

2008/09

MACOUN MARSH & BIODIVERSITY MATTERS



St-Laurent Academy Elementary & Junior High

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Following the lead of our internationally acclaimed *Macoun Marsh Project*, and our *International Youth Symposium Project*, St-Laurent Academy Elementary & Junior High is planning to further our commitment to environmental hands-on teaching, by developing more green project-based learning opportunities for our students.

There are a number of goals we hope to accomplish to expand our commitment to environmental leadership over the next several years:

- *Increase green programming throughout the curriculum & develop more green project-based learning programs*
- *Demonstrate through project-based learning, the potential for technological innovation to partner with environmental leadership.*
- *Expand our International biodiversity role & International citizenship*
- *Continue the Macoun Marsh Stewardship & Monitoring Project*
- *Partner with local and international environmental initiatives to leverage our student's learning outcomes, while contributing to local and international communities.*
- *Engage community and corporate Involvement*

Aside from the obvious curriculum and environmental benefits, these programs offer young students opportunities to develop increased confidence, improved social skills, development of values and beliefs about the environment, and a greater belief in personal efficacy - the types of skills that are increasingly important to academic, and life success.

St-Laurent Academy Elementary & Junior High has already successfully partnered with many governmental and non-governmental organizations through our *Macoun Marsh Project*, and *BiodiversityMatters: Second International Symposium for Biodiversity*.

We appreciate the added benefits our sponsors are bringing to our existing programs, and we see the contribution these relationships make to our students learning outcomes. With the support from The City of Ottawa, The United Nations, The Beechwood Foundation, Environment Canada, Ministry of Natural Resources and others, we have been able to offer our students unique learning opportunities.

Student ambassadors from the *Macoun Marsh Project* have traveled to Costa Rica, Sweden and Norway to share their project with others. Our students have made presentations at community events, to elementary teaching groups, and to scientific and research organizations. They have learned to collaborate with adults as well as students from other schools, both locally and internationally.

OUR FLAGSHIP PROJECT: THE MACOUN MARSH PROJECT

The Macoun Marsh is a small urban wetland, located on the property of Beechwood Cemetery, Canada's National Cemetery. In 2003, Mr. Léveillé and a group of his students successfully convinced the Beechwood Cemetery to preserve this natural habitat, and had it declared an environmentally sensitive area. Since then, students have taken the role of protecting, researching, and documenting this wetland ecosystem.

Since 2003 The Macoun Marsh Biodiversity Project, a multifaceted research and education initiative, has studied and preserved a unique inner-city wetland in Ottawa, identifying over **1200 species to date!**

The Macoun Marsh aims to:

- Research, enhance, and protect the ecology found here
- Record the biodiversity through every season
- Record the warming effects of an ever changing climate
- Educate the community about the value of urban wetlands with news articles, presentations and a website
- Inspire other educational and youth groups to begin their own projects, both locally, and internationally

"The Macoun Marsh Project involves working with others, developing new skills, undertaking practical conservation and influencing society. We have made a conscious decision to protect and celebrate our own Macoun Marsh. We are inspiring other individuals and schools to take a serious look at their own backyards."

*Michael Léveillé, Science Teacher, St-Laurent Academy
Executive Director, Macoun Marsh Project*

MACOUN MARSH PROJECT

AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Macoun Marsh Project was awarded the 2004 National Capital Regional Wildlife Festival Youth Award in Environmental Excellence.
- In 2004, Pinegrove Productions produced a bilingual educational film for television titled, *Our Incredible World*. It was based on the story of the Macoun Marsh Project, and filmed on location at the marsh.
- In 2006, a group of students traveled to Sweden, and the project won second place at the *International Volvo Adventure Competition*, an environmental program organized by Volvo Car Corporation in partnership with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). The Volvo Adventure jury was particularly impressed by the Ottawa team's long-term view of the environment, and the way it succeeded in creating awareness within the community about the importance of marshlands.
- Thanks to the full support of The Beechwood Cemetery Foundation, a beautiful Outdoor Classroom was built in 2007.
- In June 2008, The Macoun Marsh Project was chosen as the winner of Toyota Canada's Make Things Better Challenge.

MACOUNMARSH.BRAVEHOST.COM

BIODIVERSITYMATTERS: THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SYMPOSIUM FOR BIODIVERSITY

The Macoun Marsh Project and St-Laurent Academy Elementary & Junior High are the presenting partners of *BiodiversityMatters: Second International Youth Symposium on Biodiversity*, planned for Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, on July 5-9, 2009.

In January of 2005, HabitatNet/Souhegan High School with the Smithsonian Institution, Amigos de Sian Ka'an UNESCO Bio-Reserve and El Eden Ecological Reserve hosted the *First International Earth Summit for Youth on Global Biodiversity*. Students and teachers from the United States, France, India, Germany, Italy, Puerto Rico, the Netherlands and Mexico participated in the event.

Our Symposium will contribute to the United Nations 2010 Biodiversity Target. This target is to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.

The symposium is inviting students (Grade 6 to 12) from around the world to submit biodiversity project proposals to attend. We have 100 spaces for delegates and chaperons.

Support for *The Second International Youth Symposium on Biodiversity*:

"As politicians focus on voters for impending elections and corporate executives on the quarterly report, decisions are being made with consequences that reverberate well into the adult lives of today's youth. Yet young people don't vote and their future is seldom a part of political and corporate discussions. One consequence is declining quality of air, water, soil and biodiversity that we are leaving for coming generations. That's why youth are being informed and motivated about the important issues that will affect their lives."

David Suzuki

Education For The Planet

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM FOR BIODIVERSITY

HIGHLIGHTS

- On May 22, 2007, International Biodiversity Day, Michael Lévéillé and Clint Monaghan (Macoun Marsh Project), and Dan Bissacio (HabitatNet) announced plans to host the *Second International Youth Symposium on Biodiversity* in Ottawa, July 2009.
- On May 22, 2008, *The Macoun Marsh Project* with partners St-Laurent Academy, and The Beechwood Foundation presented a benefit concert, raising \$6000 for the 2009 Symposium.
- In June 2008, St-Laurent Academy students, representing *Macoun Marsh* and the *Second International Youth Symposium on Biodiversity* attended the *Tunza* Conference in Norway. Our students, as well as 700 other youth from 103 different countries were selected to attend this United Nations International Children's Conference on the Environment.
www.ua21.no/tunza.
- To date we have projects from 6 countries.
- In July 2009 students from the *Macoun Marsh Project* will be hosting 100 youth from around the world in Ottawa.
- Our students plan to travel to New York in 2010 and to present the Youth Accord to a meeting of the United Nations.
- We have been invited to attend the *Nagoya Biodiversity Summit* to be held in Aichi Prefecture, Nagoya city, Japan in October 2010. The Convention on Biological Diversity (UNEP) has invited us to present our Youth Accord at this event.

BIODIVERSITYMATTERS.ORG

St-Laurent Academy Elementary & Junior High

Symposium Focus

- To welcome students from around the world, and to celebrate the work they are doing at home regarding local biodiversity efforts.
- To experience Canadian biodiversity with a Bio-Blitz (A Biological Survey with local scientists and naturalists).
- To develop methods to implement the *Global Youth's Accord for Biodiversity* that was created by nine (9) nations during the *First Youth Symposium* in Mexico in 2005.
- To foster youth engagement activities to enhance their understanding of global stewardship, and a shared sense of understanding and commitment to the global community through acting locally and thinking globally.

Venue

In order to demonstrate both urban and rural biodiversity, the Symposium will spend some time in both city and country. We will be using the following venues, as needed:

- An Ottawa based Post Secondary School Conference Centre: centrally located, with easy access to Macoun Marsh
- An Outdoor Education facility in Dunrobin, Ontario : 30 minutes outside of the City of Ottawa, this facility offers a natural woodland setting with camp style lodging, plenty of nature hikes, a waterfront and full recreation facility
- Ottawa Post Secondary School residence

Planned Activities

Our delegates will have the opportunity to discover what is being done for biodiversity the world over! We are planning a number of engaging and relevant activities for our youth delegates. All of our activities will be hands-on, and meaningful to youth. It is our goal that delegates will take what they have learned from the *Symposium* to initiate activities in their home countries. Planned events include:

- Workshops
- Project Presentations by delegates
- Discussions / implementation of Youth Accord
- *Macoun Marsh* visit
- Gatineau Park biodiversity hike, Paddling / freshwater ecosystems
- Focus on Climate Change Day
- Mass tree planting
- Bio-Blitz

The Youth Accord agreement will promote the creation of other sites like *Macoun Marsh* and *El Edén*, emphasize biodiversity as a central theme of education in the natural sciences, and establish an international network of school-aged biodiversity researchers.

With the help of our delegates, we plan to launch a virtual BioBlitz project that will see youth from all over the world contributing and collaborating in a web-based environment. It is our hope that this virtual project will allow our delegates to regularly collaborate despite their geographic and cultural differences, and work to protect biodiversity worldwide. This virtual project will allow us to significantly increase our reach to youth worldwide.

Our Commitment to Innovative Education

We believe that in education, one size does not fit all. Guided by the Multiple Intelligences Theory and recent brain-based learning research, our teachers use multiple approaches to reach all learning styles. We believe that the arts, music and physical education all contribute to excellence in learning, and include these subjects in our regular curriculum. We believe that the more we engage children, the more they learn. We know the benefits of hands-on project-based learning. We are dedicated to ensuring the success of each of our individual students. We are a small and responsive school, able to integrate emerging educational research, and offer innovative teaching strategies to benefit our students.

Our Commitment to the Environment

St-Laurent Academy Elementary & Junior High is committed to environmental education. With Environmental concerns looming large across the planet, we are committed to enabling our students to be part of the solution. Environmental responsibility is a theme woven into many of our subjects, and activities at the school. Our curriculum includes project-based learning at the *Macoun Marsh*, where our students study biodiversity, and practice environmental stewardship. The *Macoun Marsh Project*, developed by our Science teacher Mr. Michael Léveillé, has been tremendously successful, winning awards internationally.

In 2007, we began our second project-based program, *BiodiversityMatters:Second International Symposium on Biodiversity*. This initiative has been welcomed by Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Montreal-based Convention on Biological Diversity, who stated that “Young people have a central place as bearers of tomorrow’s solutions. Their engagement is essential if we are to reduce the loss of biodiversity and ensure the future of life on earth.”



“I want to empower my students with a sense of responsibility. Young people need to know that the environmental condition of our planet is not hopeless. We can celebrate one little ecosystem at a time. Wetlands are a key part of our environment, and they are part of what sustainable development is all about. They affect human health, and the overall health of our world. We are proud of what our students are doing.”

Michael Léveillé, Science teacher, St-Laurent Academy Elementary & Junior High