



Pine  
Project

**2022 Year in Review**



The Pine Project operates on the land we now call Toronto, which has been a site of human activity for thousands of years. One origin of 'Toronto' is the Mohawk word 'Tkaronto', meaning "where the trees stand in the water."\* Tkaronto is part of the traditional territory of many Nations, including the Wendat and Tionontati (Petun) First Nations, the Haudenosaunee, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit (of the Anishnabeg Peoples).

We are so fortunate to learn and play in two historically significant Valleys of the city:

- The Lower Don also known as 'Wonscotonach', translating to "burning bright point" or "black burnt country", may refer to the practice of torchlight salmon spearing on the river, or to the impact of fire on the landscape.\* The Mississaugas of the Credit had a seasonal settlement here and fished and hunted the marshlands for muskrat, duck and deer.
- The Humber, also known as 'Niwa'ah Onega'gaih'ih' or "little thundering waters."\* For at least 12,000 years an Indigenous trail followed the edge of the bluffs along this section of the Humber River valley. Just up river from where we gather weekly is Baby's Point, a neighbourhood built on the same spot as 'Teiaiagon,' once a village of the Seneca and later the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We extend our deep gratitude to the generations of People – past and present – who have tended this land, the Dish with One Spoon Territory. We acknowledge the abiding wisdom of the Dish with One Spoon treaty between the Anishnabeg and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. The 'Dish' represents what is now known as southern Ontario; we all eat out of the dish with only one spoon, ensuring that our dish is never empty. This symbolizes our ongoing roles and responsibilities of sustaining the land and treating each other and all living things with equity and respect.

Today, Toronto is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge the history and ongoing process of colonization, and recognize that in order to realize the promise and challenge of reconciliation, acknowledgement must be coupled with action. At the Pine Project, we are embarking on a journey of understanding and realizing our responsibility to reconciliation, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Principles of Reconciliation and Calls to Action. We seek to move forward with humility, respect, gratitude and meaningful relationship building.

\*We respectfully acknowledge the many histories and several translations associated with the history of this land.

## A Letter from our Executive Director

### ANDREW MCMARTIN

Dear Pine Community,

As I look back on 2022, I find myself thinking about the “new normal”. For so long over the pandemic, people speculated as to what it would look like, and over the past year, we got a taste of it. As we felt some normalcy return here at Pine, we were able to hit our stride again, running our programs without Covid interruptions to welcome over 2,000 kids into nature. But this “new normal” has also been worrying. The pandemic has taken a heavy toll on kids’ physical and mental health, which is evident in the kids we work with, and has deepened inequities in access to nature and outdoor learning.

We know nature connection programs can help. We see first-hand the incredible impact that building strong relationships with nature and community has on kids, from health and learning benefits to the deep entrenchment of personal values and identity. That understanding motivated us to meet this “new normal” and do even more in 2022. Despite the ongoing challenges of kids needing more support and staffing shortages limiting our ability to meet those needs, we achieved the many accomplishments outlined below, like growing our program offerings, launching a new programming partnership, and more.

However, these accomplishments only scratch the surface of the need. We stand ready to build upon this work and support more kids and families in 2023. We’re looking forward to continuing to expand our community partnerships and improve the accessibility of our programs, restarting our Wild Deer Adult Program, relaunching our search for a permanent home base for Pine, and of course, welcoming thousands of kids to experience the wonders of nature.

I’m grateful every single day for the passion, dedication, and vision of our community - from staff to families to supporters, you make all of this possible. With your support, we’re working to turn the tide and create a new “new normal”. One where kids are happier, healthier, and able to confidently navigate their future. Thank you for sharing our vision and making a difference for children, people, and the Earth.

With gratitude,



Andrew McMartin  
Executive Director  
The Pine Project





## ABOUT US: WE INSPIRE A LOVE OF NATURE

The Pine Project is a Toronto-based charity dedicated to inspiring a love of nature. We foster confidence, competence, resilience and connection through transformative outdoor education programming for people of all ages. Our offerings include school year programs, summer day and overnight camps, adult programs, custom programming for schools, and open invitation workshops. We also partner with schools and other groups to develop custom nature programming. Since 2008, we have served over 16,000 children, teens, adults and families. Together, we play, learn, and grow in nature.

### People who join Pine

- Feel deeply connected to nature
- Value community
- Love learning
- Practice resilience and confidence
- Are physically and mentally healthier
- Respect the land, its history, and its people

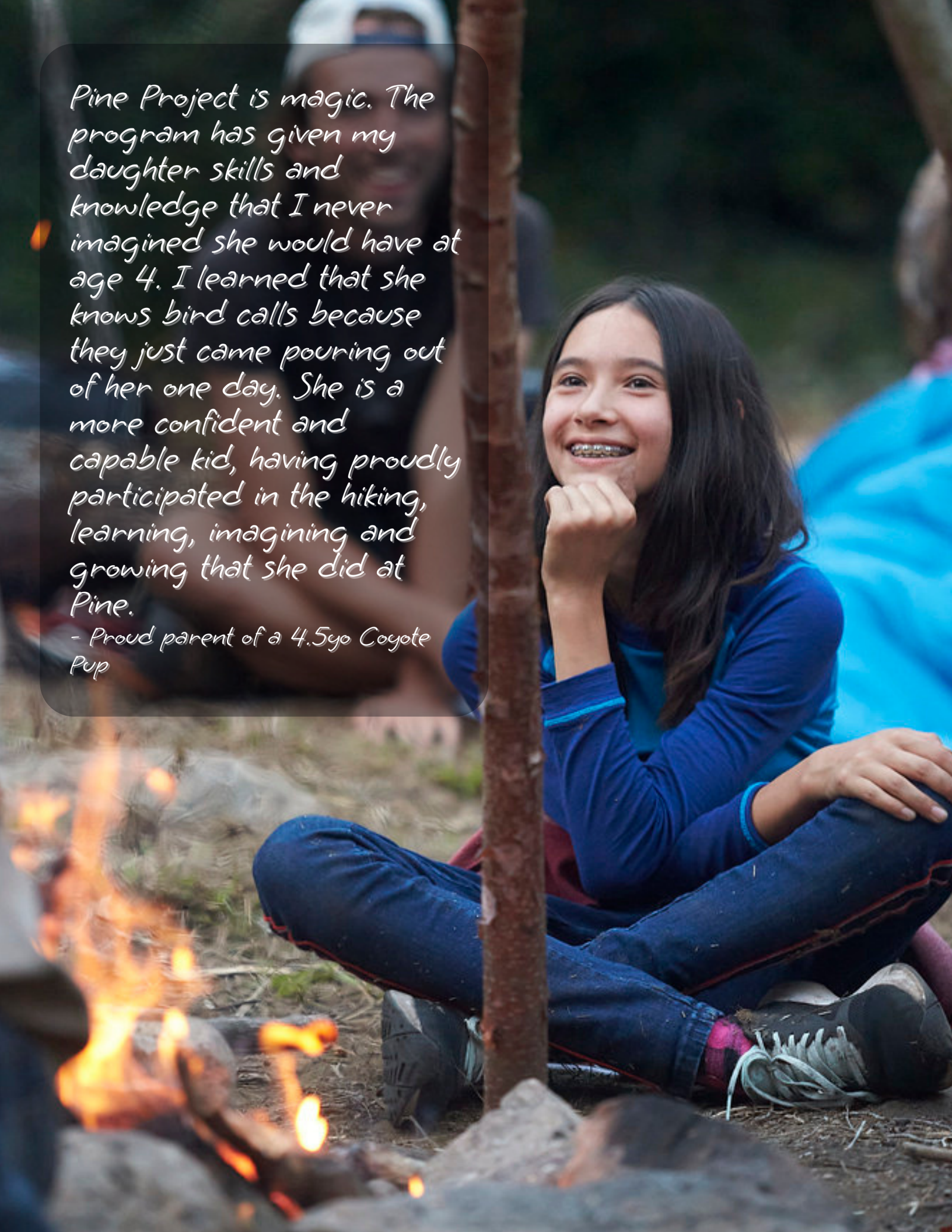
This work is made possible by YOU, our community! Thank you for supporting each other to find wonder, joy, and connection in nature.





*Pine Project is magic. The program has given my daughter skills and knowledge that I never imagined she would have at age 4. I learned that she knows bird calls because they just came pouring out of her one day. She is a more confident and capable kid, having proudly participated in the hiking, learning, imagining and growing that she did at Pine.*

*- Proud parent of a 4.5yo Coyote Pup*



# Our Impact in 2022

## Connection in Numbers



**109,692** hours children experienced the magic of nature

9,141 hours of programming offered  
221 days spent together in nature  
2,203 people served

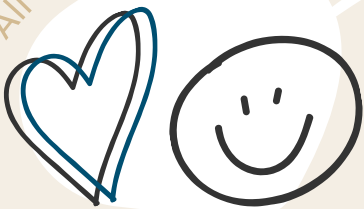


**99%**

of participants experienced increased connection to nature  
> 93% of participants experienced improvements in their mental and physical health, social skills, personal growth, and learning outcomes



All thanks to you!



**126** participants supported with financial assistance



**\$289,647** raised to support nature connection





## DEEPER THAN NUMBERS: REFLECTIONS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

"Thank you for everything you have done and continue to do. It's been an extraordinary couple of years. Your program has helped our son find positive ways to work through the challenges and stresses related to the pandemic and everyday living. Thank you for cultivating a love of nature as well as a responsibility to ourselves, others and the environment. The education and experience he gains from Pine is incomparable."

- Erin, Parent of Finn (Age 7)



"Many organizations claim to offer inclusive programming but then fail to actually deliver. Pine Project actually provides an inclusive, supportive and welcoming environment for Autistic kids and their families. The skills and compassion of staff are incredible and have truly had an impact on our family."

- Grateful Pine Parent

"Nature connection is important to me because it's about so much more than ID'ing plants or practicing survival skills. It's about a sense of community, gratitude, self-transformation, and feeling connected to nature here in Toronto. I've seen how Pine holds space for my children and others to explore their own interests, to feel recognized and proud of their gifts and talents, and to learn how to manage risks for themselves. It's so beautiful. "

- Meghan, Pine Parent, Participant and Family Member



# 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

## New Community Partnership with Eastview

In October 2022, Pine kicked off a new programming partnership with Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre. Each week, experienced Pine Instructors join kids at Eastview's Boys & Girls Club to get outside, explore a local park, play nature-based games, and practice new outdoor skills. We couldn't be more thrilled to help bring nature connection programming to kids in Toronto's Blake-Jones neighbourhood and surrounding area. It's thanks to dedicated supporters and community members that we're able to start offering this kind of programming free of charge.



## Return of Red Wolf Overnight Camp

After a 2-year Covid hiatus, we reopened Red Wolf Overnight Camp in August 2022. Red Wolf holds a special place in the hearts of many within the Pine community. It provides a unique opportunity for kids to disconnect from modern distractions and experience backcountry camping in a safe, inspiring environment. One parent shared:

*Unplugged in the wilderness was a life-changing experience for [my son]. He came home feeling strong, proud and connected. Thank you for giving my son a true sense of how courage, self-reliance and communing in nature fills you up in a way that nothing else can. - Mel, mother of a 2022 camper*



## Expansion of Summer Day Camps

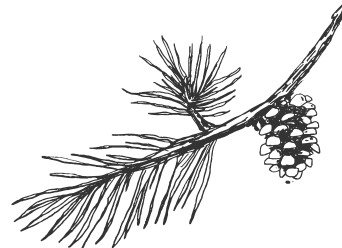
We know that it can be difficult to snag a spot in our popular Urban Summer Day Camps. We've been doing everything we can to increase our capacity each year. In 2022, we added over 130 new spots in day camps, a 13% increase over 2021 (and a whopping 30% increase from only 3 years earlier). A big win in helping more kids connect with nature!



## Community Nature Nights Begin

In October 2022, Pine launched Community Nature Nights (CNNs)! Community Nature Nights are free, open invitation workshops intended to inspire curiosity, learning, and connection. Each month, Oct – Jun, experienced mentors create a space for community members to grow their naturalist knowledge, tackle new outdoor skills, and explore mentoring techniques that support nature connection.

CNNs were developed to centre the importance of community in sharing nature connection skills and experiences. By offering programming that is free of charge, varies in themes and locations (including online), and welcomes all ages, we hope to create opportunities for more people to engage in nature connection.



# Advancing Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Pine team is committed to engaging with a decolonial lens and elevating diversity, equity and inclusion in our relations and our work. In 2022, building off of our past learnings and efforts, we took steps to live this commitment more deeply, including:

- Increasing our staff training on equity and inclusion-related themes, with staff participating in five training sessions run by external experts on gender, anti-racism, neurodiversity, mental health and Indigenous teachings.
- Addressing barriers to accessing nature connection programming by:
  - Building new partnerships with Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre (to provide free programming; see above), and Kids in Camp and Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund (to support lower-income families to join summer camp).
  - Expanding Pine's Bursary Fund (28% increase in budgeted amount vs 2021).
  - Providing 20 participants with support for seasonal gear and clothing.
- Continuing to incorporate teachings about the history of the land, cultural histories, and Indigenous-Settler relations into our programming in age-appropriate ways; eg:
  - Reading books by Indigenous authors (like "Nibi is Water" by Joanne Robertson)
  - Learning Ojibwe words for plants, animals and places
  - Holding conversations appreciating the history and culture of Indigenous peoples, drawing on Indigenous sources, in recognition of how Indigenous lands, place names, local villages, and ways of life continue to inform the influence and impact Indigenous culture has on our ways of life.
- Establishing plans and dedicating resources to continue this work in 2023 and beyond, including setting a goal to establish a partnership with a local inner-city school to provide free nature connection programming for up to 500 students.



# Your Support Matters

We are honoured to have the support and partnership of so many within our community. Whether you're a participant, caregiver, donor, partner or community member, THANK YOU for making 2022 a year to remember. The work outlined here is only made possible by your support.

You made it possible for over 2,200 children to get outside with caring mentors this year, to be curious and playful, learn to overcome challenges, experience joy and laughter, find confidence in their unique gifts, and build deep relationships with nature. It's thanks to you that we can support more than 120 kids with bursaries, begin delivering free programming to underserved communities, and build our capacity to reach more people each year.

## A special thanks to:



Ontario  
Trillium Foundation



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*If we want children to flourish, to  
become truly empowered, then let us  
allow them to love the earth before we  
ask them to save it.*  
- David Sobel







Pine Project

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