

## **Executive Annual Report for 2024 AGM**

### **Canadian Society for Organic Urban Land Care's Activities in 2023 and going into 2024**

2023 was a bit of a bumpy year for SOUL. Our new Executive Director that started in late 2022 decided to accept a full-time position with another organization this past June, which put our efforts to fundraise on pause.

This had the knock-on effect of leading the board to decide to pause the Greener Greenspaces program while we reevaluate both SOUL's direction and our financial position. Christine Earnshaw, who did much of the work of launching and administering the Greener Greenspaces program has now moved on to a project lead position with Tree Canada. The Greener Greenspaces that were recognized at the end of 2022 were profiled over the course of 2023 and those profiles and interviews, along with many lovely photos of ecologically responsible spaces, are available on the SOUL website <https://organiclandcare.ca/2021-Greenspaces>

As part of reevaluating our direction, SOUL hosted a Special General Meeting of our membership in November to discuss the future of SOUL.

The outcome of that meeting was the decision to proceed with two projects, both of which are currently being led by SOUL's volunteer board members, with the support of other volunteers.

One project is a holistic update of the SOUL Standards to include context about the relevance of ecological land care to addressing climate change, species extinction and biodiversity loss, and ensure the Standards are presented in a way that is accessible to a wide audience of professionals, practitioners and educators. Sections on handling on-site invasive species, treaty and territorial responsibilities and the responsibilities that employers have to employees and other workers are also being planned.

The other project is engaging in a longer-term exploration of land care philosophy and practice, and developing resources and practical guidance to support anyone working to transition from a relationship of hierarchy to a relationship of care within the complete ecosystem. The first stage of gathering together for conversations, sharing ideas and co-creating the next steps has already begun but additional participants are still welcome to join in. You can find more details on our website <https://organiclandcare.ca/Future-of-SOUL/>

Our intention is to explore possible grant opportunities and funding partnerships for one or both of these projects and to seek staff support on the projects if we are successful in establishing a funding stream.