



# GRATITUDE REPORT 2023



Five Oaks

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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**We deeply appreciate your ongoing support for Five Oaks. Your contribution is essential to the Centre's existence and growth.**

**Dear Friends of Five Oaks,**

**It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I reflect on the wonderful year that was 2023 at Five Oaks. As the Executive Director, I am humbled to have been able to serve this remarkable community. The past year has been one of growth, renewal, and meaningful connections, and I am honoured to have been a part of it.**

**One of my personal highlights of 2023 was the opportunity for a sabbatical and visits to retreat centres in Scotland. This experience allowed for reflection and rejuvenation, ultimately leading to the addition of our 'Simply Be' Rest and Renewal retreats to our program roster. These retreats embody the essence of Five Oaks – a space for seekers of transformation, rest, and renewal.**

**In alignment with our Strategic Plan, 2023 saw us pinpointing three key directions for our programs: Seeking Transformation, Rest and Renewal,**

**and Custom Group Retreats. Our dedicated staff, in collaboration with the Partner Working Group, have been diligently working to offer these programs alongside our growing Outdoor Education Programming, which included a successful pilot school field trip program and the popular Acorn Adventure Camp. Our Partner Working Group continues to explore avenues for deepening connections to our interfaith communities and offering meaningful cross-cultural programs. This commitment to inclusivity and diversity is at the core of our mission and values.**

**I am thrilled to announce that in 2023, Five Oaks welcomed over 195 groups and hosted 6735 guest nights, marking it as our most successful year for hosted groups since 2017. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire operations team, who have shown remarkable resilience following the years of pandemic impact.**

Five Oaks is deeply honoured to be connected with a growing network of community partner organizations, including the Grand River Bookstore, Grand River Rafting, Brave Waves, GROWE Outdoor School, Rogers Ranch, and others. These partnerships provide invaluable support and connection, enriching our community in profound ways.

In 2023, Five Oaks completed a major heating and cooling project, reducing the Centre's carbon footprint through the implementation of air source heat pumps in key areas such as the offices, Upper Room, Bookstore, Friendship, and Peace retreat houses. Thanks to a

resilient communities grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Five Oaks was able to introduce air conditioning to these spaces. Additionally, we launched our new website and completed smaller renovations, including enhancements to the boardwalk and other outdoor areas.

As we look ahead to the coming year, the team at Five Oaks is excited to welcome you back to the Centre. Whether through participation in our programs, volunteering, or supporting the centre in other ways, we invite you to join us on this journey of growth, healing, and community. With heartfelt gratitude,

# MICHAEL SHEWBURG

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## NOTICE OF AGM

The Annual General Meeting for the 2023 fiscal year will be held on Sunday, June 9th, 2024. It will be hosted both in-person at Five Oaks and virtually over Zoom.

As people of various faiths or no faith who care about the earth and Five Oaks, we are committed to "Embrace Difference". At this year's AGM, you'll be invited to take part in an Art Project that visually represents our commitment to Be and Become together. The event begins at 2PM and a delicious dinner is to follow.

Registration for the AGM is now live, visit <https://bit.ly/3So6Cs8> or [www.fiveoaks.on.ca](http://www.fiveoaks.on.ca)



# A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

As the Board of Five Oaks navigates this season in the life of the Centre, we are embracing change together. Over the past year we have drawn the circle of the Board wider through the wisdom of interfaith members who embody the mission and values of Five Oaks. We have been committed to meeting regularly and in-person on-site. Decisions inviting intentional discernment are made using a Circle process. We have made strides in aligning our polices and practices with the vision and key priorities of the strategic plan.

We are so grateful for the competent and dedicated leadership of the Five Oaks staff who lead with resilience, flexibility and the warmest of welcomes to all participants and guests of the Centre. Heartfelt thanks also to Ruth Noble for her service as Board Co-chair last year and as Chair of Human Resources and Governance this year. She has stepped down from the Board to pursue other endeavours.

Depth of programs brings the mission, vision and values to life in transformative ways. For example Five Oaks hosted “Engage Difference”, a program facilitated by the Canadian Council of Churches for strengthening understanding of intercultural ministry. This aligns with Five Oaks’ identity and vision to build relationships that will heal and change the world. Quarterly “Simply Be” retreats invite participants to embrace rest as an act of resistance and to reclaim personal strength. They teach us to pause. Board members have committed to participate in programs. We trust in the power of being on this land and in our relationship with its history, present and future. The land gifts us with cause for hope.

Members of the Board were present for the Solar Eclipse on April 8th. We gathered with over 120 other people on the Path of 100% Totality. Some highlights:

- Watching through special glasses
- Noticing the temperature and light change
  - Quieting of birds’ songs
  - Swooping of bats swoop over the water
- Being surrounded by a full circle sunset or a 360° experience of dawn
  - Taking our glasses off and see the diamond eclipse
  - Cheering in Awe

Light and Shadow combined and danced to make something rare and beautiful. The connection of land, creatures and universe was revealed. Moments like these are reminders of the roots of the world community for which we are so grateful and of the Why behind the Work.

## MAYA LANDELL AND PEGI RIDOUT

### BOARD CO-CHAIRS

Barb William: Treasurer	Martha Pedoniquotte: Member of Partners Team
Maggie Dieter: Co-secretary	Mark Laird: Executive Minister of Horseshoe Falls Regional Council of the United Church
Peter Wall: Chair Human Resources and Governance	and Corresponding Member
Amira Ayad: Member of Partners Team	

# 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

## FIVE OAKS PROGRAMS

IN 2023 FIVE OAKS OFFERED 52 PROGRAMMING CHOICES THAT ALIGNED WITH THE THREE KEY DIRECTIONS GROWING FROM THE STRATEGIC PLAN INCLUDING: SEEKING TRANSFORMATION, REST AND RENEWAL, AND CUSTOM GROUP RETREATS.

## ACORN ADVENTURE CAMP

NEW PROGRAMS WERE ADDED TO FIVE OAKS SUCCESSFUL DAY CAMP PROGRAM, EXPANDING TO INCLUDE A PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR 5 YEAR OLDS AND A YOUTH CAMP FOR 11-14 YEAR OLDS. CAMPERS CONNECT WITH OTHERS AND NATURE THROUGH GAMES, CRAFTS, SWIMMING, RAFTING, CREEK STUDIES, SCIENCE, CAMPFIRE, AND HIKE!

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

WE CONTINUED OUR PARTNERSHIPS THIS PAST SUMMER. BRAVE WAVES OFFERED SWIM INSTRUCTION FROM JUNE TO AUGUST IN THE FIVE OAKS POOL, WITH 10,210 LESSONS OFFERED IN THE POOL THIS SUMMER. GRAND RIVER RAFTING, ONE OF OUR LONG-TERM PARTNERS, CONTINUED OFFERING THEIR SHORTER TUBE RUN ON THE RIVER THAT SAW 8,637 PEOPLE USING FIVE OAKS AS AN ACCESS POINT.

## HEATING/COOLING PROJECT

FIVE OAKS COMPLETED THE INSTALLATION OF AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS IN PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP HOUSES, AS WELL AS THE OFFICES, THE BOOKSTORE AND THE UPPER ROOM IN THE MAIN BUILDING. THIS UPGRADE DECREASES THE USE OF HEATING FUELS AND ADDS AIR CONDITIONING TO THESE SPACES TO MAKE THEM ACCESSIBLE YEAR ROUND.

## HOSTED GROUPS

FIVE OAKS EXTENDS ITS VISION AND MISSION TO HUNDREDS OF GROUPS ANNUALLY. THE TEAM AT THE CENTRE WELCOMED GROUPS INCLUDING: 180 GUESTS FROM THE SIKH COMMUNITY FOR THE SIKH INITIATIVE SUMMER EVENT, THE ANNUAL NATIVE PEOPLES RETREAT, NORTH WARD SCHOOL GROUPS, AND RETREAT CENTER COLLABORATION.

# CORE PROGRAMS

## RETREAT OFFERINGS

### REST + RENEWAL

Unwind at Simply Be: Rest and Renewal Retreats. These mid-week escapes offer respite from daily demands, with guest facilitators in enriching practices like painting, forest bathing, and naturopathic medicine. Embrace rest as an act of self-affirmation and resistance against constant expectations. Enjoy personal reflection, nature connection, and optional social time.



### CUSTOM GROUPS

Elevate team dynamics and boost morale with a custom team retreat. Work with our program staff to design a unique experience tailored to your group, featuring guided nature activities, mindfulness practices, and Indigenous knowledge workshops.

### SEEKING TRANSFORMATION

Embark on a transformative journey with Five Oaks' Seeking Transformation programs. These themed retreats aim to unravel preconceptions, ignite awareness, and inspire action through deep listening and sharing. Expert facilitators help participants recognize biases, understand different perspectives, and renew their commitment to positive change. Past programs include a retreat for Christian Settlers and Where Cultures Meet & Retreat focused on reconciliation and Haudenosaunee history. Join us in this journey of personal growth and collective change.

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND GROWTH

Welcome to Five Oaks Centre, where profound programs and rejuvenating retreats are thriving. Experience the convergence of education, spirituality, and nature in our expanding programs like Acorn Adventure Camp and Diversity School Group sessions. We invite you on this journey of self-discovery and community building, where every moment inspires progressive growth.



## 2022 PROGRAM STATS

**42** FIVE OAKS  
PROGRAMS

**456** ACORN CAMP  
PARTICIPANTS

**798** TOTAL  
PARTICIPANTS

## 2023 PROGRAM STATS

**52** FIVE OAKS  
PROGRAMS

**481** ACORN CAMP  
PARTICIPANTS

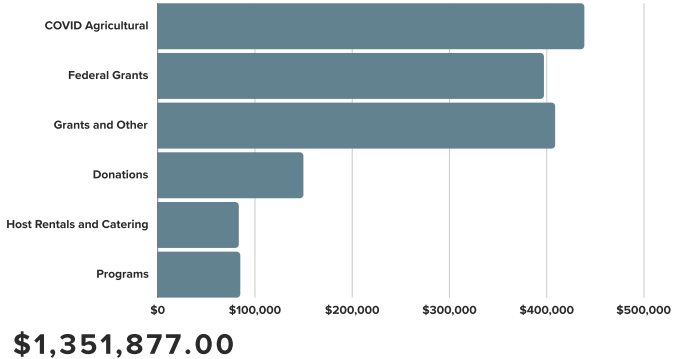
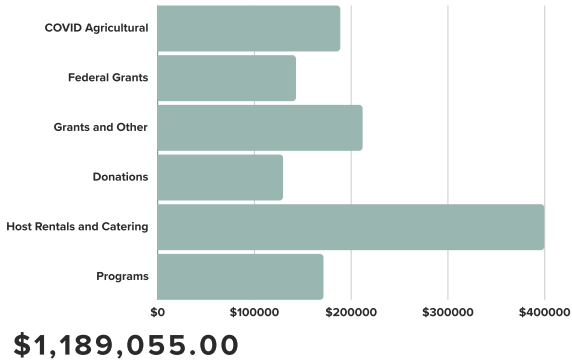
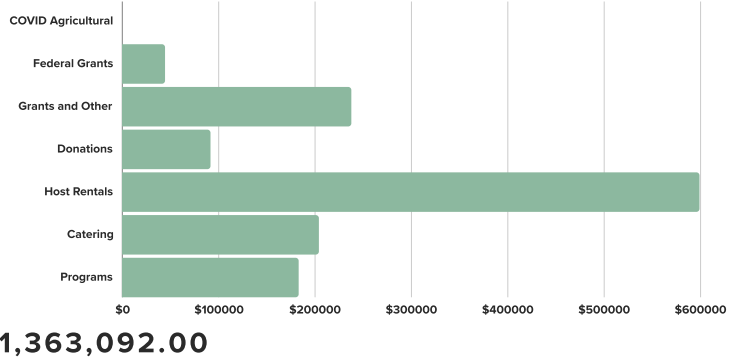
**1082** TOTAL  
PARTICIPANTS

BROWSE OUR NEW WEBSITE! [WWW.FIVEOAKS.ON.CA/](http://WWW.FIVEOAKS.ON.CA/)

# 2023 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

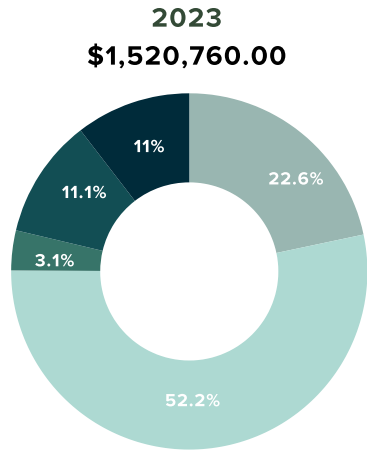
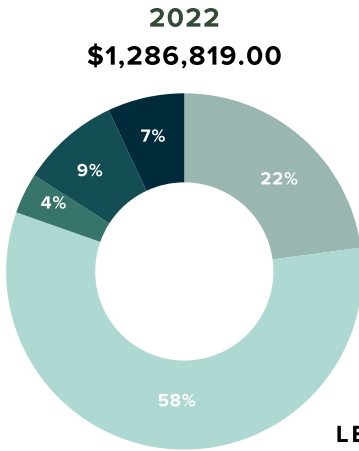
2023  
2022  
2021

## OPERATING REVENUE

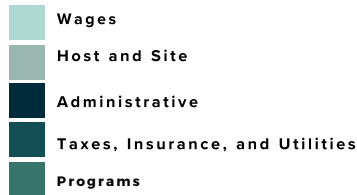




# OPERATING EXPENSES



## LEGEND



# OPERATIONS HIGHLIGHTS



## HVAC UPGRADES

Main building and retreat houses underwent a transition from oil to heat pump systems, thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.



## BOARDWALK ENHANCEMENTS

Brant Community Foundation provided a grant to enhance our boardwalks, enabling us to replace approximately 60 feet of them.



## FIVE OAKS GUESTS

The retreat centre welcomed a record number of guests, hosting 196 groups and offering 52 diverse and life-changing programs and events.



## CENTRE UPDATES

Part of B + C wings refreshed with new paint and LED lighting. Renos are underway in the Chalet's dining room, and the solar hot water preheat is now fully operational.

# A FEW WORDS FROM OUR HOSPITALITY TEAM

"My favourite part of being part of the Five Oaks team is the staff. Everyone is super supportive and genuinely cares about their employees. I feel I have room to grow without being afraid to make mistakes. In 2023, I gained valuable experience in various roles like day camp, lifeguarding, and housekeeping, which helped me grow significantly. I'm excited to join the Hospitality Administration team and welcome guests to this amazing place." - *Jenna McLaughlin*

"Five Oaks is such an incredible and peaceful space to be part of. It's a privilege to work in such beautiful surroundings with a team that truly cares about Five Oaks, not just because it's a job. We create meaningful memories for everyone who stays here. I love being part of the Hospitality team, introducing guests to the world of Five Oaks and tailoring their experience. Everyone here greets you with a smile and makes you feel like family. The joy on the Day Camp kids' faces and their laughter brighten every summer day. Hearing positive feedback from guests via calls, emails, and conversations is heartwarming. It's a testament to what Five Oaks stands for and how impactful it is." - *Dawn Sangster*





# DONATIONS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to be added to the Five Oaks Newsletter

**DONATE ONLINE** [www.fiveoaks.on.ca/donate](http://www.fiveoaks.on.ca/donate)

**DONATE BY MAIL**

I am enclosing a cheque

**OR**

Please charge my credit card:

Visa  Mastercard  Amex

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry (mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

CSC (3 or 4 digit code): \_\_\_\_\_

- I wish to know more about Faith Bonds
- I wish to know more about Legacy Giving
- I wish to receive a Tax Receipt (Donations \$20.00+)

*Five Oaks will be a good steward of the personal information gathered. We do not sell, share or rent this information to a third party, and secure or destroy it accordingly to PIPEDA guidelines.*

**I wish to make a ONE-TIME gift at the following level:**

- \$50 CAD
- \$100 CAD
- \$150 CAD
- \$200 CAD
- \$500 CAD
- Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ CAD



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Your donation and presence play a crucial role in sustaining and expanding the work at Five Oaks. Thank you for joining us on this journey of impact and service. We are grateful for your support and we look forward to achieving even greater milestones together in 2024. We extend a warm invitation for you to join us at the Centre for one or more of our retreats or events!

It would be wonderful to see you here soon.

## FEATURED OFFERINGS

**EVENT SUMMER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION JUNE 20**

**RETREAT SIMPLY BE: FOREST THERAPY SEPT 29-OCT 1**

**CONFERENCE WEAVING OUR STORIES:  
AN INTERFAITH WOMEN'S+ CONFERENCE OCT 4-6**

**PROGRAM DIVERSITY SCHOOL GROUP SESSIONS ONGOING**

**RENTALS HOST YOUR NEXT GATHERING HERE! ONGOING**

[FIVEOAKS.ON.CA/PROGRAMS/](https://fiveoaks.on.ca/programs/)

**FIVE OAKS CENTRE  
1 BETHEL RD.  
PARIS, ON N3L 3E3**



**RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED  
PORT DE RETOUR GARANTI**