including students from the Fort Erie International Academy and the newly established Niagara Falls University, as well as a young family from Turkey who had recently settled in the area, joined Niagara Parks staff to plant over 250 trees.





## Majestic Monarchs

### TAG & RELEASE EVENT RAISES AWARENESS & SUPPORT FOR FOUNDATION

During the 20th annual Majestic Monarchs program at the Butterfly Conservatory on September 7-8, 2024, guests participated in a tag-and-release program, tagging 800 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 insight into population trends, migration patterns and conservation efforts. The Niagara Parks Foundation hosted an information table at the event, raising awareness at this well-attended species preservation event.



## Memorial Tree AND BENCH PROGRAM

The gift of a tree planted at Niagara Parks or a memorial bench placed throughout these lands is a lasting tribute that benefits the community and the natural environment. This unique and meaningful remembrance of a loved one provides a restful stopping point to pause and reflect, surrounded by the sights and sounds of the picturesque environment of Niagara Parks.

This special program is a unique opportunity for guests to honour and remember a significant person or event in their lives, while also supporting Niagara Parks. Over the course of 2023-24, \$91,247 was raised through the Memorial Tree & Bench Program.

“ A CARING  
*commitment*  
TO PRICELESS PARKLANDS ”

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT  
THE NIAGARA PARKS  
FOUNDATION  
OR TO DONATE VISIT  
[NIAGARAPARKSFUNDATION.COM](http://NIAGARAPARKSFUNDATION.COM)

2023/2024

*Financial*

STATEMENTS

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	YEAR TO DATE RESULTS	YEAR TO DATE RESULTS
	Nov. 2023 - Oct 2024 12 Months	Nov. 2022 - Oct 2023 12 Months
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
<b>REVENUES</b>		
UNRESTRICTED CONTRIBUTIONS	\$54,294	\$17,895
RESTRICTED CONTRIBUTIONS		
DONATIONS	\$100,000	-
GRANT PROGRAMS	\$191,767	\$109,369
PRIORITY PROJECTS	\$5,580	\$6,792
MEMORIAL PROGRAM	\$91,247	\$31,321
INTEREST INCOME	\$6,978	\$3,641
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$449,866</b>	<b>\$169,018</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION	\$1,133	\$7,526
EXPENSES ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	\$191,767	\$109,369
GRANT PROGRAMS	\$5,580	\$6,792
PRIORITY PROJECTS	\$91,247	\$31,321
MEMORIAL PROGRAM		
OTHER EXPENSES ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	\$1,065	\$4,925
LICENSES, MEMBERSHIPS AND DUES	\$2,212	\$1,222
INSURANCE	\$1,214	\$1,214
PROCESSING FEES	\$1,073	-
OTHER	\$178	\$1,647
PROFESSIONAL FEES	\$8,159	\$1,256
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$303,628</b>	<b>\$165,272</b>
TRANSFER TO NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION	(\$100,000)	-
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$46,238*</b>	<b>\$3,746*</b>

\*Funds held for future activities

2023 - 2024

## FINANCIAL RESULTS

Funds Received: \$409,099

Expenses on Charitable Activities:

- Tree Planting: \$5,580
- Memorial Trees and Benches: \$91,247
- Other Activities: \$1,065

Operating Expenses: \$13,969

Grant Program Expenses: \$191,767

Excess of Revenue over Expenses: \$46,238

Funds Held for Future Priority Projects: \$391,161

*\*Funds held for future activities*

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	OCTOBER 2024	OCTOBER 2023
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$207,378	\$277,978
Term Deposits	\$215,462	\$111,706
Accounts Receivable	\$154,672	\$123,777
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$577,512</b>	<b>\$513,461</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable	\$113,100	\$61,498
Deferred Contributions	\$391,161	\$424,950
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$504,261</b>	<b>\$486,448</b>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$73,251</b>	<b>\$27,013</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$577,512</b>	<b>\$513,461</b>

## GRANT FUNDING

The Niagara Parks Foundation graciously acknowledges the generous support received from TD Bank Group through the TD Ready Commitment program and the Government of Canada through the Community Services Recovery Fund.



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada



**TD READY  
COMMITMENT**

# Spotlight

## CHILDREN'S GARDEN

The Niagara Parks Foundation, working closely with Niagara Parks, is embarking on an exciting journey to build Niagara's first Children's Garden.

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

*Coming Soon*

## Children's GARDEN

With screentime on the rise and more time spent indoors, connecting kids with nature has never been more important. The Niagara Parks Foundation, in partnership with the Niagara Parks Commission, is embarking on a journey to build Niagara's first Children's Garden. Designed to be fun, inclusive and even therapeutic, Children's Gardens are growing in popularity worldwide. This past year, Foundation members had the opportunity to tour other Children's Gardens, including the Atlanta Botanical Gardens, Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Columbus, Ohio and the New York Botanical Gardens in New York City.

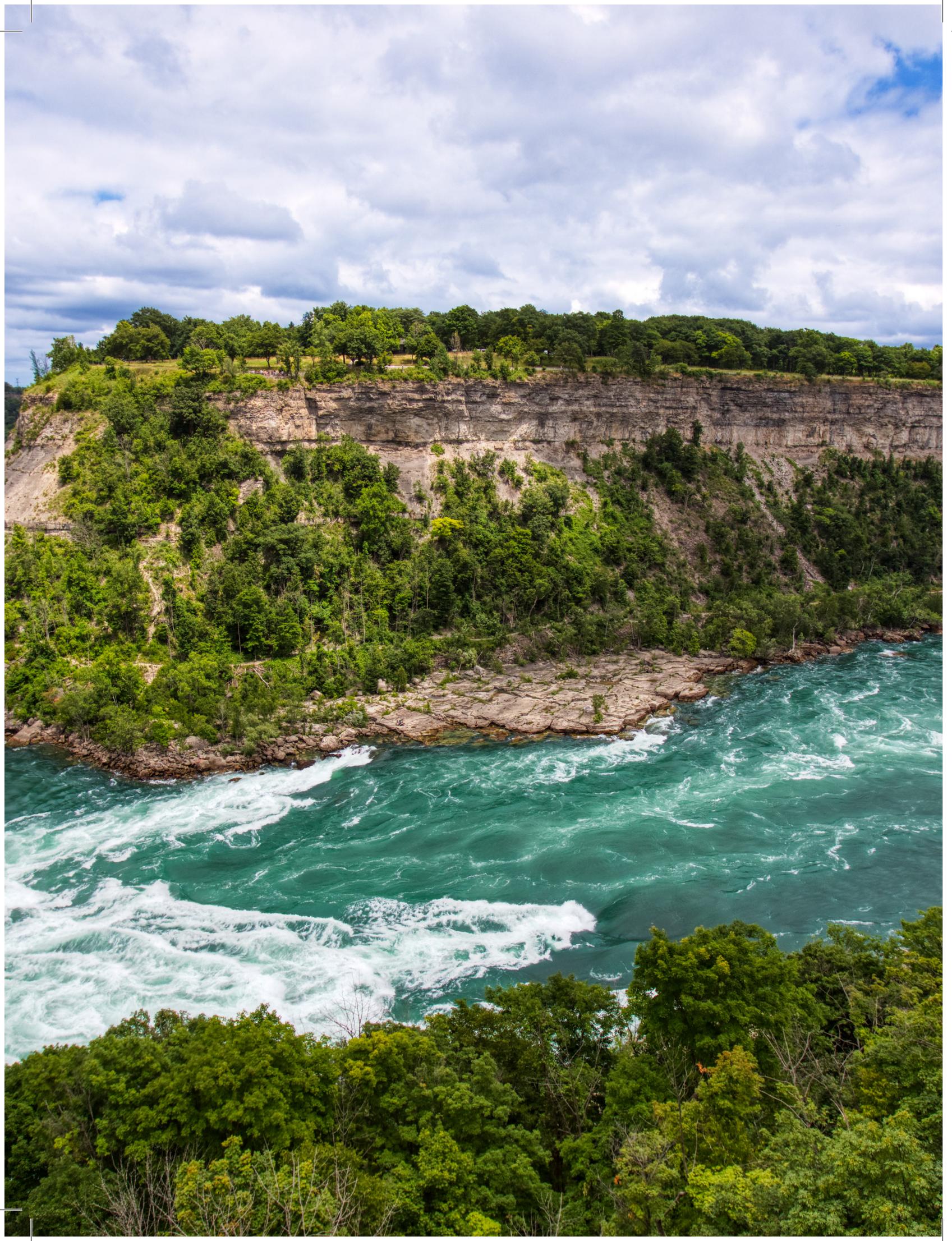
Outdoor education has been proven to promote healthy outcomes across many areas of childhood development. Nature-based learning supports:

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

The garden's proposed location is a two-acre site at the renowned Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens. Mature native trees and green space offer plenty of shaded areas for children and families to relax and connect to nature. The site leverages proximity to the School of Horticulture and the Butterfly Conservatory, a major Niagara Parks attraction that welcomes over 300,000 yearly visitors, while offering convenient access to parking, public transit and guest washrooms.

Designed to serve as an interactive outdoor classroom that provides sensory-rich experience for children, the Children's Garden will include 12 unique areas, such as "Tree Top Walk", "Root Zone", "the Rapids" and "the Labyrinth".

With the support of our partners and donors, we will make this vision a reality.



# 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.

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## *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.**



NIAGARA  
PARKS  
FOUNDATION