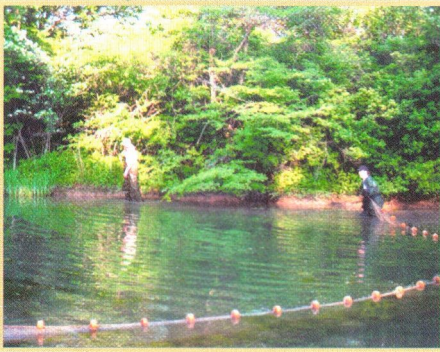
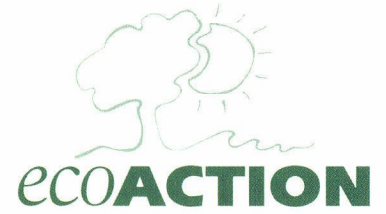


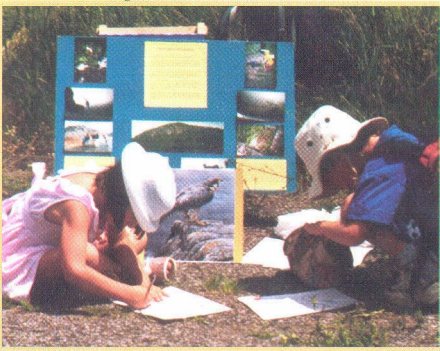


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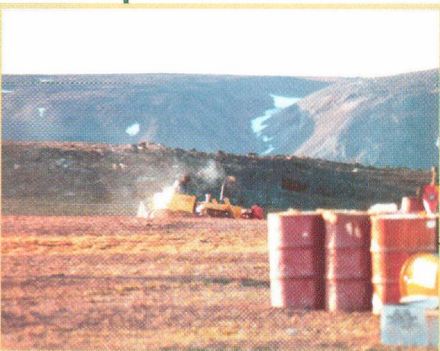
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Niagara Falls, Ontario



Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Quebec



Resolute Bay, Nunavut

Dartmouth Env. Can. Lib./Bib.



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Canadians

Creating a

Healthier

Environment

Primarily focused on funding community-based, non-profit environmental action, the support provided by this Environment Canada program has also fostered environmental leaders, initiatives and partnerships across Canada for long-term environmental change. Here are some examples of EcoAction at work.



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... the program fosters environmental leaders, organizations, partnerships and visions ...

A decade ago, Terry Perry sat down with a couple of friends around his kitchen table to discuss what they could do to help their environment in northcentral Prince Edward Island. Now, thanks to a lot of hard work and support from EcoAction, the coordinator of the Trout River Environmental Committee spends his time discussing plans to restore and protect the local Stanley River watershed with provincial cabinet ministers.

“We weren’t experts in any environmental fields,” says Perry, a carpenter turned full-time coordinator of the now 200-member strong Trout River group. “We learned as we went along.”

Perry’s committee is one of hundreds of groups across Canada that have received assistance from EcoAction. The program provides financial support to community groups for action-oriented projects that have measurable, positive impacts on the environment in the areas of clean air, climate change, clean water and nature.



Vancouver, British Columbia

But, Perry and the Trout River Environmental Committee are also characteristic of the human face of EcoAction’s diverse success: the program fosters some of the environmental leaders, organizations, partnerships and visions that are at the forefront of greening communities across Canada.

In British Columbia, the EcoAction-sponsored Nanaimo Area Covenant Project has created the province’s only full-time expert in conservation covenants. In her first



Collingwood, Ontario

year in the role, Sarah Bonar, the conservation covenant coordinator, has created three of these permanent land conservation agreements covering more than 80 hectares, and she’s now developing a valuable covenant how-to tool kit for others to use.

In many EcoAction projects, young adults are learning life-long skills through their employment in community environmental projects.

“The whole idea of the program was capacity building in these communities,” says the Conservation Foundation of Greater Toronto’s Chandra Sharma, whose EcoAction-sponsored multicultural stewardship program employed six youth as outreach workers in their communities. Through this project about 500 volunteers planted 20,000 native trees and plants in dozens of neighbourhood habitat restorations.

This form of community capacity building includes activities in some of Canada’s most isolated communities. The Coastal Labrador Waste Action Plan, for example, employed 27 local residents, and university and high school students as front line waste management workers promoting recycling in communities from Mary’s Harbour in the south to Nain in the north.

... young adults are learning life-long skills ...

... local children have become environmental advocates ...

Often this community environmental capacity building involves the creation of new and enduring partnerships. In the Yukon, the territory's first community-based wetland protection effort has laid the groundwork for other conservation initiatives by organizing the first meeting of all the Yukon's regulatory agencies dealing with shoreline development. The meeting was attended by 17 federal, territorial, municipal and First Nation officials, many of whom had never previously worked together, notes Marlene Jennings, coordinator of the Quartz Road wetland project.

Entirely new environmentally positive communities and businesses are sometimes nurtured by EcoAction's support of ground-breaking organizations. The program spurred the growth of the English-speaking world's first car sharing initiative, Vancouver's Co-operative Auto Network. Created in 1995, the now self-sustaining group involves more than 900 members and a fleet of 48 vehicles—a fact that executive director Tracey Axelsson says represents a reduction of about 400 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually.

The *Light Better...for Less* project in Nova Scotia provided training in energy efficient lighting to dozens of electricians, thereby creating a provincial network of lighting



Saint-Élie-d'Orford, Quebec



Resolute Bay, Nunavut

professionals who are aware of the environmental impacts of the lights they install and can share this information with clients.

Manitoba's Green Procurement Network, which supports organizations in buying with an eye to environmental health, has gone from a doubted *new kid on the block* in 1997, to a broad-based movement today.

"There are more and more vendors coming on board. More people see this as a business opportunity," says Jane Maslowski the network's founder.

From Alberta to Quebec and the Northwest Territories, communities are coming closer together around EcoAction-sponsored environmental efforts. As well as restoring 600 metres of shoreline and diverting an estimated 30 percent of unwanted nutrients from their lake, the Living By Water project at Sylvan Lake, Alberta had a unifying effect on the community that will outlast the project, says Janet Remillard, the project's coordinator.

In Yellowknife a local citizens' group is working closely with the town council to use parasitic wasps as an alternative to pesticides to control Birch Leafminers.

... the networks created by these projects sometimes extend beyond neighbourhoods to encompass all Canada and beyond ...

*... a change in the way thousands of
Canadians view their world ...*

"I think it's just a cool process, to have something in nature doing what it normally does, where we would otherwise use pesticides," says Rob Johnson, president of Concerned Citizens for Yellowknife.

"People are very concerned about this topic with good reason," says Edith Smeesters, president of the Quebec-based Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (CAP). "Pesticides have serious consequences for both their health and the environment's." As part of this project, CAP distributed 5,000 copies of an information kit called *Without Pesticides...Naturally*. Five hundred of these were given out in neighbourhoods in the town of Victoriaville, where a survey found that two-out-of-three residents who received the package reduced their pesticide use.

The networks created by these projects sometimes extend beyond neighbourhoods to encompass all Canada and beyond. The New Brunswick Lung Association's Healthy School Program has been so successful that the association's executive director Ken Maybee predicts it will be used to improve indoor air quality in every school in Canada within five years. An innovative Montreal back-lane greening project has shared its experience with a group in Brussels, and the Vancouver Co-operative Auto Network's materials are being used in Germany.

*... new environmentally positive
communities and businesses ...*



Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island



Saint-Bruno, Quebec

Given the dynamism of the community members involved, EcoAction's greatest long-term environmental impact could well be something beyond easy measurement: a change in the way thousands of Canadians view their world. This is certainly the case for 1,200 Saskatoon area school children who learned through hands-on rehabilitation work that Saskatchewan's native Great Plains grasslands are more endangered than tropical rainforests.

As a result of this learning experience, local children have become environmental advocates, notifying Ducks Unlimited of a neighbourhood slough being filled in and lobbying town councils against projects that could damage threatened habitats.

These are but a few of the examples of volunteerism and commitment that the EcoAction Community Funding Program was designed to support. It's this kind of ecological action that promises to have immediate positive impacts and to benefit Canada's environmental health for generations to come.

For more information on these stories and the EcoAction Funding Program, please visit our website at www.ec.gc.ca/EcoAction

