

To: Board of Management

From: Senior Director, Marketing, Communications & Partnerships

Subject: **EDUCATION PROGRAMS REPORT 2018**

Date: 2019-01-23

SUMMARY:

This report focuses on the primary activities and achievements of the Education Branch at the Toronto Zoo for the year 2018. Education oversees a wide variety of different programs throughout the year that support key components of the Strategic Plan and further educational goals. These include school program offerings and teacher resources, as well as a roster of public programs for a variety of audiences/ages and summer camps. Overall program participation and revenues in 2018 were amongst the highest on record with revenue up 28.6% over 2017 (labour disruption year), generating overall \$1,042,660, and participation up by 43.6% over the preceding year. Bookings for fee-based school programs increased by 49.4% over 2017, with a particularly large increase at the secondary level, which increased 81.3%. Core revenue generating programs such as Bush Camp, Zoo Camp, Zoo School, and the Valentine's adult program, continue to show strong participation and revenue generation.

Also, included is a summary of curatorial outreach programs which are administered by the Conservation & Wildlife Division.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

COMMENTS:

Key accomplishments in 2018:

Received \$50,640 in grant funding

To support the Operation Conservation program, \$40,640 was granted by the Tippet Foundation and Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation. Plus, through an estate donation, the Education Branch received \$10,000 for 953 students and 108 supervisors from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Malvern community to participate in self-guided field trips to the Toronto Zoo.

School program bookings are a popular option for field trips

16,925 students attended curriculum-based school programs in 2018, which is an increase of 50.7% against 2017 numbers. It should be noted that the number of students

attending for field trips in 2017 was low as a result of the labour disruption, which occurred during our peak school season. In comparison to 2016 student numbers attending curriculum-based school programs (15,535), there is an increase of 9.0%. In 2018, we saw a significant increase in the number of secondary level students, nearly doubling program attendance in comparison to both 2017 and 2016. In 2018, Education staff developed, piloted, and implemented a new Polar Bear Program (both primary and junior levels) to replace the Panda Program following the giant pandas departure in March. Programs were initially run in April (primary) and May (junior) and have proven to be a popular choice for visiting schools.

Fee-based school programs remain very popular with teachers and program evaluations are consistently positive. Evaluation comments from teachers include:

“Very hands on and age appropriate. We really enjoyed the polar bear program and would do it again next year!” (C.R. Gummow)

“Presentation was very good and all of the kindergarten (students) were very interested!” (Agincourt Junior)

“My students said the conservation talk was really interesting and some said it was the highlight of their trip!” (Leaside Highschool)

“The combination of in-class program with reinforcing concepts through our trip to see the various animals was most valuable.” (Transfiguration of Our Lord)

In addition, the Education Branch develops and markets a variety of curriculum-based options/resources for teachers to bring their classes to the Zoo for general visits, without a formal program/tour. In 2018, a total of 103,374 students visited the Zoo, representing about 10% of overall attendance and generating an additional \$840,174 in admissions revenue that flows into the general operating budget, along with a portion from school workshops.

Professional Development provided to in-service and pre-service teachers

Professional development sessions continued to be offered at the Zoo to educators throughout the year. The format includes hands-on, inquiry based, activities and content which highlights our various conservation programs, particularly those that focus on Canadian species. These sessions provide teachers with an overview of the types of curriculum-linked programs and resources we have available and provide a deeper understanding of the science and efforts that go into Species Survival Plans and how we at the Toronto Zoo are working to save wildlife.

Professional development events were provided for a number of organized groups during 2018. Participants received a presentation, guided tours of the Zoo including a tour of the new Wildlife Health Centre viewing gallery, a behind-the-scenes visit on-site, and light refreshments. Organized groups included 45 secondary teachers from the Toronto Catholic District School Board in February, and 11 educators from the Science Education Leaders of Ontario (SELO) in June. As a result of the SELO visit, the Zoo participated in

another Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) based workshop off-site which incorporated similar conservation messaging and reached over 250 students.

In addition to the formal PD sessions, the Zoo hosted a Field Trip Preview Weekend on September 29 and 30, as an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of a field trip to the Zoo to enhance classroom curriculum. This event was open to classroom teachers, in addition to early childhood educators, child and youth workers, and educational assistants working in a classroom setting. Education staff operated booths to promote our field trip options and provide information and resources to attending educators. In total, 869 educators attended the event which was marketed to surrounding school boards, Montessori schools, and the College of Early Childhood Educators, as well as through social media.

Promotion of Field Trips to the Zoo

In order to maximize the exposure of the many educational opportunities available for students, the Education Branch continually makes updates and modifications to the design and content of the School Programs Brochure (Appendix 1) to ensure it is user friendly and provides key information at a glance for teachers. This brochure is printed and distributed every September and January to schools in the Toronto, Durham, York, Peel, and Kawartha/Pine Ridge school boards, as well as upon request. Brochures were also sent to all of the private schools in the Greater Toronto Area, including schools that are members of the Conference of Independent Schools. In addition to sending out the brochure, an advertisement was placed in the Attractions Ontario Field Trip Planner for Educators. This document is sent to all schools across Ontario and is also available to view and download from the Attractions Ontario website.

Through feedback from teachers, we have determined that the primary method they use to get information about field trip options at the Toronto Zoo and teacher resources is through the Zoo's website. The website was continually updated and maintained throughout 2018 allowing teachers to navigate with ease by elementary and secondary levels, filtering the resources and programs that only apply to the grade level(s) they are teaching.

In order to ensure that we are connecting with teachers through a variety of means, we produce a monthly e-newsletter, which is circulated to nearly 5,000 educators and highlights the current initiatives of the Zoo as well as educational opportunities for teachers and their students. A sample newsletter has been attached (Appendix 2).

In keeping with the growing demand and interest in learning experiences for young children, we continued to extend the school admission rate to child care centres that are registered with the Ministry of Education with a hope of attracting additional guests and increasing admissions; a total of 3,029 participants from child care centres took part in a field trip to the Zoo in 2018.

Conservation and Wildlife Educational Outreach

Curators at the Toronto Zoo and their staff also coordinate a number of grant funded programs each year that reach additional audiences.

In 2018, our Adopt-A-Pond (AAP) wetland conservation program reached over 62,084 individuals at 60 public events, which included presentations, meetings and conferences, training sessions, and through social media. We distributed over 13,306 education and conservation resources to individuals requesting information.

Our citizen science programs, FrogWatch and Turtle Tally, grew largely this year by nearly tripling and doubling respectively the number of submissions since last year, likely due to the launch of the Adopt-A-Pond mobile app. FrogWatch Ontario is part of the national initiative, FrogWatch Canada, administered by Environment Canada; AAP is the provincial coordinator of the project. FrogWatch Ontario is a partnership between Toronto Zoo's AAP, Environment Canada's NatureWatch program, and the Ontario Government's Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC). We have had 511 participants with over 19,032 observations collected since 1999. Ontario Turtle Tally was established by Adopt-A-Pond to monitor the health of turtle populations. Information that is collected in this database will be submitted to the Natural Heritage Information Centre. Turtle Tally has had over 3,128 participants who contributed over 21,334 turtle sightings since 2003. In 2018, Ontario Turtle Tally received reports of observations of 2,633 individual turtles and its' participants saved 527 turtles from potential road mortality.

Our First Nations program, Turtle Island Conservation (TIC), has also been developing and delivering conservation education programming in partnership with over 15 First Nations communities in Ontario. TIC partners with First Nation communities to preserve community knowledge and significant natural and cultural landscapes, and to support First Nations communities in their commitment to the protection of biodiversity in Ontario. We have reached over 1,000 individuals this year with education and outreach across all First Nations programs. Approximately 1,500 resources were given out including each of our books and pamphlets which have also been translated into First Nations dialects. For the coming year, TIC and AAP hope to work with First Nations communities to restore wetlands and develop new resources in native languages. See details below:

<u>Program</u>	<u># of participants</u>
Adopt-A-Pond and Turtle Island Conservation:	
Outreach and Education (Presentations, Workshops, Events)	13,724
Social Media Engagements	48,360
Turtle Tally Participants	576
FrogWatch Participants	211
TOTAL	62,871

In addition, the Great Lakes Program, focusing on the conservation of this unique and important freshwater resource, continued to develop new initiatives for outreach. In 2018 this program continued to return to the Chatham-Sarnia and Kitchener-London regions offering bi-lingual outreach for grades 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11, and also expanded into the Cobourg-Kingston area. Altogether this program reached 20,000 students in 2018.

Zoo School - delivery of Grade 11 biology credit courses

In 2010, the Toronto Zoo became established as a private school with the Ontario Ministry of Education and gained the authority to grant school credits towards a student's

secondary school diploma. Since its inception, Zoo School has been a very popular program and for the eighth consecutive year the program was at enrollment capacity with a significant waitlist of students (n=17) wanting to be a part of the program. In order to accommodate students who are keen to register and support them in timetable scheduling, Zoo School registration opens 18 months prior to the start of the course offering. In 2018, we had a total of 34 students successfully receive their grade 11 university biology credit, resulting in \$56,700 in revenue. Feedback from students and parents remains highly positive and includes comments such as:

"I am [a student], from zoo school a couple of years ago (hard to imagine, almost two years ago!) To this day, zoo school has always been so helpful for me, and I remember everything I've learned and applied it to areas like the SAT Biology test. Thank you so much. You've really made a difference in the way I see biology."

"You guys were awesome! It truly was an experience of a lifetime! It was the first time in [our son's] educational career that he loved going to school! And he worked his heart out with homework for hours every day! Loving the learning ♥ As well, he plans to apply to volunteer at the zoo - thanks again!"

Operation Conservation Program delivered to youth from underserved communities

Funded by the Tippet Foundation and Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation this program offers youth a two-day, immersive experience that serves to promote interest in the natural world and develop stewards for the environment, who are equipped to take an active role in wildlife conservation under the guidance of a supportive coordinator. Two hundred and forty nine students participated in this two-day immersion program in 2018; funding to support this program has been received from these foundations since 2002.

Learning opportunities expanded for underserved communities through Model Schools Passport Program

One of the key challenges of the Toronto District School Board's Model Schools program is to strengthen and increase parent involvement, a critical factor in student success. Participation in this passport program allowed students and their families the chance to experience the Zoo and share an enriching learning opportunity together which they may not otherwise have been able to do as a family, nor with their school, as a result of financial limitations. In 2018, 723 children and 945 adults participated in the program resulting in revenue of \$13,344.

Zoo Camp continues to provide a positive summer experience for youth

In 2018 Zoo Camp attracted 1,631 participants and generated \$496,806 in revenue. This represents a 24% increase in both participation and revenue from the previous year, which was impacted by the labour disruption. This summer we continued to provide staff training with a focus on interpretive techniques, providing the seasonal staff with a skill set to provide our campers with a fun and memorable learning experience at the Zoo. Parents were once again given the option to purchase a meal plan for their child for the week during Zoo Camp instead of making daily lunches, which was successful in generating \$10,164 in revenue. We continue to provide Before & After Care services for

parents who need the benefits of extended camp hours. In 2018, this was successful in generating \$20,707 in revenue.

Bush Camp experience remains popular

In 2018, the Bush Camp overnight experience was the strongest year on record for participation and revenue. A total of 3,527 individuals attended the Bush Camp program, either as a family unit or as part of a youth group. A total of \$307,394 was generated in revenue, which is a 54.5% increase from 2017, and 19.7% from the preceding year. This past summer, Bush Camp continued to include a behind-the-scenes visit with the Masai giraffe and watusi, both of which were very well received. T-shirts, crests, and ball caps were also available for purchase with a new addition of buffs proving to be successful in 2018.

Overnight programs in the fall and winter for youth groups continue to be a positive draw

In 2018 the Education Branch continued to offer overnight programs during the fall and winter months to youth groups such as Scouts, Guides, Brownies, etc. These programs, which were first introduced in 2015 continue to be successful and attract a number of groups throughout the non-peak season. In 2018, a total of 319 people participated in the program resulting in \$19,757 in revenue.

A variety of special themed presentations offered to engage inquiring minds

As a result of visitor feedback and the Toronto Zoo Organizational Review, the Education Branch shifted its focus from child only weekend programs towards hosting more family focused programs in 2018. These included themed programs on the topics of giraffes and giant pandas involving opportunities to meet the keepers that work closely with these animals. Additionally, our after-hours program, Bump in the Night, themed for Halloween and focusing on nocturnal animals continued to be a strong draw.

Working with staff from many other branches, the Education Branch offers guests opportunities to participate in special presentations from experts working with wildlife in the field or experts found right here at the Toronto Zoo. In 2018 the Education Branch offered presentations related to polar bears, bats, and giant pandas. In total, 532 guests participated in these themed programs, resulting in \$11,093 in revenue.

The Education Branch also hosts a special Valentine's dinner and program for adults, building on the program that was initiated in 2011. The program in 2018, focused on parenting in the wild, and had strong participation and revenue (233 participants and \$18,215 respectively, plus an additional \$950 generated through a silent auction). The program has grown in popularity and is expected to continue to be a crowd favourite in future years.

Overall, Education had an outstanding year in 2018, having the highest overall program participation and revenue. As we look forward into 2019, we are planning to continue building on this success by commencing a re-design of our school programs to incorporate current teaching practices and expectations, developing new activities and tour for Serengeti Bush Camp, implementing a more user friendly camp registration system, and continuing to work towards implementing play spaces around the Zoo site.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 1 – School Programs Brochure 2018-2019
Appendix 2 – Sample E-Newsletter – Educators' Edition (November 2018)
Appendix 3 – School and Public Education Programs 2013-2018