

To: Board of Management

From: Dr. William A. Rapley  
Executive Director  
Conservation, Education & Research

Subject: **EDUCATION BRANCH REPORT 2009**

Date: 2010-02-01

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**Summary:**

This report provides a review and update for the Board of Management on the activities and achievements of the Education Branch for the year 2009.

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that this report be received for information.**

**Background:**

**Mission of the Education Branch**

*The Education Branch's mission is to promote an appreciation of and caring for the natural world in all its biodiversity; to develop the understanding that all living things are interconnected; to create an awareness of the impact of humans on the environment; to instil a sense of personal responsibility and provide people with the information to make lifestyle changes that promote conservation.*

The Education Branch is comprised of six full-time employees. In addition to the Manager and Supervisor of the Branch, one staff person is assigned to coordinating our 350 volunteers, one is dedicated to school programs, one to public programs, and finally, one to program registration. Programs are delivered in the auditorium of the Education Centre, the Education Portable, the Conservation Connection Centre and the Atrium of the Administrative-Support Centre. During the school year six part-time staff deliver curriculum-based student workshops at the Zoo. Zoo Camp, Bush Camp and the Kids Zoo employ 38 non-permanent staff, the majority university students or recent graduates.

The Branch delivers programs to three types of audiences:

1. Formal education is comprised of students attending elementary, secondary and post secondary institutions. In 2009 the total attendance for school groups was 155,121; 110,526 in elementary school, 37,209 in secondary school and 7,386 in post secondary studies.

2. Non-formal education consists of non-school programs for which participants register and usually pay a fee. Examples are Zoo Camp, Bush Camp and weekend children's programs.
3. Informal education takes place in unstructured learning situations such as interacting with a volunteer at a touch table or visiting one of the interpretive exhibits throughout the site.

### **Comments/Discussion:**

Key accomplishments in 2009:

#### Received \$70,510 in grant funds

To support the Operation Conservation program, \$34,000 was granted by three foundations (Tippet Foundation, Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation and Weston Family Foundation). PQR donated \$8,310 for youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to attend school workshop programs at the Zoo. An additional grant of \$6,500 from PQR supported 14 youth from the Mount Dennis Community to attend Zoo Camp. With funding of \$21,700 from the Museum Assistance Program (MAP) distance education programs to support elementary and secondary curriculum were developed and piloted.

#### Distance education pilot programs initiated

With funding from the Museum Assistance Program (MAP) and in partnership with Grande Yellowhead District School Board in Alberta for the provision of equipment, distance education programs were developed to support elementary and secondary curriculum. A number of pilot programs were successfully delivered to over 120 students in Alberta and Ontario schools. To support each curriculum-linked program, videoconference session scripts, teacher activity guides and resource materials were created. As a tool for continuing education, a number of video conference sessions were also arranged to connect Zoo staff and volunteers with Polar Bears International (PBI). Participants were given the opportunity to interact with PBI scientists/researchers broadcasting live from the Tundra and learn more about climate change and the effects on polar bears.

#### Fourteen students from six institutions served internships with the Education Branch

Four interns from Humber College, Multimedia Design and Production Program developed a series of interactive games and learning activities for the Education webpage and various videos on orangutan enrichment, geothermal energy, black-footed ferret breeding, and Western lowland gorillas Species Survival Plans for our website and on-site screens. Two interns from Ryerson University's Early Childhood Education program assisted in the development of an educational outreach program for kindergarten students. Three B.Ed students from Queen's University redeveloped and enhanced our grade two outreach program. Three students from Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE – U of T) revised our educational outreach program on biodiversity for grade six students and another for secondary level students / adults on the topic of sustainability. One student from Fleming College and another from the University of Toronto, both enrolled in Museum Studies, created a new "Gorilla Experience" volunteer touchtable, developed posters for Dja Research Station in the African Rainforest Pavilion and developed a tour script on evolution for grade 12 students.

#### Student Workshops continue to attract strong participation

Over 9,700 students attended a four hour curriculum-based workshop in 2009. Program evaluations are consistently positive. As a Grade 6 teacher from Tam O'Shanter P.S. wrote, "This was my first trip to the Zoo where I participated in a program. I would definitely do it again. Our workshop presenter was very knowledgeable and it made the trip more interesting."

#### Teachers' Days remain popular and well attended

Teachers' Days, held bi-annually in April and September, continue to attract a large number of educators. Marketed to eleven surrounding School Boards and two universities with Bachelor of Education programs, resulted in a total of 2,889 teachers participating in 2009. This provides an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of a field trip to the Zoo to enhance classroom curriculum. Teachers can visit the Zoo for free with a friend or family member.

#### Ad placed in teacher's magazine

A full colour, 1/4 page ad was placed in the September issue of "*Professionally Speaking*", the journal of the Ontario College of Teachers. The magazine is distributed to every certified teacher's home in Ontario. The ads promoted the Toronto Zoo as an excellent resource for bringing conservation and the science curriculum to life.

#### School programs brochure printed and distributed

A copy of the school programs brochure is attached (Appendix 2) outlining the wide offering of curriculum based programs for elementary and secondary level students. Information found in the brochure is also available to teachers on the website. Noteworthy additions to this brochure are: Zoo School – High School courses in the summer offered at the Zoo, "Zoo to You" showcasing a new line up of interactive, curriculum-based classroom sessions, and the addition of a guided tour on evolution for grade 12 students.

#### Zoo School - delivery of high school credit courses

In partnership with Toronto Independent High School the Toronto Zoo delivered various credit courses for high school students during July and August. These courses included: grade 11 biology, grade 11 anthropology & evolution, grade 12 environmental leadership and grade 12 conservation biology. Overall 16 students attended these two week courses, and the Zoo received \$9,500 in remuneration from Toronto Independent High School.

#### Operation Conservation Program delivered to youth from underserved communities

Operation Conservation is designed for at-risk students in the Jane-Finch and the Malvern Communities. Two hundred and forty four students participated in the two-day immersion program this year with support from grant funding.

#### Youth from disadvantaged Toronto communities attend Student Workshops

With funding from PQR, 1,204 students from a variety of identified neighbourhoods in Toronto attended a four hour curriculum-based workshop at the Zoo.

#### Youth from Mount Dennis Community attended Zoo Camp and Bush Camp

With a grant from PQR, 14 youth aged 11 to 16 attended a week of Zoo Camp including bus transportation, lunches, and an overnight stay at Bush Camp. Families of the campers were hosted at the Zoo on the Friday.

New online registration system and database implemented for Zoo Camp

A new CampBrain database and online registration system was implemented in 2009, resulting in enhanced customer service and more efficient processing of registrations and payments. This system is recognized and used by several other camps accredited by the OCA (Ontario Camps Association).

Serengeti Bush Camp continues to provide a unique overnight experience

Bush Camp operated from the May long weekend to Labour Day with 3,056 campers enjoying a variety of interactive educational activities, tours and behind the scenes opportunities. T-shirts, crests, ball caps (new this year) are purchased by participants as a keepsake of their one 'wild' night at the Zoo.

Youth Badge Programs reach over 475 scouts, guides, brownies and cubs

Youth earn any one of 14 environmental badges by attending a half day program at the Zoo. This is one of the longest operating Zoo education programs.

Parent and Tot programs – parents and children learning together

These programs continue to be our most popular, with sessions filling up one to two days after registration begins. With the assistance of staff skilled in teaching pre-school children, animal visitors, and lots of activities, parents and children develop an appreciation for nature.

Weekend programs for children, families and adults

Programs that focus on many different themes and ages are offered throughout the year on weekends or evenings.

Programs continue to complement special exhibits

Our family Rise n' Shine program continued for a second summer, this year with the addition of sharks, to coincide with the special Sharks at Stingray Bay exhibit. This family program, delivered by existing Kids Zoo seasonal staff, attracted 504 participants who enjoyed breakfast, an informative talk, interactive activities and an early morning stingray feeding experience.

**KEY LEARNING / ISSUES:**

- Until the Centre for Sustainable Life and Learning becomes a reality, education program space needs to be used wisely to maximize our carrying capacity.
- To connect with a wider audience, video-conferencing provides a feasible avenue. This technology and co-ordination of programming will be further explored in 2010.
- At the present time expansion of education programs is restricted by our limited staff resources.
- Co-operative programming with other organizations, such as Parks Canada, provides opportunities to share expertise, resources and imagination.
- Government and foundation grants continue to augment the number and variety of programs beyond those delivered by permanent staff.
- Procuring funding to support students from underserved communities to attend education programs at the Zoo provides both a wonderful opportunity for these students and serves to fill the shoulder seasons.

The Education Branch had another successful year in 2009 with a blend of programs that delivered both educational value and strong revenues. School programs, particularly the student workshops and classroom presentations, were augmented to include new curriculum and sustainable development content. Programs such as Zoo Camp and Bush Camp continue to be a source of pride for the Zoo. Progress on the establishment of a Centre for Sustainable Life and Learning provides the opportunity for future growth and development of the educational potential of the Zoo both on site and through outreach activities.

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**List of Attachments:**

Appendix I - School and Public Education Programs 2006-2009

Appendix II – School Programs Brochure