BUILDING ACADEMIC RETENTION THROUGH K9S

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Okanagan School of Education

Annual Report
YEAR 7
2018/19
MESSAGE FROM B.A.R.K. DIRECTOR,
DR. JOHN-TYLER BINFET

We’re pleased to report highlights from another busy year in B.A.R.K. Established in 2012, B.A.R.K. provides social and emotional support to students at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan campus to reduce their stress and homesickness and to increase their sense of community on campus. In keeping with UBC’s mission to “enrich the learning experience of students,” B.A.R.K. serves as an active research and volunteer hub where students, from varied disciplines, are mentored in conducting research on various dimensions of canine-assisted interventions and/or gain valuable volunteer experience in any number of community programs B.A.R.K. offers.

Highlights from this year include the publication of Honor’s Biology student, Haley Silas’s research in the Journal of Veterinary Behavior, the completion of data collection by graduate students Freya Green (Canine-assisted visitation and stress reduction benefits to RCMP constables) and Nicole Harris (Exploring the effects of a canine-assisted intervention on Okanagan Boys & Girls Club participants), and the naming of Dr. Binfet to the editorial boards of both Anthrozoöös and the Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin.

Increasingly B.A.R.K. is being recognized as a leader in the field, and this is being reflected in news coverage in the Huffington post USA, The Conversation, and the Globe and Mail.

As always, we are appreciative of the financial support from UBC’s Student Support Services and from VEDA Exclusive Living who continue to be tireless advocates of the work we undertake in B.A.R.K.

Though B.A.R.K. is a community-driven initiative at UBC Okanagan, providing support to students, its primary focus is to conduct high-quality research that advances the field of animal-assisted therapy. I would like to thank all of the dedicated B.A.R.K. volunteers who make this program possible.

There are a number of ways to support B.A.R.K. and donations are always welcome (see the “DONATE” button on our website). For more information, contact the B.A.R.K. office at bark.dogtherapy@ubc.ca.

Dr. Binfet
Associate Professor, Okanagan School of Education
University of British Columbia
MISSION STATEMENT

Now in its seventh year, Building Academic Retention through K9s (B.A.R.K.) is a research-driven program designed to support the emotional well-being of university students grappling with challenges around homesickness, social isolation, and integration into the university community. B.A.R.K. programming consists of both intervention studies and community drop-in services.

B.A.R.K. upholds the following core beliefs and values:

1. Community members play a key role in enhancing research initiatives on campus. B.A.R.K. volunteer dog handlers contribute enormously to both student enrichment and research studies carried out through the B.A.R.K. lab.

2. B.A.R.K. research and drop-in programs provide a framework for mentoring student scholars and volunteers.

3. B.A.R.K. is committed to supporting diversity and strives to create working climates where everyone is welcome, recognized, and invited to contribute.

4. B.A.R.K. is committed to community partnerships and supports the efforts of local animal-welfare groups (e.g. Paws it Forward, Kelowna SPCA).

5. B.A.R.K. is committed to upholding the highest standards of research. This includes adhering to both Human Behavioural Research Ethics Standards and to Animal Welfare Ethics Standards, using experimental designs that include the randomization of participants into treatment and control conditions, and including follow-up assessments of treatment effects as part of methodological designs.

6. B.A.R.K. is committed to giving back to the university community and pledges to have an active presence in student and university initiatives.
This year, B.A.R.K. tracked over 3850 interactions between students and B.A.R.K. therapy dogs on campus. We welcomed twelve new therapy dogs to the team, along with 9 new handlers. This increased the total number of therapy dogs participating in the program to 61. On campus, B.A.R.K. offered regular drop-in sessions on Friday afternoons and BARK2GO sessions on Wednesdays. In addition, the B.A.R.K. program took part in numerous additional events, including CREATE, THRIVE, and UBC’s first Homecoming and Giving Day events. This helped to extend the reach of the program and raise awareness of the work we do in B.A.R.K.

**B.A.R.K. DROP-IN**

B.A.R.K. offers regular drop-in sessions on Friday afternoons from 4:30-6:00pm in EME 1123, the Faculty of Education’s Innovative Learning Centre. There are typically 13 to 16 dogs and their handlers involved in each session, along with 15 student volunteers. On average 94 UBC students visit the lab each Friday and interact with therapy dogs and handlers for approximately 30 to 45 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered **14**
- Average number of participants per session **94**
- Total number of visits to the drop-in **1310**

**BARK2GO**

B.A.R.K. also offers regular BARK2GO sessions, which sees 4-5 therapy dogs, their handlers, and a student facilitator situated in high-traffic locations on campus. Held on Wednesdays in Fipke foyer and the Library’s new flex space, BARK2GO sees 119 UBC students, on average per session. Students typically spend between 5 and 20 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered **18**
- Average number of participants per session **120**
- Total number of visits to BARK2GO **2156**

**ON-CAMPUS PROGRAM VISITS**

Drop-ins + BARK2GO + Giving Day = 3857
Over the course of this year, UBC's B.A.R.K. program has continued to visit RCMP members and city employees at the Kelowna detachment. In addition, this year B.A.R.K. trialled new BARK2GO-style sessions at both Kelowna and Rutland detachments.

**RCMP DROP-IN**

B.A.R.K. offers regular drop-in sessions on Thursday mornings at the Kelowna detachment. Each session sees 4 handlers and 4-6 dogs stationed within the detachment. On average 16 employees (predominantly RCMP, City of Kelowna, and Regional District of Central Okanagan) attend each drop-in. Employees, on average, interact with therapy dogs and handlers for approximately 15 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered: 13
- Average number of participants per session: 16
- Total number of visits: 199

**RCMP BARK2GO**

In addition to drop-in sessions, this year B.A.R.K. conducted 18 BARK2Go-style visits. This saw a single dog and handler stationed in higher-traffic locations in the Kelowna and Rutland detachments. Between the two locations, B.A.R.K. saw approximately 65 employees per week.
Thanks to continued funding from the TELUS Thompson Okanagan Community Board, 20 students from the Okanagan Boys & Girls Club participated in a 6-week program designed to develop leadership skills, build confidence, and provide an opportunity to practice acts of kindness. Now in its second year, the Building Confidence and Kindness through K9s program sees B.A.R.K. dogs and handlers working alongside UBC student mentors to foster social and emotional development in children, aged 5-11.

Under the direction of B.A.R.K. educators Nicole Harris, Carson McKay, and Pam Robertson, students attended weekly sessions and practiced a variety of skills including, but not limited to: introducing oneself to others, recognizing the importance of eye contact, giving and receiving of meaningful complements, and practicing self-reflection and empathy for others.

At the end of the program, parents attended a graduation ceremony wherein students received certificates to celebrate their participation in the program. This provided the children with the opportunity to demonstrate the skills they had learned or developed, and introduce their parents to the B.A.R.K. volunteers, dogs, and mentors with whom they had spent the past 6-weeks.
COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

B.A.R.K. at VEDA Exclusive Living

B.A.R.K. holds sessions at VEDA exclusive living on Mondays from 6:00-7:00pm, once a month. This situates 4-6 therapy dogs and their handlers in their APEX club room. Open to everyone, these sessions see approximately 45 students per visit.

In addition to VEDA, B.A.R.K. participates in numerous other community initiatives including:

- Sessions at the Indigenous Scholars Student Conference, UBC Okanagan
- JUMPSTART orientation, UBC Okanagan
- CREATE orientation, UBC Okanagan
- Visits to School District 23
- UBC’s Homecoming
- UBC’s Giving Day
- THRIVE Week, UBC Okanagan
- Relay for Life, UBC Okanagan
- Therapy dog session with HOPE outreach
- Therapy dog session with Okanagan School of Nursing, UBC
- Okanagan Bernese Meet Ups fundraiser at St. Hubertus & Oak Estate Winery
THE B.A.R.K. TEAM

Running all of the varied B.A.R.K. programs would not be possible without the hard working, dedicated team of student and community volunteers. The B.A.R.K. Team in 2018/19 consisted of the following members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>61</th>
<th>57</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Therapy dogs</td>
<td>Volunteer Handlers (660 hours)</td>
<td>UBC Student Volunteers (972 hours)</td>
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</table>

Total in-kind volunteer hours = 1632
COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

Each year, B.A.R.K. receives a large number of comments about our program. Below is just a small sample of comments from the 2018/19 academic year.

“B.A.R.K. has been one of my favourite parts of University. So thankful for your contribution to our students and for bringing such an upbeat and caring culture to our school!”
– B.A.R.K. visitor, March 2019

“Great place to be on a Friday, thank you!”
– B.A.R.K. visitor, February 2019

“This was the highlight of my week” – B.A.R.K. visitor, September 2018

“People in the B.A.R.K. Program are very supportive”
– B.A.R.K. visitor, September 2018

“I love petting all the dogs, helped my stress.”
– B.A.R.K. visitor, March 2019

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

The B.A.R.K. program is supported on UBC’s Okanagan campus by the AVP Students Office and the Okanagan School of Education’s Innovative Learning Centre. We are also grateful for sponsorship from VEDA Exclusive Student Living (http://www.vedaliving.ca), and the many individual donors who participated in our fundraising campaign this year. Specific project support was contributed by the TELUS Thompson-Okanagan Community Board, the Kelowna RCMP, and City of Kelowna.
CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


2. Symposium at the annual meeting of the International Association of Anthrozoology, Sydney, Australia. Therapy canines: Screening and assessment, safeguarding well-being, and innovative programming.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2018–2019

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<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>AVP Students Office (UBC Okanagan)</td>
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<td>VEDA Exclusive Living</td>
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<td>Telus Thompson Okanagan Community Board</td>
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<td>Carry Forward (2017/18 Fiscal)</td>
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<td>Work Study (UBC) Funding</td>
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<td>Fundraising/Donations</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honoraria/Professional Fees</td>
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<td>Salaries and Benefits (student positions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference and Travel</td>
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<td>Incidents</td>
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<td>Operational Supplies and Expenses</td>
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<td>Food and Beverage</td>
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<td>Audio, Video and Photography/Professional fees</td>
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<td>Gifts/Volunteer Appreciation</td>
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<td>Laundry</td>
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<td>Volunteer parking passes</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses 2018/19</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Carry forward next fiscal</strong></td>
<td>14079.23</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39127.09</strong></td>
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Note: Some funds raised from UBC Giving Day were deposited in the 2019/2020 fiscal year

PUBLICATIONS


GRANTS AWARDED

Binfet, J. T. (2018). Building confidence and kindness through K9s: A pilot project with the Okanagan Boys & Girls club. TELUS Thompson Okanagan Community Board. $5,000.
IN THE NEWS

The B.A.R.K. program was featured in numerous media stories this past year. A sample of these is included below:

1. Huffington Post, March 19 2019 [Link](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dog-therapy-students-college-campus_b_5c90ffa9e4b04d574a452c73)


3. The Conversation, March 10, 2019


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Facebook: BARK UBCO
Twitter/Instagram: BARKUBC

CONTACT
Freya Green, Program Coordinator

As Program Coordinator, Freya assists with the administration and implementation of on-campus and community-based B.A.R.K. programs. Any questions regarding volunteering for B.A.R.K., requesting B.A.R.K. visitation, or general inquiries should be directed to Freya Green at bark.dogtherapy@ubc.ca