

ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR 12 2023/24



Building Academic Retention through K9s

BARK 
BUILDING ACADEMIC RETENTION THROUGH K9S



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

DR. JOHN-TYLER BINFET

As Year 12 comes to a close, there are a number of highlights and milestones that warrant recognition. Our New Dog Intake saw 7 teams move on to acceptance in the Drop-in Program and 2 teams added to the BARK2GO Program. Our BARK2GO program saw the addition of a new station in the EME Building which quickly became our most popular station (1,093 visits at this station alone!). Freya Green, B.A.R.K.'s Program Coordinator, oversaw Year 6 of B.A.R.K. dogs at the local detachment of the Kelowna RCMP. B.A.R.K. continues to capture the interest of researchers both nationally and internationally and this year we were pleased to host colleagues from UWaterloo, Calgary, and from Swansea University, Wales.

The B.A.R.K. lab continues to be prolific in disseminating knowledge about therapy dogs and, in addition to a co-authored book with Dr. Tardif-Williams titled "Virtual Human-Animal Interactions: Supporting Learning, Social Connections, and Well-Being" (Routledge, 2023), we had 5 peer-reviewed publications published (most with student co-authors!). One publication stands out as especially noteworthy with regards to its scientific findings. In an effort to answer "Does spending time with therapy dogs work equally well for all genders?" we conducted a study assessing the effects of a 20-minute intervention on women, men, and gender-expansive students and found that the intervention works equally well across genders. Arising from this publication was an invitation for Freya to give a webinar for the Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin. B.A.R.K. participated in 3 podium presentations at the International Society for Anthrozoology in Edinburgh, Scotland. Locally, we offered a session at Peter Greer Elementary that saw children practice a variety of social and emotional skills in interacting with B.A.R.K. dogs. For high school students, B.A.R.K. dogs participated in Mount Boucherie's Mental Health Week and supported messaging around self-care, stress reduction, and well-being.

Before closing, it's important we recognize the achievements of B.A.R.K. students including Dr. Camille Rousseau's successful defense of her Ph.D. Camille will graduate this spring along with B.A.R.K. volunteers Amelia, Hugo, and Meg. Although we're sad to be seeing these students leave us, we know they will remain connected to B.A.R.K. and will always be a part of the B.A.R.K. family. In closing, we express appreciation to Dr. Dale Mullings, UBC Okanagan's Associate Vice President (Students) for his support and funding of B.A.R.K. and to VEDA Exclusive Student Living who, for the past 8 years, has been a staunch financial supporter of programming.

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



MISSION STATEMENT

Now in its twelfth 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.



“I genuinely felt like I had problems that weren't going to go away ever, but now they feel smaller and less significant.”

— 1st Year Student, Feb. 2024



“This is probably my favourite thing to do on campus. I always come out feeling happy and stress-free!”

— 2nd Year Student, Feb. 2024

PROGRAM REPORT: ON-CAMPUS

By hosting two regular on-campus programs and attending numerous events, B.A.R.K. tracked over 4,000 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 expanded the BARK2Go program by adding our new, highly popular, EME station.



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 12 to 14 dogs and handlers involved in each session, along with 15 student volunteers. On average 82 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 **13**
- Average number of participants per session **82**
- Total number of visits to the drop-in **1,063**

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 159 UBC students, on average per session. Students typically spend between 5 and 30 minutes per visit.

- Total sessions offered **17**
- Average number of participants per session **159**
- Total number of visits to BARK2GO **2,696**



ON-CAMPUS SPECIAL EVENTS + PROGRAM VISITS = 4,125

PROGRAM REPORT: ON-CAMPUS

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 **4**
- Average number of participants per session **17**
- Total number of visits to the mini sessions **66**



Special Events

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

- Graduate student drop-in with the college of graduate studies
- Stress-buster event with the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies
- Meet and Greet with UBCO Heat
- Community-building sessions with the English Foundation Program
- Create Orientation, Weeks of Welcome drop-in, and THRIVE sessions with Student Services
- Exam-special BARK2Go sessions with the UBCO library

PROGRAM REPORT: COMMUNITY

Thanks to continued partnerships, B.A.R.K. entered an eighth year of programming at VEDA Exclusive Student Living and continued our stress-reduction and community-building sessions on Monday evenings. This year, we expanded our visitation to the Kelowna RCMP Detachment by relocating to a convenient, high-traffic location within the detachment to meet the increasing demand to boost the well-being of RCMP members and Civic employees.



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 well-being and build community within the cozy setting of the VEDA clubrooms on Monday evenings. Open to everyone, these sessions see approximately 20-40 students per visit.

- Total sessions offered **8**
- Average number of participants per session **17**
- Total number of visits **132**

RCMP Drop-In Sessions

B.A.R.K. offers regular drop-in sessions on Thursday mornings at the Kelowna detachment. On average 56 RCMP members and City employees stop by our station, conveniently located in a central hub within the detachment, to de-stress and connect with B.A.R.K. therapy dogs, handlers, and staff.

- Total sessions offered **10**
- Average number of participants per session **56**
- Total number of visits **561**



OFF-CAMPUS SPECIAL EVENTS + PROGRAM VISITS = 1,061

PROGRAM REPORT: COMMUNITY



Peter Greer Elementary School



B.A.R.K. collaborated with Ann-Katrine Giroux, teacher intern (BEEd '23), at Peter Greer Elementary school for a social-emotional learning infused session with Grade 2 students. This session incorporated social awareness, self-management, empathy, responsible decision making and relationship-building. Students practiced introductions with the therapy dogs and their handlers, interviewed handlers about the dogs' preferences and hobbies, learned about dogs' body language, and reflected on their own body language.

Welcoming Visitors

B.A.R.K. is honoured to receive visits from researchers and canine-assisted program directors from around the world keen to learn more about B.A.R.K. programming and research. This year, we welcomed colleagues from Uwaterloo, Calgary, and Swansea University, Wales.



Mount Boucherie Secondary

In aid of Mental Health Week, B.A.R.K. collaborated with Mount Boucherie Secondary School to host a drop-in for high school students. Supporting messaging around self-care and well-being; this session saw 346 people in attendance and provided high-school students the opportunity to de-stress and connect with peers during a busy week.

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 2023/24 consisted of the following members:

62

Volunteer
Handlers

64

Therapy
dogs

21

Student
Volunteers



TOTAL IN-KIND VOLUNTEER HOURS = 1,842

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 generous 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.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2023/24

Revenue

Carry forward from 2022/23	31,887.97
Funding from VEDA Exclusive Living	10,000.00
Program Funding from AVPS	7,000.00
Salary Funding from AVPS: Program Coordinator	50,212.00
Salary Funding from Central Finance: Program Coordinator (Wage Increases)	10,329.00
Donations	970.25

Total Revenue 110,399.22

Expenses

Office & Operational Supplies	13,871.81
Salaries and Benefits: Students	9,639.61
Salaries and Benefits: Program Coordinator	57,104.98
Travel and Accommodation: Conferences & Workshops	7,218.59
<i>Note: Includes student participation in international conferences</i>	
Telecommunication Charges & Utilities	538.08

Commitments

Conferences and Workshops	1,702.45
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Total Expenses 90,075.52

Carry forward next fiscal 20,323.70

Total 110,399.22

**Note: There was a delayed transfer for wage increases, hence the discrepancy between salary funding and salary expenses.*



PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS



Presentations

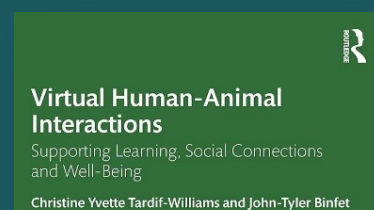
- Green, F. L. L. (2024, Jan 19) Canine-assisted interventions and diverse gender participants: Do CAIs work for everyone? Virtual Presentation for the *Human-animal interaction* section.
- Binfet, J. T. Lessons learned from 10 years of canine-assisted interventions. Keynote speech at the *Celebration of the 170th Anniversary of Veterinary Medicine Education in America*, Mexico City, Mexico.
- Binfet, J. T., Green, F. L. L., Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Godard, R. J. P., Singal, A., Rousseau, C. X., Roma, R., Willcox, A. A. (2023, June 17). Virtual connections with canines: Therapy dogs reducing undergraduate student stress. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Society for Anthrozoology*, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Rousseau, C. X., Binfet, J. T., & Willcox, A. A. (2023, June 16). Understanding handlers' perspectives: Under-explored pillars supporting canine-assisted interventions. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Society for Anthrozoology*, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Binfet, J. T., Green, F. L. L., Godard, R. J. P., Rousseau, C. X., Szypula, M. M., & Decker, J. (2023, June 16). Exploring gender differences in stress reduction of university students attending a canine-assisted intervention. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *International Society for Anthrozoology*, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Publications

- Webberson, E., Schroeder, K., Binfet, J. T., & Stellato, A. C., (2024). Supporting animals and veterans through enrichment: An exploratory study on a brief canine socializing intervention. *Human-Animal Interactions*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2024.0013>
- Binfet, J. T., Green, F. L. L., Godard, R. J. P., Rousseau, C. X., Szypula, M. M., & Decker, J. (2023). A mixed-methods examination of an on-campus canine-assisted intervention by gender: Men, women, and gender diverse students' self-reports of stress-reduction and well-being. *Human-Animal Interaction*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2023.0037>
- Rousseau, C. X. & Binfet, J. T. (2023). Publication trends in *Society & Animals* from 2009-2019: A bibliometric analysis. *Society & Animals*, 44(4). <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-bja10136>
- Green, F. L. L. & Binfet, J. T. (2023). Beyond Cuddling Canines: Exploring Students' Perceptions of the Importance of Touch in an On-Campus Canine-Assisted Intervention. *Emerging Adulthood*, 11(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21676968231188754>
- Tardif-Williams, C. Y., Binfet, J. T., Green, F. L. L., Roma, R. P. S., Singal, A., Rousseau, C. X., & Godard, R. J. P. (2023). When Therapy Dogs Provide Virtual Comfort: Exploring University Students' Insights and Perspectives, *People and Animals*, 6(1). <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/paij/vol6/iss1/5>

Books

- Tardif-Williams, C. Y., & Binfet, J. T. (2023). *Virtual human–animal interactions: Supporting learning, social connections and well-being*. Routledge.



NEWS & MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Print

- UBC Applied Science (2024, Feb 9). Making The World A Better Place Through Research And Sharing Knowledge.
- DieHundzeitung.com (2023, Nov). Studie Kuschel mit Hunden Funktioniert Genderfrei (German).
- Okanagan School of Education (2023, Nov. 6). Pawsitive lessons in social-emotional learning.
- Espèces-menacées (2023, Nov. 6). Faire des câlins avec des chiens peut améliorer votre bien-être (French).
- Outrage Magazine (2023, Nov. 4). Canine cuddles can comfort equally across all genders... including LGBTQIA people.
- Stanley Coren (2023, Nov. 1). Therapy Dogs Are Effective for All College Students. Psychology Today.
- Earth.com (2023, Oct 31). Therapy dogs benefit student wellbeing across all genders.
- UBC Okanagan News (2023, Oct. 30). Reimagining the PhD.
- Science Daily (2023, Oct 30). Canine cuddles can comfort equally across all genders.
- Worldhealth.net (2023, Oct. 24). Canine cuddles can comfort equally across all genders.
- Castanet (2023, Oct. 24). Canine cuddles can comfort equally across all genders.
- UBC News (2023, Sept. 19). Meet the adorable working animals of UBC: From fierce mousers to guiding paws.

Television

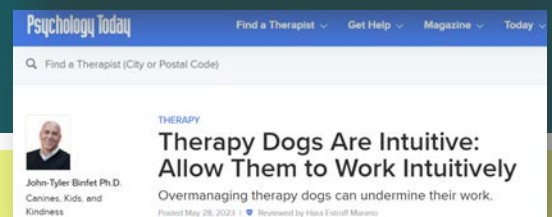
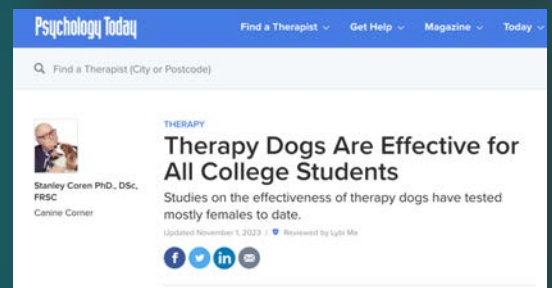
- Kelowna10 (2023, Oct 30). Do therapy dogs benefit people across all genders?

Radio & Podcasts

- Human Animal Interaction Section – J.T Binfet (2024, Jan 16)
- Human Animal Interaction Section – F. Green (2024, Jan 10)
- Global News, Jill Bennett Show (2023, Oct 24).

Psychology Today

- (2023, Apr. 29). Dogs on the Roster in College Classrooms: What are the benefits of dogs in college classrooms?
- (2023, Sept. 30). Feeling Lonely on a Crowded Campus? Therapy Dogs Can Help.
- (2023, July 31). Therapy Dogs: The Politicians of Working Dogs.
- (2023, May 28). Therapy Dogs Are Intuitive: Allow Them to Work Intuitively.
- (2023, Apr. 7). Therapy Dogs Help Optimize College Student Mental Health.



SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITE REPORT

Social Media

Meta

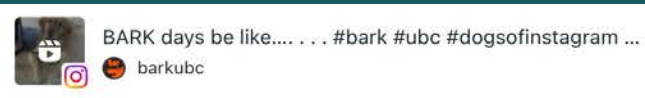
Followers: Instagram: 2,909 | Facebook: 2,700



Top Posts

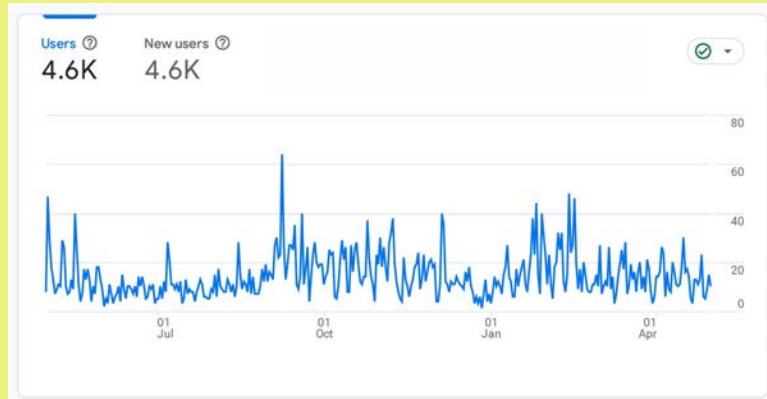


Reach: 3,274 | Views: 6,054 | Interactions: 252



Reach: 2,738 | Views: 4,605 | Interactions: 97

BARK Website



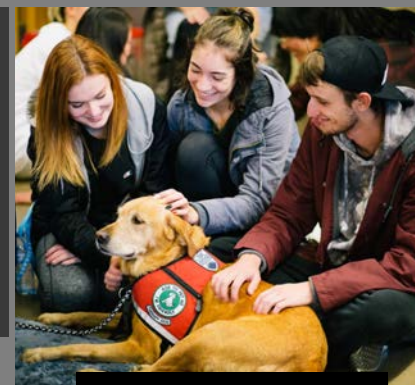
IN MEMORIAM



Daisy

Daisy, and her handler Donna, were one of the very first handler-dog teams to proudly wear the red B.A.R.K. vest. We remember Daisy for her happy spirit and pure adoration of belly-rubs. We send our best wishes to Donna and her family as we remember this lovely girl and the legacy she left at UBC.

Many of our students on campus will remember Jersey as one of our sweetest therapy dogs. Known for her calm, laid back attitude, Jersey volunteered from 2016-2023 and has shared her therapy dog wisdom to her packmate, Baylee. Jersey is sorely missed, but we are thrilled that Eirena and Baylee remain members of the team in her honour.



Jersey

OUR GRADUATING STUDENTS

Amelia, Camille, Meg, & Hugo

The B.A.R.K. program simply would not be possible without the dedication and passion of our student volunteers. Each year, we conclude the academic year by celebrating our graduating students. This year we show our appreciation for, and celebrate the achievements of, four wonderful volunteers who have dedicated over 20 years between them to the B.A.R.K. program! To celebrate their graduation, we asked them to leave us with a comment that summarizes their favourite aspects of volunteering with the program.



Amelia Willcox - BSc in Biology, minor in Psychology ('24)

Amelia began volunteering with B.A.R.K. in 2018 and quickly became an integral member of the B.A.R.K. team, especially in the behind-the-scenes running of our programs and research studies. Amelia has also been a wonderful advocate of the program and has presented at numerous international conferences on behalf of B.A.R.K. and UBC! We will miss her infectious energy, tireless commitment, and enthusiasm but wish her all the best in her future in Animal-Assisted Play Therapy.

"I have gained so many valuable research and interpersonal skills. I also got the opportunity to work with pretty amazing people! My favourite part? The friends I made, the time I spent talking to other volunteers and guests of B.A.R.K., and petting the dogs!"



Camille Rousseau – PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies ('24)

All while balancing her own research, Camille has been involved with the Friday drop-ins, BARK2GO, our Building Confidence and Kindness through K9s program with Gr 4-8, our stress-reduction program at the RCMP, and many research projects/special events for over 6 years! We will miss Camille's enthusiasm, hard-work, and expertise but we wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

"Being a part of the B.A.R.K. program afforded me the opportunity to my bolster canine-assisted intervention research skills and be a part of something larger than my own research. There is something special about being part of a distinguished, research informed program that holds the potential to brighten people's day"



Meg Allan – BSc in Biology, minor in History ('24)

Whether it's helping to run a session, welcoming attendees at the check-in desk, running a BARK2Go station, or tirelessly keeping us up to date with data entry, Meg has been a passionate and dedicated member of the program since 2019. We will miss their passion for working with people and animals, their willingness to help with any task, and their friendly, kind, and empathetic nature. We wish them all the best in their move to the University of Victoria to pursue a B'Ed in Education.

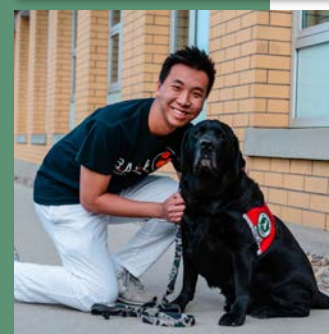
"The best bit? The community. I am leaving this program having made countless new friends and having found a space that is kind, inclusive, and incredibly fun. I am so grateful for the opportunities this program has given me to grow and learn as a volunteer, a student, and a researcher. I've learned so much about research, canine welfare, student welfare, and even myself"



Hugo Tanade – BMgt in Management ('24)

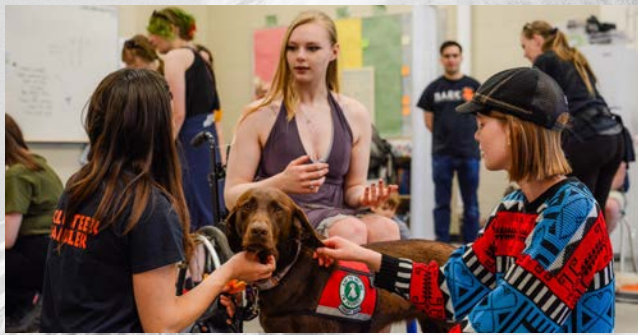
Often seen running a BARK2GO station in the library, hosting VEDA sessions, or at drop-ins on Fridays, Hugo has been volunteering for B.A.R.K. since 2019. A 'dog-guy' through and through, Hugo's friendly spirit and passion for contributing back to his community has made him an integral member of the B.A.R.K. team. We will miss his positive attitude, ability to connect with people (and dogs), and infectious smile, but we're excited to see him successfully launch into his career.

"BARK has really helped me to polish my public speaking skills and it's been an amazing experience to talk with everyone who comes to sessions, to share these moments, and see students leaving sessions with smiles! My favorite part is being part of the community and having the opportunity to work with all the wonderful volunteers, supervisors, dog handlers, and of course the lovely dogs!"





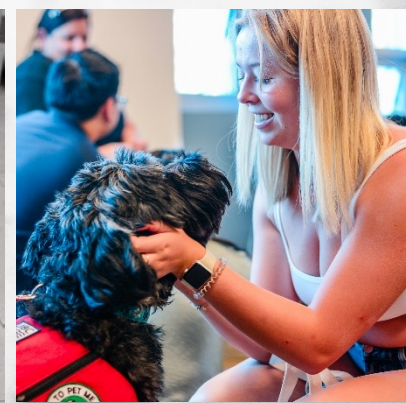
“This really relieved a lot of stress I had this week starting my MSW”
– Grad student, Sept. 2023



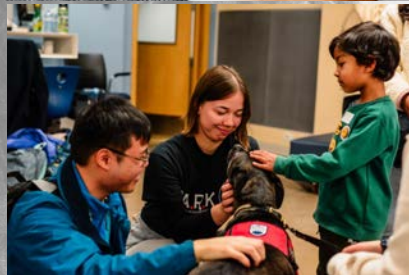
“Love it! All time favourite program!!”
– UBC Student, Sept. 2023



“Honestly, best part of my week. I’m always glad I can come.”
– 1st year Student, Oct 2023



“It helped me slow down and not be in such a rush to get everything done.”
- UBC Student, Feb 2024





“Thank you for all you do.”
– RCMP member, April 2023

“Love this program. The student
volunteers are so lovely!”
– Grad Student, Feb. 2024



“Amazing experience! Loved
meeting all the dogs.”
– 1st Year Student, Sept. 2024



“The dogs
keep getting
cuter every
time I visit!”
- 1st Year
Student, Oct
2023



“Thank you. I really needed this”
– Community member, Dec. 2023

“This helped with getting over my
fear of big dogs, thank you!”
– Grad Student, Sept. 2023



“The dogs are
so cute, they
made my day!”
– Feb. 2024



BARK

BUILDING ACADEMIC RETENTION THROUGH K9S



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

Website: bark.ok.ubc.ca
Facebook: BARK UBCO
Twitter/Instagram: BARKUBC

Photographs provided by: Freya Green, Madisyn Szypula, & Adam Lauzé



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