The Blue Mountains Youth Climate Action Fund – Round One Project Activities

Aki Guardians Climate Action

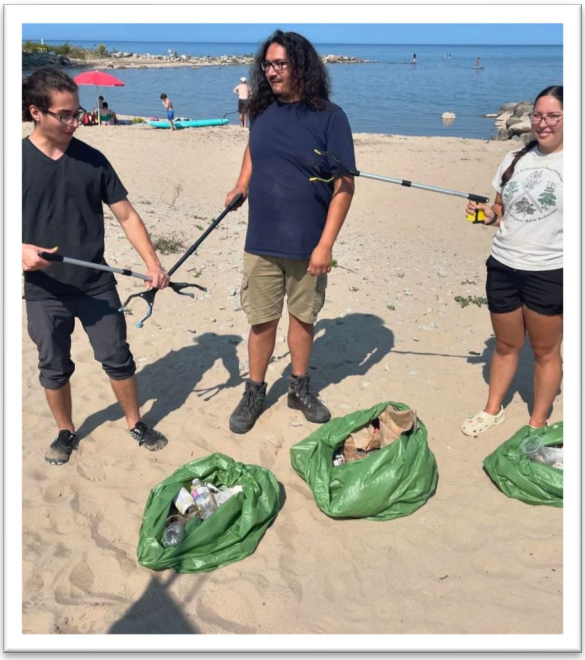
Youth leads: Ethan Young, Owen Menominee, Kelsey Roote

Sponsored by: Bagida'waad Alliance

The Aki Guardians planned four events, including two guided educational nature walks, and two litter cleanups. A guided interpretive hike at Margaret Paull Side Trail in Clarksburg, and a guided birding hike at George Christie Nature Trail in Collingwood, provided hikers with outdoor education and connected their learning to climate change where possible. The first litter cleanup recovered broken glass, cigarette butts, plastics and other materials from the shoreline at Northwinds Beach. The second cleanup event was cancelled due to weather, and the Aki Guardians pivoted to providing an educational presentation at the L.E. Shore Library in Thornbury on Species at Risk (SAR) and the role of The Blue Mountains and the escarpment as a wildlife corridor for bird migrations.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- Two guided educational hikes, one shoreline cleanup, and one Species at Risk presentation to residents of The Blue Mountains and surrounding area
- More than 27 kg of litter recovered from Northwinds Beach
- Improved knowledge of the area's natural environment, biodiversity and climate-related risks for event participants



Green Grey Blue Miniseries

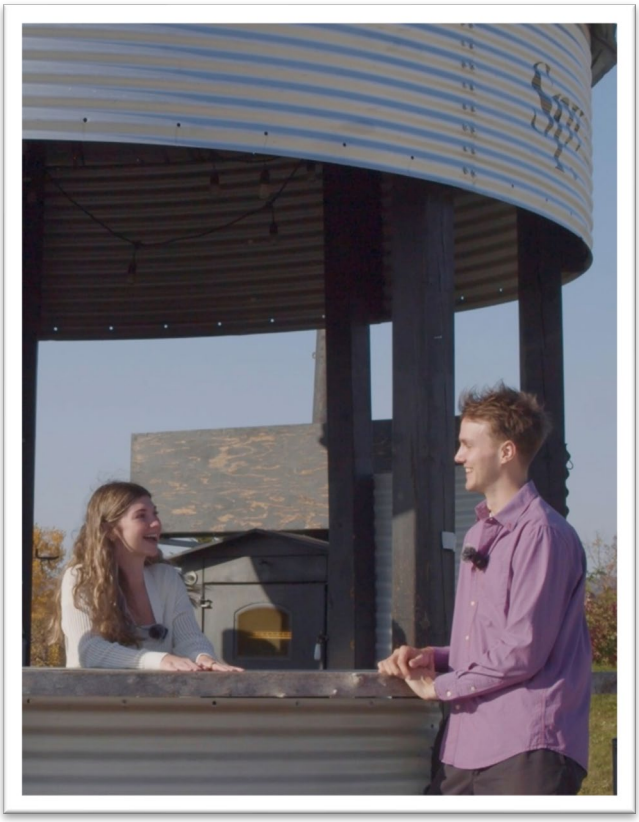
Youth leads: Atticus Russwurm and Katie Stewart

Sponsored by: Beaver Valley Outreach

Using the grant funds, Katie and Atticus produced the Green Grey Blue 4-episode mini-series, highlighting climate action in the Saugeen Ojibway Nation traditional territory with a focus on The Blue Mountains community. The series showcases local organizations and community members' sustainability initiatives, such as circular economy efforts, renewable energy, and sustainable tourism, and features over 19 interviewees. By highlighting local inspiration and success stories, the video series demonstrates actionable steps to contribute to a cleaner, greener community.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 21 youth between ages of 15 and 24 were engaged in filming or are featured in the video series
- 4 videos were produced with 19 interviewees showcasing 18 community sustainability features. Visit the Green Grey Blue Miniseries Youtube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/@green.greyblue/videos
- Improved knowledge of local sustainability and climate initiatives for viewers



Sustainable Marker Ink Research & Development

Youth Lead: Zoe Cadieux

Sponsored by: Beavery Valley Outreach (supported by Jacob Proctor)

This project involved testing four plant berries found in the region as viable marker ink alternatives. Schools contributed spent white board markers to enable experiments with the natural ink prototype. Georgian Bay Community School helped build awareness and identified potential youth volunteers for community and project collaboration, and also demonstrated the natural ink prototype for high school students. A small-scale tie dye workshop with six youth participants further promoted natural inks/dyes, and additional time was spent learning from and connecting with various community organizations to identify native dye sources and for future up-scaling of the project, as well as tying it to the naturalization movement of our local spaces.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- Four native/invasive plants were tested for their viability; one invasive plant was selected as most viable to proceed with further testing
- Engaged approximately 30 youth (15-24) in presentations and workshops to learn about natural-sourced dyes

Tiny Forest

Youth lead: Jaden Slowiak

Sponsored by: Beaver Valley Outreach (supported by Climate Action Now Network)

Jaden worked with a local arborist and climate action organization Climate Action Now Network to design and plant a tiny forest. This tiny forest follows the 'Miyawaki method', a Japanese method that involves planting diverse varieties of trees and shrubs in a small space to spur competition and rapid growth, and to provide much needed habitat for insects and pollinator species. A community planting event brought together youth and adult volunteers to plant trees and shrubs, and to provide participants with information on how tiny forests work and their many community and environmental benefits.

Outputs and Outcomes:

A tiny forest is a more effective way to reduce the heat island effect. They are more likely to survive and are much denser than typical tree plantings spaced further apart.

- 180 trees planted in the Tiny Forest method
- 40 volunteers participated in an activity relating to climate action
- The tiny forest will improve local biodiversity and carbon sequestration, and can provide future educational opportunities for students and other residents

St. Mary's Highschool Eco Team – The Bat Project

Youth leads: Lindsay, Kennedy, Sydney and Natasha – High school students with St. Mary's Highschool Eco Team (Envirothon)

Sponsored by: Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board

The St. Mary's Highschool Eco Team applied their funding into the production, implementation, and sponsorship of bat boxes to improve endangered bat habitat in The Blue Mountains. Under the supervision of their teacher, Jacqueline Otterbein, the students visited The Blue Mountains and identified nine possible bat box locations at Peasemarsh Conservation area. The little brown bat faces several threats to its habitat, including climate change, and is a voracious consumer of mosquitoes. Three large bat boxes and six small ones were safely and properly installed with the help of Grey Sauble Conservation Authority staff. The students then produced magazines describing the project and sharing information about the bats to raise awareness.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 15 youth (15-24) were engaged
- Nine bat boxes (3 large and 6 small) were installed to improve little brown bat habitat at Peasemarsh Conservation Area
- 50 environmental information magazines were created

Events for Life Climate Action

Youth Leads: Abbey Dunlop

Sponsored by: Events for Life

Events for Life received YCAF funding to engage and educate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities on climate action and to share their learnings with the community. The funds enabled Events for Life participants to research different climate topics each month and speak with local eco-friendly movements and businesses on these subjects. These topics included:

- September: pollinators and planting gardens for pollinators
- October: waste, including simple waste audits and 2 community clean ups
- November: recycling and compost, including learning about compost methods
- December: sustainable living, thrift shopping and how to repair items

From these experiences, the youth lead and Events for Life participants created monthly articles that were published in the Blue Mountains Review, a local newsletter.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 42 youth (15-24) were engaged
- 4 workshops were held, 4 newsletters were published, 2 community clean-ups
- Engagement and enrichment of youth who are often not included in climate change conversations and activism

Remote Sensing & Monitoring of Inland Lakes in Bruce Peninsula National Park

Youth Leads: Ethan Parker

Sponsored by: Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association

The grant funds went towards purchasing water level loggers as part of the youth lead's master's research on lake hydrology in Bruce Peninsula National Park. The loggers were installed at Cameron Lake to record water level changes in the national park to help determine the accuracy of a new NASA satellite (SWOT - Surface Water and Ocean Topography) which also measures water level, but from space. Ultimately the study will help assess SWOT as a reliable tool for long term monitoring of inland lake water levels, which is important in the context of climate change and its impacts on the water cycle.

Deploying loggers under the ice allows for understanding how SWOT measurements are affected by ice cover. An additional logger will monitor ambient barometric pressure. In summer 2025, loggers will record water levels in several park lakes with varying sizes and differing amounts of emergent vegetation, expanding the lake level dataset. Gaining a deeper understanding of how lakes respond to climate change and other hydrological shifts is essential for the adaptive management of these ecosystems and their resources.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 10 water level loggers installed and/or available to be deployed for ongoing climate research at Bruce Peninsula National Park
- The Town will receive further updates on the research outcomes when the student's research is complete

Youth Climate, Sustainability, and Engagement Summit

Youth Leads: Sage Fry

Sponsored by: Escarpment Corridor Alliance

The youth lead hosted a small summit for youth looking to be engaged with environmental activities, as well as supporting high school environmental club initiatives. The summit event also screened an episode of the Green Grey Blue Miniseries for attendees. Through the extension granted to this project, a survey was developed to better understand drivers behind youth engagement and what initiatives they wish to see in their community.

The youth lead also used the survey and related outreach as an opportunity to provide information on Round 2 of the Town's YCAF program. A key finding from the survey was that it can be difficult for many youth to identify how they can take action on climate change, and that it can be difficult to find the time or energy to pursue a project – challenges that the YCAF program aims to help address.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 30 youth engaged between the summit and survey
- Raised awareness of local climate action opportunities and learned about engagement challenges and opportunities directly from youth