

## FINAL REPORT TO THE CANADIAN TREE FUND (JACK KIMMEL GRANT)

FOR

### THE BEN NOBLEMAN COMMUNITY ORCHARD SIGNAGE PROJECT

Not long ago, after the installation of our new signage in Ben Nobleman Park Community Orchard, one of our volunteers, Lynn, saw a father and child reading the new sign together. She approached them and told them that she was involved in the orchard.

"I didn't even know there was an orchard in this park until just now," he said. He lives near the park and visits the playground with his son frequently.

"I was wondering," he asked, "Do you sell Ben Nobleman Park Community Orchard T-Shirts? I would love to buy one for my little boy!"

The truth is that we don't sell T-shirts. But that interaction was exciting for the volunteers in our initiative. To us it shows that when people know about our project, they get excited about it and want to get involved in some way. And that was the goal of creating an installing signage.

So, we are pleased to report to the Tree Fund Awards Committee that no longer is the public unaware of the Ben Nobleman Community Orchard.

Thanks to the Canadian Tree Fund's Jack Kimmel grant, "It Takes a Community" signage beckons the casual passerby to discover the park's beautiful fruit trees and they also learn about the labour of love that takes place here throughout the seasons.

The following document will:

- 1) demonstrate that the signage fulfilled its purposes
- 2) Show how the objectives were achieved
- 3) Acknowledge the successes and challenges of the project
- 4) Describe the impact of the sign on aborigiculture/urban forestry
- 5) Show measurable outcomes of the signage.

#### **PURPOSE**

The signage promotes awareness, education and outreach in the aborigiculture industry through the pictures and illustrations of the seasonal tasks we perform in the Ben Nobleman Orchard such as weeding, mulching and pruning in order to keep our fruit trees healthy and productive.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

Our objectives for the signage included:

- a) Educate the public about the seasonal tasks that are required in order to keep our fruit trees healthy and productive
- b) Teach the community about the relationship between fruit trees and pollinator gardens
- c) Inspire fruit tree planting at home or the creation of more community orchards
- d) Create awareness of the volunteer nature of our organization, and encourage new volunteers to join us in caring for our trees

- e) Communicate community harvest times and other special activities
- f) Clarify harvesting etiquette.

At the fundraiser in the summer, we formally unveiled the signage and have incorporated the signage in our walk around tours to educate, teach, encourage participation, and inspire tree planting as outlined in our objectives above.

The signage has also been utilized to communicate our activities in the park including our annual fund raising event in the spring and our participation in the Rosh Hashana Market in the fall.

### **SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES**

Successes of the project are twofold. First the project was on time. The sign and billboard were completed prior to our annual fundraiser in order to promote it.

Also, we were able to showcase it during a large community event in the park called "The Rosh Hashana Market" which attracted hundreds of people from around the neighbourhood during the two-day event.

Each day we held two orchard tours and we used the new signage as a tool to educate the crowd about what we do. The signage also publicizes the orchard and encourages new volunteers to participate in our orchard.

Another success was the project was also on budget. We were able to produce the sign at a reasonable price due to our relationship with the graphic artist Audrey Nair who was once a volunteer for the orchard.

In addition, our relationship with the Toronto Parks and Recreation helped to ensure that we could get a sturdy and beautiful sign at an affordable price since Parks and Recreation covered the cost of installation.

Design Cost	\$ 180.00
Poster Cost	\$ 97.41
Installation/Construction of Billboard	<u>\$ 900.00</u>
TOTAL	\$1177.41

After ten years of enhancing and animating the park with the orchard, this signage has gone a long way to finally help passers-by understand why our park is so special and how they can get involved.

Our main challenge is the difficulty measuring the effectiveness of our sign in terms of awareness and educational value.

We have had first-hand interactions seeing people looking at the signage or even taking pictures of it. But what is impossible to know is how many people have learned more about us as a result of the signage.

We hope that over time we will however, reap the benefits. People now know what we do and they understand how to get involved and how to interact with the trees.

We hope that will lead to people harvesting more carefully so as to not break branches and damage the trees while reaching for an apple, some cherries, an apricot or a plum.

## **IMPACT/OUTCOMES**

We outlined in our grant proposal how we see the signage benefitting our community through the acronym GROW:

G: Gather as a community to participate in orchard activities, festivals and events and build community.

R: Rest in the orchard for urban local residents, apartment dwellers and volunteers.

O: Outreach to our community to educate about tree-care and encourage new volunteers.

W: Wellness through involvement in our fruit tree project with volunteers enjoying regular exercise, increased social connections, and enjoyment of bounty of free organic fruit.

We strongly believe that the signage has created a tremendous impact in that:

1. The presence of the signage enhances the creation of community centred around the Orchard and Park.
2. This year we had 25 new people sign up for our orchard volunteer list. In recent memory, we have not witnessed such a huge response. We are guessing that is partially a result of the new signage.
3. Along with the increased interest in volunteering, we have seen an increase in our volunteer hours in 2019. This year we volunteers spent a total of 205 volunteer hours in the park. This is an increase of 30 hours this year compared with the 2 previous years which were steady at 174 and 176 hours.
4. All the volunteers - new and old- are enjoying the wellness benefits of connectedness to nature and each other's company, and the purpose of creating joy for others in the community as well.

Thank you so much to the Canadian Tree Fund for giving us this opportunity to share our project with others. The signage gives our orchard park the attention it so richly deserves. And it's been really wonderful for the hardworking volunteers to see such a positive response from local residents who finally understand what we do - and why we do it.

Please find attached a copy of the signage for your files. Thanks again!

Marilyn, Gail and the team.



# BEN NOBLEMAN PARK COMMUNITY ORCHARD

**OUR WORK**

**FALL**

**Harvest**

- Picking the ripe fruit carefully, protects tree branches.

**WINTER**

**Pruning**

- Tree trimming improves tree health and productivity.

**Dormancy**

- Trees need to rest in the winter, and so do the orchard volunteers!



**OUR STORY**

- We are **Toronto's first community orchard** in a public park, established in 2009.
- Volunteers care** for the fruit trees and pollinator garden on weekends.
- Volunteers also raise funds** for orchard supplies through events and grants.

**SUMMER**

**Orchard Sox**

- Covering the young fruit with sockettes to protect from insect damage.

**Tree Painting**

- Painting the trunks of the trees protects from sunburn damage and crawling insects.

**SPRING**

**Mulching**

- Compost or rotted manure feeds the trees.

**Weeding**

- Removing weeds reduces competition for water and nutrients.

**Pollination**

- The pollinator garden attracts insects which allow fertilization and fruiting.

**OUR GOALS**

- To create a **vibrant community space** where people socialize, relax, and work together.
- To **teach the importance of trees** and the role they play in feeding us.
- To **learn the skills involved** in growing food and to live more sustainably.



**OUR VALUES**

This orchard is for everyone's enjoyment. **We ask that you:**

**BE RESPECTFUL**

- Do not climb the fruit trees or pull their branches. Broken branches will never regrow.
- Do not enter or walk through our pollinator garden to avoid killing the pollinator plants.
- Leave the orchard free of trash and litter.

**HARVEST FAIRLY**

- Do not pick unripe fruit.
- If the fruit is ripe, gently harvest only what you can eat while in the orchard.
- If you would like to take fruit home, please come out to an organized harvest or volunteer day.
- To receive notice of harvest days, join our email list by emailing [growingforgreen@gmail.com](mailto:growingforgreen@gmail.com).

**OUR EVENTS**



Many photos courtesy of [www.margaretirvingpopart.ca](http://www.margaretirvingpopart.ca)

**VOLUNTEER!** Visit [www.communityorchard.ca](http://www.communityorchard.ca) or email [growingforgreen@gmail.com](mailto:growingforgreen@gmail.com)

**OUR SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS**



