

Posted: February 22, 2022

Youth Community Action Projects



Every year, participants in our Youth Water Leaders Program create and implement service projects to spread awareness or take action to protect the river and the watershed. This year was no different, with these young leaders getting extra creative in the face of new challenges. Explore some of their projects with us!

Tweet

Wow! 2021 was quite the year for our Youth Water Leaders. With all the uncertainty and change we've had to deal with over the past several months, it has been so refreshing to see these young leaders in water protection step up to the plate and accomplish their goals in the community, regardless of the circumstances. We were so inspired by their acts of service that we wanted to share their successes with everyone. Prepare yourselves for a long blog post – these youth were busy!

Michaela's Benefit Concert



Michaela Salomon hosted a benefit concert dedicated to Ottawa Riverkeeper on Friday, July 8th in a market hall in Ripon, Quebec. Over 50 people were in attendance for this beautiful performance. Michaela, who is a classically trained violinist originally from Germany, shared her passion about the river and nature in our watershed through music. She even played some Quebec fiddle tunes to celebrate the culture and history of the area she now calls home. Alongside the concert, a spokesperson from Ottawa Riverkeeper gave a brief talk about the importance of loving and protecting our river. Resources featuring information on Ottawa Riverkeeper's pollution hotline and how community members can help keep their water clean were handed out at the end. Overall, Michaela raised over \$500 to help promote watershed health and touched many people with her music and dedication to water protection.

Josh's Bike Tour



Josh is an avid biker who loves cycling because it allows him to be out in nature and to avoid the greenhouse gas emissions that come with cars. He wanted to share his love both for the river and cycling in his service project. On October 17th, he took a group of 45-50 community members on a 360-degree bike tour of the Ottawa River. People of all ages came out for Josh's 'Tour de l'Outaouais' and were able to spend a morning together enjoying the beautiful fall weather. Along this 7km route he picked out 9 points of interest to share the history, culture, and ecological health of the river with the participants.

Josh's Bike Tour



Don't worry if you missed the action! Josh's bike day can be experienced through this video (<https://youtu.be/lhNjg74Ws9g>), and the map of the route is still available online, with information on all his points of interest for anyone keen to follow the route on their own time. The map can be found here!

(<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?>

[mid=131XXhYiLbkrOyI7G5tXApf5onrEEMO6D&ll=45.42457510473554%2C-75.70952514999999&z=15](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=131XXhYiLbkrOyI7G5tXApf5onrEEMO6D&ll=45.42457510473554%2C-75.70952514999999&z=15))

Olivia's Mural



Olivia, one of our Youth Water Leaders who started the program in 2020, collaborated with the National Capital Commission and Heritage Canada to paint a mural on a bridge post on Bate Island. Her mural, "Voices Unheard," features seven different species at risk in the Ottawa River watershed. Her vibrant painting transforms a grey concrete wall into a vivid depiction of the healthy habitats needed to protect monarch butterflies, spotted turtles, American eels, lake sturgeon, channel darters, the hickorynut (<https://ottawariverkeeper.ca/what-we-do-2/issues/endangered-species/the-hickorynut/>), and the least bittern. This giant art installation took nearly 100 hours to create! If you stopped by Bate Island to enjoy the falling leaves this autumn you would have likely seen Olivia, on top of some scaffolding, paint brush in hand, trying to promote awareness of our watershed fauna. She even brought the community together to help her paint the background of her mural. In the spring, Olivia will install her artist's statement, which has been written in English and translated into both French and Algonquin. This mural will remain for years to come, helping both residents and visitors to the watershed hear the unheard voices of creatures large and small. Watch Olivia's mural come to life in this short 1-minute feature (<https://youtu.be/MNN7VZfQkB8>)!

Sydney and Jess's Shoreline Cleanup



Sydney and Jess learned about plastic pollution from our activities associated with Ocean Week Canada (<https://oceanweekcan.ca/>) and our shoreline cleanups (<https://icleanup.ca/>). They decided that for their service project they wanted to help reduce plastic pollution (<https://ottawariverkeeper.ca/home/projects/microplastics-ottawa-river-report/>) in the Ottawa River. After some detailed research they discovered Seabins; these devices remove plastic from marinas and other shoreline areas. The pair began to work with Melanie Abdelnour (<https://www.deepbluecleanup.com/>) who is currently spearheading the seabin project in Ottawa and went to discover how this technology works. They are currently working on creating a proposal to have more Seabins added to marinas and dock areas in Ottawa. They also sought to do something hands-on to help with plastic pollution, so they organised their own shoreline cleanup at Aylmer Island. This island is sacred land for Indigenous people, and yet is unfortunately often covered in garbage and waste. On September 19th (<https://www.deepbluecleanup.com/blog/aylmer-island-cleanup>), they partnered with the Nepean Sailing Club to boat approximately 20 participants out to Alymer Island on the Ottawa River to remove 44 lbs of trash, including a broken boat, from the island.

Kyra and Christopher's Rain Garden

Kyra & Christopher's Rain Garden

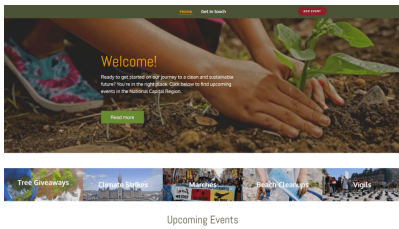


One of the community based monitoring projects that youth learned more about and participated in this year was Ottawa Riverkeeper's road salt monitoring program. In an effort to keep salt and runoff out of our waterways this winter, Kyra and Christopher partnered up with Coopérative d'habitation l'Alternative (a local housing cooperative) in Gatineau for their service project. They spent hours preparing a report for the Coop's board and green committee based on their research about the benefits of rain gardens (<https://ottawa.ca/en/living-ottawa/environment-conservation-and-climate/protecting-ottawas-waterways/rain-ready-ottawa>), different rain garden designs, and strategies for protecting the creek behind the Coop from winter snow removal.

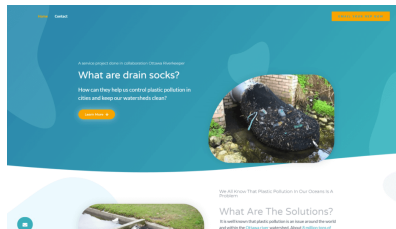


By visiting the site and talking with Coop residents, they choose a location for the rain garden where runoff from a parking lot enters the storm drain. They also partnered with RisingYouth to receive a grant to purchase all the plants and soil needed to build a healthy and thriving garden. Not afraid to get their hands dirty, the pair worked with coop members and got to work digging in November! It will be exciting to see the effects that their garden has on reducing contaminants in a small part of our watershed. See a video of Christopher and Kyra hard at work here (https://youtu.be/nO_BcvnZL3w).

Emily, Marieke, and Ana's Website Projects



(<http://calendarforchange.org/>)



(<http://candrainsocks.org/>)

On top of all these wonderful projects we also have two websites currently being developed by program participants. Emily and Marieke, two of our youngest Youth Water Leaders, wanted to find a way to make getting involved in environmental

action easier for everyone. CalendarforChange (<http://calendarforchange.org/>) was created from this idea to keep everyone involved, organised and connected in an online environment. Calendar for Change is an online space where both organisations and individuals can add events related to environmental protection to a group calendar for everyone to see. Ana is also working very hard to launch her website and campaign to keep plastic and pollutants out of the water by installing drain socks in the Ottawa River watershed. What's a drainsock? How can it help protect the river? We're glad you asked! Head over to Ana's website candrainsocks.org (<http://candrainsocks.org/>) to learn all about the project.

As a successful cohort of our Youth Water Leaders Program comes to an end, we'd like to thank all the youth for their dedication and hard work in our communities. Their desire to make a difference has really inspired us during the past year. We'd like to thank Canada Service Corps, RisingYouth, and our community partners for making these projects possible. And finally, we'd like to thank Amanda MacCarthy, our incredible Youth Programming intern, who helped shepherd these youth through their projects, put resources and workshops together, and helped write up blogs like this one!

Become a Youth Water Leader!

Applications for the new cohort of our Youth Water Leaders Program are now open on our website. If you were inspired by what you read above and the amazing projects of our youth in 2021, consider joining us this year. Help make a change in our community and protect our watershed. Click here to apply (<https://ork.bamboohr.com/jobs/view.php?id=44>), or to share it with youth who may be interested in water protection!

Apply Now (<https://ork.bamboohr.com/jobs/view.php?id=44>)

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