



# ANNUAL REPORT

**YEAR 11**  
2022/23

**Building Academic  
Retention through K9s**



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**BARK**  
BUILDING ACADEMIC RETENTION THROUGH K9S



# CONTENTS



Letter from the Director	2
Mission Statement	3
B.A.R.K.'s 10 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	4
Program Report	5
The B.A.R.K. Team	8
Financial Report	9
Sources of Support	9
News and Media	10
Publications and Presentations	11
Under the Spotlight	12
In Memoriam	13
Comments from Visitors	14

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

## DR. JOHN-TYLER BINFET



As Year 11 in B.A.R.K. comes to a close, we look back on several memorable events and achievements. We started the year with our annual New Dog Intake process that saw 41 dog-handler teams apply and 13 move to full acceptance into programming. A belated congratulations to these teams and we've seen wonderful promise in them as they have found their place with B.A.R.K. programming. Assessing potential dog-handler teams takes a bit of a village to do and I am grateful for the handlers, student volunteers, and B.A.R.K. personnel for all their work and expertise here.



In September, we hosted the 10 Year Anniversary of B.A.R.K. and saw volunteers from years past attend and share their memories and experiences in B.A.R.K. If you're ever up in the B.A.R.K. office, be sure to ask Freya to see the "10 Year Anniversary Book" she and Amanda Lamberti compiled! What started as a humble operation back in 2012 has grown to become a leading force in on-campus canine-assisted intervention programming. With 59 therapy dogs working on behalf of B.A.R.K. we've been able to continue our Drop-in student stress-reduction program on Fridays that just saw us surpass 10,000 student visits!

Our BARK2GO program on Wednesdays remains popular and offers students a low-barrier and easy-to-access opportunity to spend time with the B.A.R.K. dogs. Under the direction of Freya Green, our weekly sessions at the Kelowna Detachment of the RCMP just celebrated 5 years of programming! We also saw data collection completed for two new studies – one on virtual canine comfort using Qualtrics and a second study examining how stress is differentially reduced by gender. In addition to this collective programming and research success, we had several publications emerge from the B.A.R.K. lab with notable publications on our Virtual Canine Comfort project funded by a Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada grant. Arising from this grant was a new co-authored book with researcher Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams titled "Virtual Human-Animal Interactions" (2023; Routledge).

Adding to the B.A.R.K. accolades was doctoral student Camille Rousseau's receipt of the prestigious Public Scholars Initiative 2023. Congratulations Camille! In closing, we acknowledge the passing of several of our senior therapy dogs and remain grateful for their years of service. Along with their handlers, we find comfort in the support they offered students and members of the communities in their work on behalf of B.A.R.K.

Sincerely,  
John-Tyler Binfet, Ph.D.  
B.A.R.K. Founder & Director

# MISSION STATEMENT

Now in its eleventh 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.

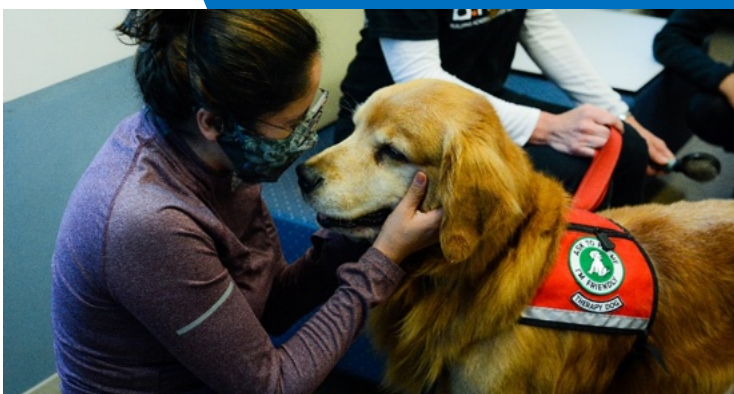
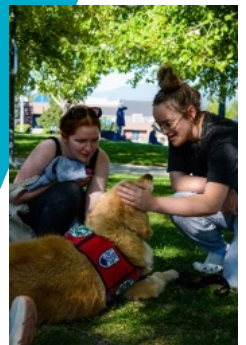


# B.A.R.K.'s 10TH ANNIVERSARY

For 10 years, B.A.R.K. has been dedicated to exploring the role of therapy dogs in fostering well-being on campus and in the community and supporting the well-being of students, staff, faculty, law-enforcement, and seniors. To celebrate hitting this milestone, we collaborated with numerous on-campus partners to host a series of events and activities. These included an anniversary drop-in session, a Meet & Greet with UBCO Heat, Stretch & Cuddles with UBCO Athletics and Recreation, B.A.R.K. Hidden Gifts with the UBC Okanagan Library, and our Paws for Applause celebratory Banquet.



## Meet & Greet with UBCO Heat



## Stretch & Cuddles with UBCO Athletics and Recreation

## Paws for Applause Banquet



# PROGRAM REPORT: ON-CAMPUS

By hosting two regular on-campus programs and attending numerous events, B.A.R.K. tracked over 3,400 in-person, on-campus interactions between students and handler-therapy dog teams. This year, we continued our ever-popular drop-in sessions on Friday evenings and our BARK2Go sessions on Wednesday afternoons.



## Campus Drop-Ins

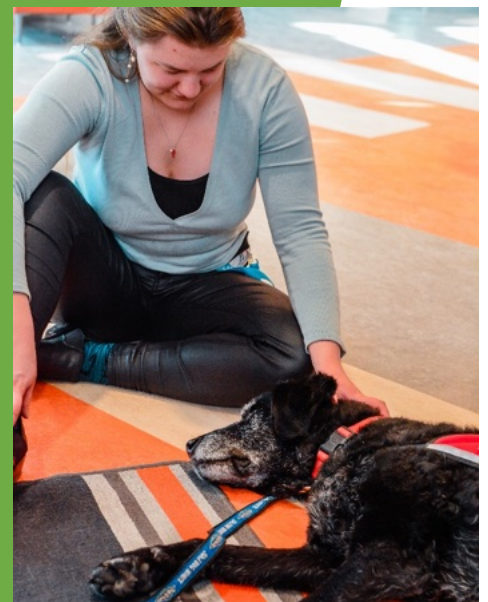
B.A.R.K. offers regular drop-in sessions on Friday afternoons from 4:30-6:00pm in EME 1123, the Okanagan School of Education's Innovative Learning Centre. There are typically 10 to 13 dogs and handlers involved in each session, along with 15 student volunteers. On average 78 UBC students visit the lab each Friday and interact with therapy dogs and handlers for approximately 30 to 45 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered **11**
- Average number of participants per session **78**
- Total number of visits to the drop-in **844**

## BARK2GO

B.A.R.K. also offers regular BARK2GO sessions, which sees therapy dog-handler teams, and a student facilitator situated in high traffic locations on campus. Held on Wednesdays in the UNC Building and the Library's flex space, BARK2GO sees 135 UBC students, on average per session. Students typically spend between 5 and 30 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered **16**
- Average number of participants per session **135**
- Total number of visits to BARK2GO **2158**



**ON-CAMPUS PROGRAM VISITS = 3494**

# PROGRAM REPORT: ON-CAMPUS



This year, B.A.R.K. continued to offer mini sessions and the virtual canine program. In addition, we participated in numerous campus events and initiatives including collaborative events with the Okanagan School of Engineering, English as an additional Language program, and Athletics and Recreation.

## Virtual Canine Program

This year, B.A.R.K. continued the virtual canine program developed in 2020 by providing 24/7 access to virtual canine modules to the UBC Okanagan campus and greater community. We saw 1,176 people make use of the program from May-December and have expanded our reach to 44 countries across the world!



## B.A.R.K. Mini Sessions

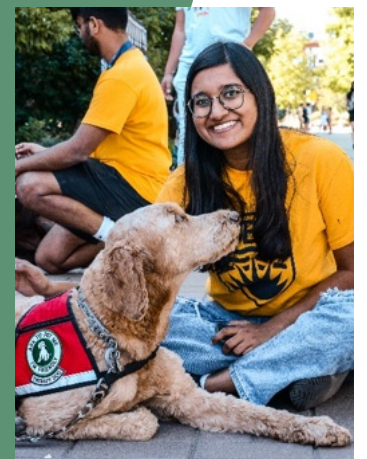
In addition to our regular drop-in and BARK2Go sessions, B.A.R.K. continued to offer smaller sessions for students seeking an opportunity to spend more time with peers and therapy dogs in a more intimate setting.

- Total sessions offered **11**
- Average number of participants per session **13**
- Total number of visits to the mini sessions **64**

## Special Events

B.A.R.K. participated in numerous campus collaborations, including:

- Stress-reduction sessions with the English Foundation Program
- Cops and Canines with UBCO Security and RCMP
- B.A.R.K. & Yoga with Athletics and Recreation
- B'Ed and M'Ed Orientations with Okanagan School of Education
- Create Orientation, Weeks of Welcome drop-in, and THRIVE sessions with Student Services
- Meet and Greet with UBCO Heat



# PROGRAM REPORT: COMMUNITY

Thanks to continued partnerships, B.A.R.K. entered year 7 at VEDA and continued our stress-reduction and community-building sessions. Visitation to the Kelowna RCMP Detachment entered into Year 5, and we continued to provide opportunities for RCMP members to boost their well-being. We also returned to Missionwood Retirement Resort for our Valentine's Day special event.

## VEDA Exclusive Student Living

B.A.R.K. is grateful for the continued sponsorship from VEDA Exclusive Student living. Therapy dogs and their handlers support resident wellbeing and build community. Open to everyone, these sessions see approximately 30-50 students per visit.

- Total sessions offered **8**
- Average number of participants per session **22**
- Total number of visits **176**



## RCMP Drop-In Sessions

B.A.R.K. offers regular drop-in sessions on Thursday mornings at the Kelowna detachment. On average 23 RCMP members and City employees attend each drop-in and interact with therapy dogs and handlers for 15 minutes, on average, per visit.

- Total sessions offered **9**
- Average number of participants per session **23**
- Total number of visits **206**

## Valentine's Day with Seniors

B.A.R.K. was delighted to return to Missionwood Retirement Resort again this year. Originating in 2019, this collaborative project provides an opportunity for students, volunteer handlers, seniors, and therapy dogs to connect with one another. This year we saw over 50 senior residents in attendance.



**OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAM VISITS = 447**



# THE B.A.R.K. TEAM



Running all of the varied B.A.R.K. programs would not be possible without the hardworking, dedicated team of student and community volunteers. The B.A.R.K. Team in 2022/23 consisted of the following members:

58

Volunteer  
Handlers

59

Therapy dogs

20

Student  
Volunteers

**TOTAL IN-KIND VOLUNTEER HOURS = 1591**

# FINANCIAL REPORT



## 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 the continued sponsorship from VEDA Exclusive Student Living (<http://www.vedaliving.ca>), and the many individual donors who participated in our fundraising campaign this year.

Donations to B.A.R.K. can be made at [www.bark.ok.ubc.ca](http://www.bark.ok.ubc.ca).

### FINANCIAL REPORT 2022/23

#### Revenue

Carry forward from 2021/22	28,870.31
Transferred from Program Code	19,434.35
Funding from VEDA Exclusive Living	10,000.00
Program Funding from AVPS	7,000.00
Salary Funding from AVPS: Program Coordinator	46,915.00
Donations	6,673.00
Student Directed Initiatives Funding	1,374.00

**Total Revenue** 120,266.66

#### Expenses

Salaries and Benefits: Students	16,141.83
Salaries and Benefits: Program Coordinator	50,724.72
Professional fees	1,240.00
Travel and Accommodation	211.68
Technology	2398.18
Telecommunication Charges & Utilities	641.06
Office & Operational Supplies	17,021.22

#### Commitments

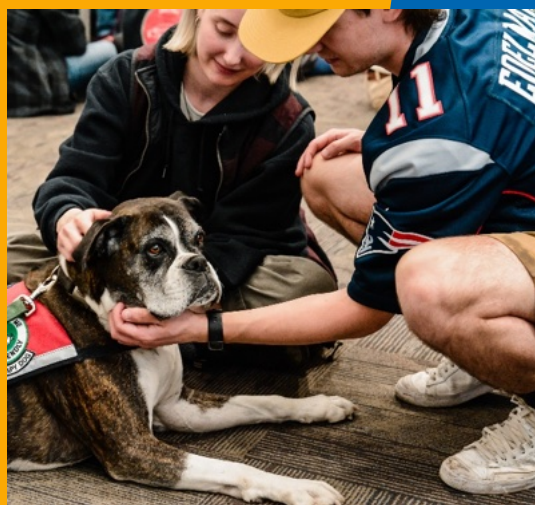
Conferences & Workshops	2,954.81
-------------------------	----------

**Total Expenses** 88,378.69

Carry forward next fiscal 31,887.97

**Total** 120,266.66

*\*Program codes were transferred part way through this fiscal year*



# NEWS AND MEDIA

## Radio

103.9 The Lake (2023, Feb 15).

## Television

Castanet (2023, Mar. 12). Dogs Help Out RCMP: Kelowna Mounties take a break from their day with some happy puppies

KelownaNow (2023, Feb. 14). Dogs storm seniors' home for Valentine's Day.

Castanet (2023, Feb. 14). Therapy dogs visit Kelowna retirement home.

## Print

KelownaNow (2023, Feb. 14). UBCO therapy dogs visiting seniors for Valentine's Day.

Castanet (2022, Sept. 21). UBCO celebrates 10 years of canine therapy programs.

DogTime (2022, Sept. 8). Cuddling Dogs Improves Student Life at Canadian University.

Flipboard (2022, May 27). Brock, UBC study highlights benefits of virtual canine visits.

The Brock News (2022, May 25). New research shows virtual canine comfort can benefit stressed students

TW Labradors (2022, Mar. 12). Kelowna therapy dogs hit the web.

Kelowna Capital News (2022, Mar. 12). Kelowna therapy dogs hit the web.

## Psychology Today

(2023, Feb. 14). Therapy Dogs Can Unite College Students and Seniors.

(2023, Jan. 12). The Proliferation and Appeal of On-Campus Therapy Dog Programs.

(2022, Nov. 9). Who makes a good therapy dog?

(2022, Aug. 5). Adapting to College: Strategies to Avoid Homesickness.

(2022, Apr. 30). Therapy Dogs Provide Virtual Comfort.



# Presentations & Publications



## Presentations

Binfet, J. T., Tardif-Williams, C., Draper, Z. A., Green, F. L. L., Singal, A., Rousseau, C. X., & Roma, R. (2022, Nov. 3rd). Exploring how virtual interactions with therapy dogs enhances undergraduate student well-being. Paper presented at the *International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference*, Kelowna, Canada.

Papers presented for Symposium at the annual meeting of the *International Society for Anthrozoology*, Boise, Idaho (Virtual). Virtual Canine Comfort: Considerations and Findings from Virtual Canine-Assisted Interventions  
Paper 1: Binfet, J. T., Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Green, F. L. L., Roma, R., Singal, A., Rousseau, C. X., & Godard, R. J. P. (2022, July). Supporting college student well-being through virtual interactions with therapy dogs: Findings from a randomized controlled trial.

Paper 2: Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Binfet, J. T., Green, F. L. L., Roma, R., Singal, A., Rousseau, C. X., & Godard, R. J. P. (2022, July). Exploring college students' perceptions of a virtual canine intervention.

## Publications

Binfet, J.T., Green, F.L.L., Singal, A., Rousseau, C.X., Roma, R., & Godard, R. (in press). When therapy canines provide virtual comfort: Exploring university students' insights and perspectives. *People and Animals: The International Journal of Research and Practice*.

Rousseau, C. X. & Binfet, J. T. (in press). Publication trends in Society & Animals from 2009-2019: A bibliometric analysis. *Society & Animals*.

Rodriguez, K. E., Green, F. L. L., Binfet, J. T., Townsend, L., & Gee, N. R. (2023). Complexities and considerations in conducting animal-assisted intervention research: A discussion of randomized controlled trials. *Human-Animal Interactions*.

<https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2023.0004>

Binfet, J.T., Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Draper, Z. A., & Green, F. L. L., Singal, A., & Rousseau, C. X. (2022). Virtual canine comfort: A randomized controlled trial of the effects of a canine-assisted intervention supporting undergraduate wellbeing. *Anthrozoös*, 35(6).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2022.2062866>



# UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

## Student Volunteer: Akshat Singal

Akshat began volunteering with B.A.R.K. in 2019 and quickly became an integral member of the B.A.R.K. team. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit and B.A.R.K. pivoted to a virtual platform, his technological prowess became essential to B.A.R.K.'s ability to support student well-being through virtual canine comfort modules. Akshat graduates in 2023 (BSc Computer Science) and we wish him all the best for his move to Seattle to begin his career at Microsoft.

“Akshat’s strong leadership and keen scientific mind will be missed in B.A.R.K. He set the bar high for a B.A.R.K. volunteer – always ready to step in when needed and assisted with both study delivery and applied programming.”



## Handler-Dog Team: Elizabeth & Wrigley

Elizabeth and Wrigley began volunteering with B.A.R.K. in 2019. During their time with B.A.R.K., they were involved with our drop-in and BARK2GO sessions, virtual canine projects, and lots of special events on-campus and in the community. It is with great sadness that we announce that Wrigley crossed the rainbow bridge this year. Our thoughts are with Elizabeth and her family.

“Elizabeth and Wrigley will be missed in B.A.R.K. and, under Elizabeth’s excellent handling, Wrigley was able to do what he did best – connect and reassure students and help them push away the worries of the world.”



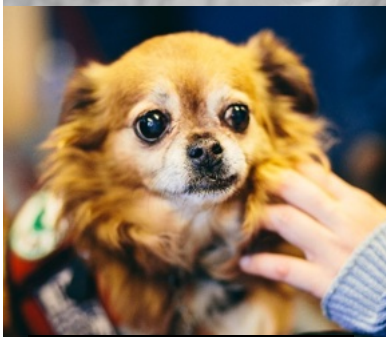
## B.A.R.K. Alumni: Charlie Drummond

B.A.R.K. is grateful for all of the student volunteers that commit time and energy to support B.A.R.K. programming. Charlie began volunteering in 2012 as the program was first introducing therapy dogs to the campus community and continued to volunteer until 2017. In his time with B.A.R.K., Charlie co-founded the BARK2Go program. Introduced to campus in 2015, BARK2GO has become a highly-popular addition to the campus life and we thank Charlie for leaving a legacy at UBC Okanagan.

“Charlie’s legacy in B.A.R.K. continues in our BARK2GO program. He remains a strong supporter and advocate for B.A.R.K. and we’re lucky to have him as part of the B.A.R.K. family.”

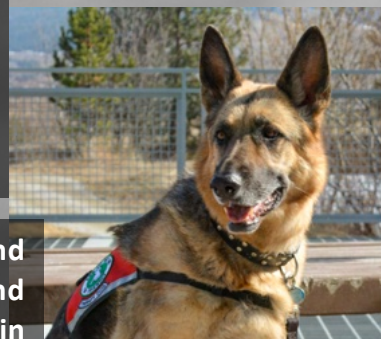


# In Memoriam



**Angel**

Angel was one of the first therapy dogs to set foot on the UBCO campus in 2013 as part of our pilot program. She was well-known in the drop-in sessions for climbing into your lap for pets but she was at her happiest when cradled in the arms of students or B.A.R.K. volunteers.



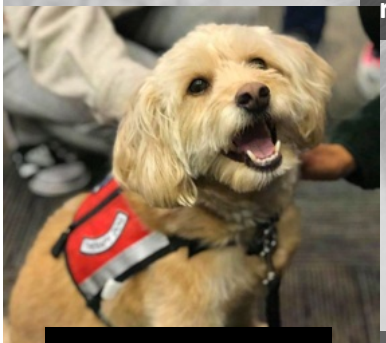
**Baby**

Baby was a classic reminder to live life to the fullest and she inspired many as a three-legged cancer survivor and therapy dog. She was an popular member of our drop-in team and she had mastered the art of catching the attention of students as soon as they walked in the door.



**Craig**

Craig - Dr. Binfet's well-known and popular tripod sidekick – was always ready to spread the joy whether it was in the office, around and about on-campus, or at drop-in sessions. As the official "BARK office dog," Craig had a special role in reducing stress within the B.A.R.K. research hub and will be missed by everyone.



**Cooper**

Cooper was one of our happiest little therapy dogs who just loved connecting with students at BARK2Go and RCMP members at the Kelowna detachment. He will be remembered for greeting everyone with a big smile and requesting butt scratches at every event he attended.

Those who knew Teddy knew that his name could not have been more apt – he really was a Teddy Bear. Always eager for a cuddle and ever-ready for that photo opportunity, Teddy was a well-loved member of the B.A.R.K. drop-in team from 2012-2019 and is sorely missed.



**Teddy**



**Inch**

Inch had a tough start to life, but he had so much love to give. He was a popular addition to the drop-ins, but he truly shone as one of the pioneer dogs of the BARK-RCMP program. He even spent his latter working years modelling his therapy dog duties for his brothers, Kit and Canele who, no doubt, will continue his legacy.

Many of our students on campus will know Wrigley for his gentle soul and patience – the only thing he loved more than cuddling with students was his tennis balls! Wrigley was also involved in our virtual canine program and proved to be just as sweet on camera as he was in-person.



**Wrigley**

**“The dogs are INCREDIBLE. Very, very well done!”**  
– UBC Student, Sept. 2022

**“Really love the program and wish they did this at every university!”**  
– UBC Student, Feb 2023



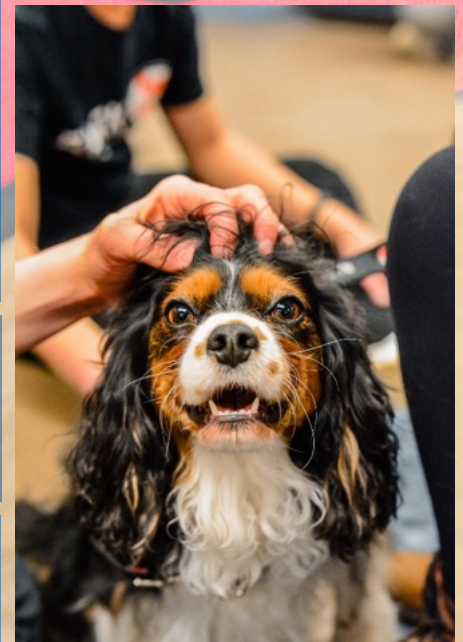
**“Such a fantastic idea! Dogs are so good for the soul”** – UBC Student, Nov. 2022

**“Words cannot express how grateful I am for having BARK part of my life. I loved the BARK program and the amazing people who make the program possible even before coming to UBCO”**  
– UBC Student, Sept. 2022

**“Volunteering with Sitka in BARK was one of the highlights of my time at UBCO. I will never forget the feeling of a drop in session, which was the most wonderful buzzing atmosphere. The perfect combination of excitement, friendship, comfort, relaxation and laughter”**  
– B.A.R.K. Alumni, Sept. 2022

**“I really enjoyed the session! It was great to have a nice break with friendly people and faces.”**  
– RCMP Attendee, Nov. 2022

**“Very enjoyable and I loved every moment!”**  
– UBC Student, Oct. 2022



“At VEDA Exclusive Student Living, we couldn’t be more thankful & more proud of the B.A.R.K. program, and more specifically, the team that makes it all happen. At its core, B.A.R.K. is about connection and the sessions held at VEDA continue to be our most popular and well-attended event amongst our tenant community”

– VEDA management, Sept. 2022

“I love BARK! Every time I see the therapy dogs I get so excited! And when I get to pet them I feel so much better about whatever may be going on in my life. Thank you so much for this amazing program!”

– UBC Student, Sept. 2022

“Absolutely loved it. People and dogs are wonderful. A positive, great program. Brings so much zen and happiness”

– RCMP Attendee



“THAT WAS SO MUCH FUN!! Thank you so much!”

- UBC Student, Feb. 2023





“B.A.R.K. not only gave me a sense of purpose, but it gave me a family who became a huge support system for me by showing me it’s okay to be who I am. If it wasn’t for B.A.R.K., I would not be who I am today, and I probably wouldn’t have pushed myself to stay at UBCO, or even to continue with my degree. I will forever cherish my time with boss man Ty, Freya, and every volunteer that I have crossed paths with. Thank you for all you have done for me!”

“There's really nothing better than walking into a room full of wagging tails and fluffy paws at the end of the week. Watching students who are missing their pets at home or who need a pick me up during exam season connect with the dogs is such a gift. I am so grateful to be a part of such a welcoming and positive community!”

– B.A.R.K. Volunteer, 2022

“Amazing to have such people organize a beautiful way to heal people’s minds!”

– UBC Student, March 2023



“This program allowed me to make new friends, feel calmer (thanks to all the dogs who let me pet them), talked to different faculty to help guide me, and overall leave me with a smile on my face and ready to enjoy my university experience”

- UBC Alumni, Sept. 2022



“Amazing. Best program ever!”  
– UBC Student, Nov. 2022



The University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus  
1137 Alumni Avenue, EME 3118  
Kelowna, BC, V1V 1V7

Website: [bark.ok.ubc.ca](http://bark.ok.ubc.ca)  
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](mailto:bark.dogtherapy@ubc.ca)