

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

1. Bird Habitat Project (Originally the Living Snow Fence Project)

Youth leads and engagement: 2 youth leads (Natasha Buckton and Jude Hoekstra) with support of 10 more students on St. Mary's High School Eco Team

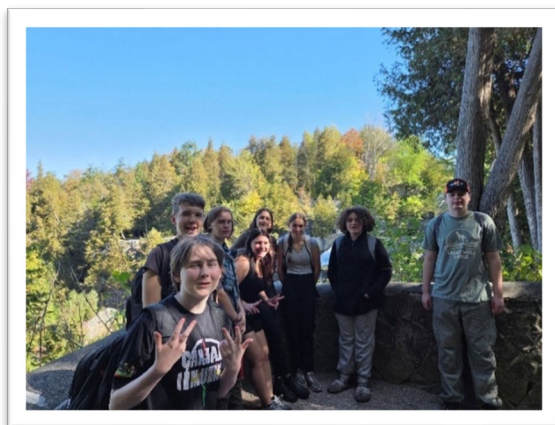
Sponsored by: St. Mary's Highschool, Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board

The students on St. Mary's Highschool Eco Team aimed to improve endangered bird habitats that are at risk due to climate change, development and other impacts. This was accomplished by learning about affected bird species, habitat needs and impacts, building and installing bird houses for at risk bird species, and educating youth and adults by distributing information pamphlets and birdhouse installation kits.

The original project concept focused on planting a living snow fence to reduce winter snow impacts and improve road safety; however, this project would have mainly relied on heavy machinery and professional services, and there was very little for youth to do. The students brainstormed and came up with a new project with the help of their teacher advisor, and the new project was approved by the Town and YCAF program. In this way, the new Bird Habitat Project centered youth leadership and cocreation which is at the heart of the YCAF program.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 48 bird houses and nesting box installation kits distributed to families.
- 8 bird houses installed by students outdoors with help of Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, to be monitored over a 12-month period.
- Youth and broad public awareness of habitat loss including cause and impact to local bird species.



2. Warton Bike Bus

Youth leads and engagement: 3 youth leads (Annabella Genner, Avery Lothstein, and Evan Lothstein)

Sponsored by: Peninsula Shores District School Home and School Association

The Warton Bike Bus project ignited a passion for biking among students and community members through the 2025 school seasons. The youth leaders and supporting adults led 16 bike bus rides in total, with an average of 11 students per ride in the spring and 7 students per ride in the fall. In total, approximately 143 total student rides occurred with the support of teachers from Peninsula Shores District School, community volunteers and 13 Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) riders.

The Bike Bus initiative began in the spring season with a free bike repair and giveaway event, which ensured students who wanted to participate had access to safe, functional bicycles. Students also held a bike rodeo with the OPP and youth leads engaging 75 grade 5/6 students. Pre-ride safety briefings and rides were led by students who had received bicycle safety training.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 143 student bicycle riders through the school season.
- 8 bikes gifted to participating youth and 15 bikes repaired.
- Increased knowledge of cycling safety and improved enthusiasm to bike to school.
- @wartonbikebus on Instagram



3. Community Gardens and Urban Farming

Youth leads: 3 youth leads (Cormac N., Duncan H., Michelle M.)

Sponsored by: St. Mary's Highschool, Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board

This project installed several different raised garden beds at St. Mary's Highschool, providing youth with education and hands-on work building vegetable and pollinator gardens and incorporating First Nations teachings. The youth leads and their classmates worked together to grow an appreciation nature and the land, while building teamwork skills and work ethic, and brought education and awareness to the importance of stewardship of the earth, through planning and implementing gardens. The project showed the community the importance of sustainability and local food taking a holistic and organic perspective, and will spark conversation and engage youth for years to come.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 6 raised garden beds.
- 37 youth volunteers were engaged alongside the youth leads.
- Increased youth awareness of horticulture and agriculture practices and education in reducing our carbon footprint while learning about biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Improved knowledge of Indigenous cultural agricultural practices.



4. Water & Woods: Reviving Nature Through Cleanup & Reforestation

Youth leads and engagement: 1 youth lead (Maya Fleischmann)

Sponsored by: Water Speaks, with Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

The Water & Woods project made a tangible impact on local water ecosystems through dedicated community action. The project held a weekend tree planting and debris & trash cleanup event, engaging volunteers to support the work at Black Ash Creek in the Petun Conservation Area in The Blue Mountains. Native saplings will contribute to erosion prevention and long-term habitat restoration along the Nottawasaga River, and volunteers removed all visible garbage and debris from a section of Black Ash Creek, directly improving water quality and salmon habitat, and protecting other species that depend on these vital ecosystems for survival. This work was accomplished in partnership with the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 155 saplings planted to help stabilize the creek bank.
- 17 youth participants engaged in hands-on conservation work.
- 12 garbage bags of litter and debris removed from the creek and riparian area.
- Restored section of Black Ash Creek will improve water quality and increase fish numbers over the long term.



5. Earthkeepers

Youth leads: 6 youth leads (MJ Klunder, Josh Stewart, Zoe Kyriopoulos, Olive Borowski, Edmund Lewall and Kaylee MacKay) and 3 more youth providing important support (Mya Dickson-Stanhope, Leo MacKay and Rowan Law)

Sponsored by: Owen Sound District Secondary School & Hillcrest Elementary School, Bluewater District School Board

The Earthkeepers program created leadership opportunities for high school and college students, strengthening youth capacity and confidence. The program connected youth leaders with over 460 youth in hands-on, outdoor experiential learning while fostering meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners and knowledge keepers. The 17 outdoor workshops facilitated by Saugeen Ojibway Nation's Environment office youth lead Josh Stewart and Gr 11/12 OSDSS youth leaders also supported educators to embrace teaching and learning outdoors with their students. This work deepened students' connection to the land, nurturing them as future environmental stewards and contributing to true reconciliation on Saugeen Ojibway Nation lands.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 9 high school youth leaders and supporters, and 29 grade 7 students facilitated 7 indoor classes and 9 outdoor classes at Take Me Outside Hillcrest Day with a total of 461 youth engaged.
- 7 Indigenous-led assemblies/workshops for participating youth.
- Developed youth leadership skills, increased youth connections and the school's relationship with local Indigenous knowledge keepers.



6. EcoFlow: Youth-Led Climate Action for Sustainable Menstruation

Youth leads: 1 youth lead (Bridget Osundiji)

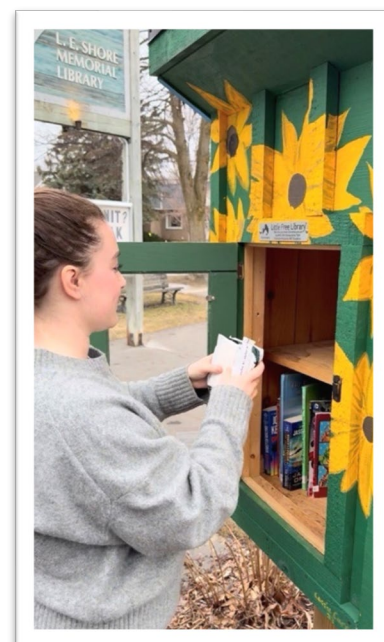
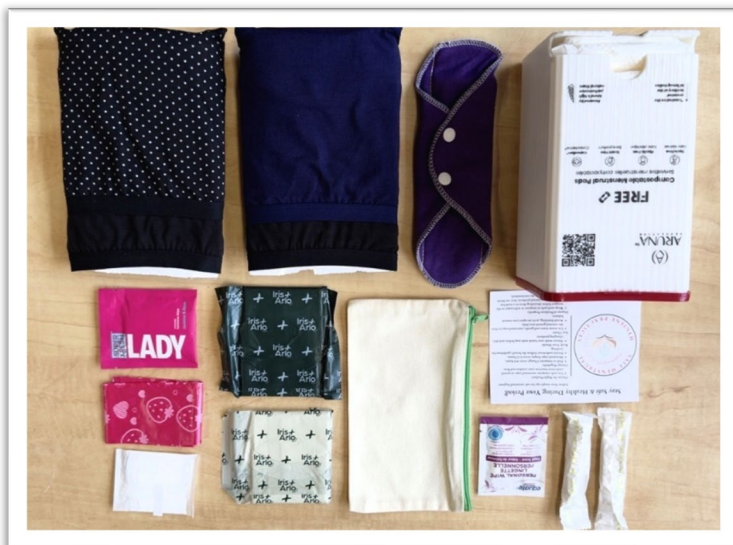
Sponsored by: Period Equity Alliance

The EcoFlow project empowered youth in the Town of The Blue Mountains and broader region to lead conversations and actions around sustainable menstruation and climate change. Through youth-led workshops and community outreach, the project raised awareness about the environmental impacts of single-use menstrual products and introduced eco-friendly alternatives to help reduce plastic waste. By combining education, access, and advocacy, EcoFlow supported climate-conscious habits while advancing menstrual equity in local communities.

The project lead delivered two impactful group workshops, creating meaningful engagement and learning about sustainable menstrual options for youth participants. Free menstrual products distributed to the Town have been made available in the Town's Little Free Libraries, which also carry books and free pantry items.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 20 youth participants engaged in 2 workshops.
- 663 sustainable menstrual products distributed and made available for free for those who need them in public places.
- Public partners engaged include Midland Public Library, Collingwood Youth Centre, Blue Mountain Public Library, Collingwood Public Library, Georgian Bay Youth Roots, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Grey, Bruce and West Simcoe.



7. Get Our Festivals Clean – Banditfest

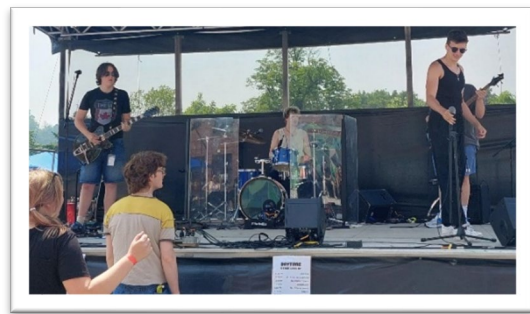
Youth leads and engagement: 3 youth leads (Olive Borowski, Mya Dickson-Stanhope, Sydney Pettit)

Sponsored by: United Way of Bruce Grey

The youth leads brought increased climate awareness and engagement to Banditfest, a youth-led music festival in downtown Owen Sound. Banditfest gives young musicians their first major performance platform and creates an inclusive, all-ages space where teens can connect, express themselves, and celebrate local talent. Integrating climate awareness messaging into this event helped youth connect climate action with culture and community. The event invested in reusable and sustainable products to demonstrate sustainable practices to concert goers, and provided transit passes to reduce GHG emissions for concert goers. This project fostered community engagement, offered a positive place for youth, and highlighted emerging artists, strengthening cultural vibrancy in our region while demonstrating sustainable best practices.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- Approximately 250 youth reached with climate and environmental awareness messaging incorporated into the festival.
- 280 posters and pamphlets distributed to youth, covering different environmental and climate themes such as transportation, water, reuse, and more.
- The project strengthened youth leadership and civic engagement, with young people feeling more empowered to shape community events, cultural spaces, and conversations about climate action.



8. Backyard Birds

Youth leads: 21 youth leads in Grey Highlands Secondary School (GHSS) senior construction class

Sponsored by: Beaver Valley Community School (BVCS) and GHSS, Bluewater District School Board

This project was all about encouraging families to enhance their backyards to attract more native bird species. We were able to supply approximately 50 families with two types of bird feeders, a bird house, and a poster to help them identify the different birds they attract. What this means for our community is a lot more places for our bird populations to feed and nest. We were also so proud of the collaboration that took place between three local schools that all culminated at our Blue Mountains Public Library event. It was a great opportunity to bring so many different families and community members together, all with the goal of making our own private greenspaces more appealing for our feathered friends

Outputs and Outcomes:

- Approximately 50 youth and 25 adults attended a backyard bird presentation and workshop at the Blue Mountains Public Library.
- 21 GHSS construction class students built several bird houses; combined with purchased DIY bird house kits, 50 bird houses were given to local families along with 50 suet bird feeders, 50 squirrel-proof bird feeders, and bird feed.
- Increased awareness about the important role backyard birds play in local ecosystems, and new habitat created in at least 50 local backyards.



9. Butterfly Garden and Insect Hotels

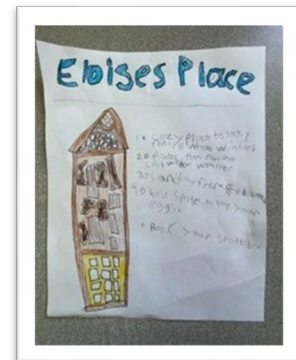
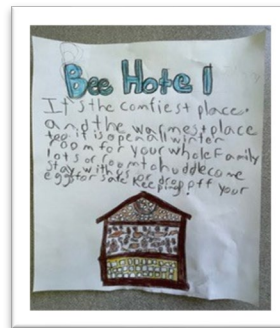
Youth leads: 20 youth leads in Georgian Bay Community School (GBCS) senior construction class

Sponsored by: Beaver Valley Community School (BVCS) and GBCS, Bluewater District School Board

This project enhanced community backyards by distributing native wildflowers to attract specific butterfly species and other pollinating insects with 80 families. The project also allowed youth leads to distribute 50 insect hotels made by high school students at GBCS. A goal of this project was to educate students and their families on the benefits of insects in maintaining healthy backyard habitats, rather than seeing them as nuisances or species that we don't want in our backyards.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 50 insect hotels made by the high school youth leads and distributed.
- 6 shrubs and 225 wildflower plantings.
- 80 pollinator pots distributed to approximately 80 BVCS students in grades 2-5.
- Improved knowledge of pollinator species and habitat among students and families, and improved resilience of these species to climate change and other impacts.



10. Endangered Species Mural

Youth leads: 3 leads (Leopold Baker, Scarlett Thorton, Reece Collins)

Sponsored by: Walkerton District Community School, Bluewater District School Board

The Endangered Species Mural depicts many native species that are threatened or endangered, where climate change can be expected to impact their numbers even further. Art promotes relaxation, critical thinking, creativity, and holds meaning. The mural was constructed in three sections by the youth leads who worked together on the research, design, and painting of the mural artwork. The mural was shown at the 2025 Youth Climate Action Conference and was on display at the Deep Water Gallery in Warton in late 2025, and as of January 2026 had been installed permanently at the Bluewater Outdoor Education Centre. In this location it will continue to educate, inspire, and remind youth for years to come of the importance of ecological protection, climate action, and the power of artwork as a form of expression and activism.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- The all-ages audience of the mural during the project was more than 610 people.
- The projected audience for the mural at the Outdoor Education Centre (installed as of January 2026) is expected to be 2,200-2,500 students per year, drawing from schools across Grey and Bruce Counties.
- The mural has improved student inspiration, interest and involvement in local arts and climate action.



11. Pollinator Engagement and Education / Creating a BUZZ around climate change

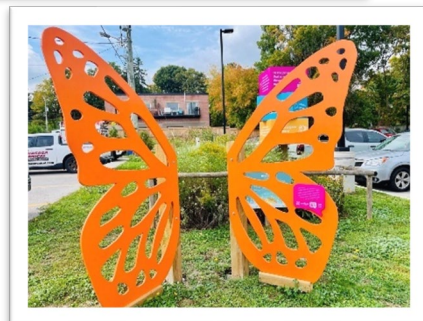
Youth leads: 3 leads (Harry Halton, Kaj Kulakowski, Elle Holman)

Sponsored by: Beaver Valley Outreach, with Pollinate TBM

The youth leads created a branded canopy tent, T-shirts, bilingual brochures on recycled paper, and launched a dedicated campaign webpage alongside Pollinate TBM. Pop-up events were held in Thornbury, Clarksburg, and Blue Mountain Resort, where infographics and seeds were shared, emphasizing education before action. Free native plants were distributed with participants invited to upload photos of their plants in the ground for a chance to win prizes. Creative elements included colorful bilingual signage at three locations, a fixed 3D mural at the Clarksburg clinic, a butterfly-wing sculpture at the Arthur Street parking lot, and QR codes linking to the website. The project promoted local pollinator awareness and education, providing children, their parents, and other curious visitors with a clearer understanding of how climate change impacts pollinators and, in turn, our local food system.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 100 native plants distributed at 7 pop-up events.
- 2 art installations (butterfly wing sculpture and pollinator mural) and 3 new informative pollinator signs.
- Website: <https://www.pollinatetbm.ca/creating-a-buzz>



12. Community Gardens Food Security Service and Education Area

Youth leads: 2 leads (Maddox Johnson, Sienna Hayter)

Sponsored by: Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce, with Sound Outdoors

This project built a shaded community gathering space at the Fresh Roots community garden in Owen Sound. This space was used to host a youth-led information event on the importance of local food and climate change, and is now available for future programming of workshops and small events. The youth leads co-designed and assisted in the construction of the new space alongside Sound Outdoors (responsible for managing the community garden), and helped to promote the garden program in the hopes that more people, young and old, will come to these gardens to grow together and learn.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- New 400 square foot space available for community gatherings and events.
- One youth-led information session, with more to come.
- 3 signs and 1 magazine article to promote the community garden.
- Increased awareness of food security, and new free and safe spaces for community members to gather and learn together.



13. Secondary School Students at Youth Climate Action Conference 4.0

Youth leads: 19 high school students from schools across Grey and Bruce Counties

Sponsored by: The Sustainability Project

The Youth Climate Action Conference (YCAC) is an annual event that started in 2022, which typically engages with students in grades 6-8. This project allowed the YCAC to deliberately engage with older students in high school to attend, volunteer and serve as role models for the conference attendees. Youth leads were invited to share a keynote presentation in a co-created fashion, sharing content to further motivate action among younger attendees at their own schools to begin action projects locally. The youth leads also assisted in planting a Tiny Forest on-site, and the Endangered Species Mural (another YCAF project) was exhibited for attendees. The project also matched secondary school students with community volunteers and civic leaders, including Mayor & County Warden Matrosovs, for mentorship and knowledge-sharing.

Outputs and Outcomes:

- 19 older youth in new leadership and volunteer roles, earning a total of 114 volunteer hours and inspiring 125 younger students.
- 400 saplings planted in a tiny forest.
- Youth leads were introduced to, and volunteered alongside, civic leaders and environmental action advocates in the community, gaining awareness of relevant and local intervention points in the climate crisis.

