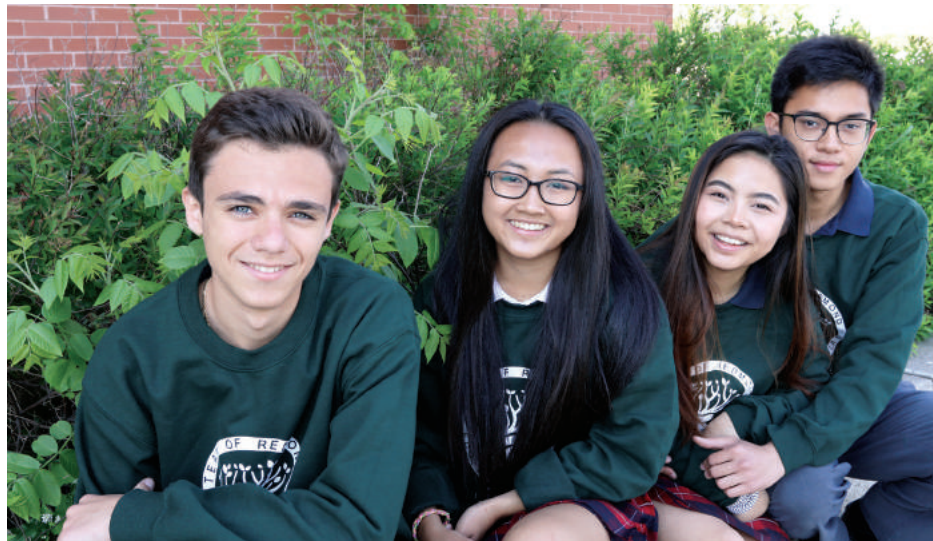


ANNUAL REPORT | 2017-18

# TAKING ACTION, TOGETHER



# VISION and MISSION

**VISION:** Every School an EcoSchool!

**OUR MISSION** is to nurture environmental leaders, reduce the ecological impact of schools, and build environmentally responsible school communities.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** A Reason for Hope
- 2** EcoSchools have Impact
- 3** Custodians Take Action on Waste
- 4** Upper Grand Certifies at 100%
- 4** Karen's Top 10 Tips
- 6** Highlights of 2017-18
- 7** Innovating with Cascades
- 8** Enhancing EcoSchools, Together
- 9** Holy Trinity Secondary School  
Grows Great Food
- 10** Thank You
- 11** Our Team
- 12** School Board Partners
- 13** Financials

# A Reason For Hope



The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report released this fall was a clear call to action. The urgency is real: floods, droughts, rising ocean levels, and climate

migrants, with 2030 named as the tipping point. The report is a challenging read and after diving into the key findings, honestly, it was hard to feel optimistic.

It was only after taking time to reach out to our EcoSchools community that I started to become hopeful again. After spending an afternoon hearing students talk about their composting programs, walk-to-school days, textile recycling campaigns, and schoolyard designs, it's impossible to not have a spark of hope for our shared future.

From smaller rural schools to busy urban schools, environmental leaders are taking a stand for the planet. In each of our 1,900 certified EcoSchools, youth are responding to complex issues with creativity, courage, and resilience.

The IPCC report is clear; we need to get moving. There is a lot of work to do and as we look to the future, our community is unwavering. In 2019, we will scale to

support more schools and school boards, grow our network of partners, and launch new and engaging ways to help students understand and track their environmental impact.

Our ambitious plans to scale could not be possible without our dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters. We are equally proud of what we've accomplished in partnership with our funders. Their sustained investment provides us with the capacity to fulfill our strategic vision.

As we look ahead, it will be critical to broaden and deepen our community of supporters. It is truly the collective impact of our community's caring investment that has made it possible for us to come this far - and we believe that we will continue to grow, enabling us to effect positive change.

Our confidence emerges from shared passion, determination, and the belief that, together with your support, we will make a difference. There is no better time than now to invest in our shared future, and I am thrilled to be on this journey with you. Together, we can make every school an EcoSchool.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lindsay Bunce'.

LINDSAY BUNCE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**“If we don’t do something now, what will the world look like in 20-30 years? We have to focus on the future of our environment!”**

*EcoTeam member, Guardian Angels, York Catholic District School Board*

# EcoSchools have impact!



**1,900**

**1,900 schools certified**  
in 58 boards.



**1 MILLION**

**Nearly 1,000,000 students**  
engaged in environmental  
learning & action.



**74**

**74 Energy Hogs** found in  
schools across Ontario!



**TOP 3**

**Top 3 school-wide  
campaigns:** Earth Month,  
Earth Hour, and School-  
Ground Clean-ups.



96% of certifying schools indicate that they support student leadership.



80% of teachers say EcoSchools  
has benefited their personal  
development or career.

# Custodians take action on waste



*“On a personal level we all want to do just a little bit more. Sometimes we think of things on a grand scale and it feels overwhelming, when really if we break it down to the little things, it can be easier to adopt and still significantly impact the cause.”*

Tony Ward, custodian at St. Dominic, WCDSB

**“2017/2018 was our first year certifying as an EcoSchool. As a small school, we believed by starting small we could achieve more and wow, did we ever achieve everything we set out for. The students have created successful campaigns that will continue into our next school year.”**

*Teacher, Merlin Area PS, Lambton Kent District School Board*

# Upper Grand certifies at 100%



UGDSB staff proudly conducting a board office waste audit

*Upper Grand District School Board proudly certified 100% of their schools this year. Karen Acton, Environmental Sustainability Lead with the board, explains this success emerged over time, with plentiful supports: "One aspect that supports schools is how the Board office walks the talk and does many of the same eco initiatives that our schools do. Anything from swaps to waste audits!" She adds: "My role is a challenging one, but it has incredible rewards. Seeing the dedication of staff and students to making positive change to protect our earth inspires me every day!"*

## Karen's TOP 10 tips

on how school boards can best support their schools

### 1 COLLABORATE AND MAKE A PLAN:

A UGDSB Environmental Education and Management Committee (EEMC) was created with stakeholders at all levels. We then created a 5-year Environmental Sustainability Action Plan to

guide our efforts. One of the goals in the plan was for 100% (all 76 schools) to achieve EcoSchools certification. To add tangible support to this, our Board Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans all include environmental goals.

- 2 SHARE THE VISION WITH EVERYONE:** A communication plan is essential. It needs to include many innovative ways of getting the message out – newsletters, emails, lunch and learns, in-services, annual reports, social media, etc. (We created a new hashtag #UGLearnGreen!). Also, give presentations to as many stakeholder groups as you can – trustees, principals, teachers, students, parents, custodians, board staff.
- 3 ENCOURAGE A TEAM ECOLEAD APPROACH:** All our schools have an EcoLead teacher, but many have two or three. This helps teachers to not only share the workload, but also provides them with a supportive partner when encouraging other staff to make positive changes.
- 4 PROVIDE LOTS OF SUPPORTS:** Teachers need time and resources to promote environmental initiatives in their schools. The UGDSB provides half-day supply release as needed so teachers can conduct waste audits or finalize their certification application. Resources are housed on UGshare, a staff web portal, and include 'Quick Guides' of essential information, campaign packages, videos, funding opportunities, lesson links, energy/solar panel data, and much more.
- 5 PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TRAINING:** We offer EcoSchools workshops, arrange mentorships between new EcoSchools and experienced schools, and offer other networking and training opportunities for EcoTeams. In addition, many teachers greatly appreciate the various local, hands-on workshops on how to extend classroom Wlearning outside.
- 6 MAKE IT A BOARD-WIDE APPROACH:** The UGDSB has annual event days and all schools are encouraged to participate by providing resources and certificates of participation. For added incentives, we also have annual Eco contests with prizes to motivate schools. These have included a Slogan Contest, a Lesson Plan Contest to encourage curriculum points, and last year we had an Eco Resolution contest in January where staff and students pledged to take action!
- 7 CULTIVATE EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS:** School boards do not have to do it alone! There are many agencies that have a passion for supporting kids and schools. We have strong ties with cities, municipalities, conservation authorities, and numerous environmental organizations that provide presentations, workshops, field trips and resources.
- 8 BE A ROLE MODEL:** Staff at our board office created a Board EcoTeam that walks the talk. We conduct waste audits, have lunch and learns, celebrate sweater day with chilli cook-offs, and play board games in the dark for Earth Hour. Our newest initiative this year was to host a Swap Shop for Buy Nothing Day. Personally, you will never see me with a single use coffee cup or using plastic utensils!
- 9 COLLECT DATA + REFLECT, REVIEW AND REVISE:** There are always new ways to approach things that didn't work or new initiatives to try. We have conducted many surveys, feedback sessions and reflective protocols with stakeholder groups on various topics. This past year, feedback prompted new tech supports for schools to track photocopying. We also revised our process for smaller greening projects so schools now fill out fewer forms.
- 10 CELEBRATE SUCCESSES:** This is key. Always celebrate achievements! We post school initiatives on the board website and tweet out photos. For official recognition, we have provided schools with ecofriendly bamboo, end-of-year award plaques to celebrate student environmental efforts. We have an annual teacher leadership award too.

# Highlights of 2017-18



## It's official

**Ontario EcoSchools** is now a registered charity! For the past 12 years, York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies has been the incubator of the Ontario EcoSchools program. During this time, the program experienced sustained growth: from 100+ schools certified in 2005 to over 1,800 schools certified in 2016-17. This exciting momentum has led us to become a charity!



## Strategic vision

Our **three-year plan** will be bold and involve working with school boards, schools, and diverse communities to inspire systems change.

**PRIORITY 1:** Grow environmental leadership

**PRIORITY 2:** Build a sector-wide movement

**PRIORITY 3:** Provide stellar support



## SuperConference

On February 22, 2018, we held our first-ever **joint youth and adult conference**. It was a monumental day for the program as close to 400 teachers, administrative staff, educators, students, and community partners joined us to celebrate program accomplishments and gain new insight and ideas for future endeavours.

## Our Reach



### INSTAGRAM

Instagram launched!  
**512 followers**



### TWITTER

**103,700 impressions**  
a month



### EMAIL

**9,200+ email subscribers** with an average 45% open rate



### MEDIA

**28 media mentions**



2017-18 HIGHLIGHTS

# Innovating with Cascades



## Partnering with Cascades on a youth leadership day heading into the 2018 SuperConference.

The focus of the day was ICE (Innovation, Creativity, Entrepreneurship) training. As part of this, 60 students from 3 school boards were invited to tour a Cascades Containerboard Packaging facility in Vaughan. On the tour, students learned about the circular economy and Cascades' commitment to sustainability and water conservation.

The adventure wrapped up with a field trip to Lake Ontario to connect with local waterways.

To follow up on the training day, the students attended SuperConference 2018 and presented their green business suggestions to Cascades and other industry partners. As one student participant noted: "It was an amazing experience to be engaged with my peers, teachers, environmental advocates, and the local environment."

The day showcased the innovative ways that non-profits, businesses, and the education sectors can collaborate to make a difference for the planet.

***"As an organization that lives and breathes sustainability and is focused on the next generation, it was a privilege to spend the day with such inspirational students. The dialogue between our team and these change agents was eye opening and left me confident that the future of our earth is in great hands."***

Mikhael Metauro, Director of Supply Development, Cascades Recovery+

# Enhancing EcoSchools, together



This year we held community consultations on how to enhance the 13-year-old EcoSchools certification framework. Together, we looked at what environmental issues should be featured, how to best streamline certification and support schools, and how to start scaling national. Thank you for the great insights! You are creating a greener future.



2

Full-day  
focus groups



9

Community  
meetings



4

Insightful  
surveys



1M

1 million  
amazing ideas

**“There are a lot of unsung heroes in EcoClub. These are often the students who don’t get the awards and medals, but need to be recognized and celebrated for their good works.”**

*Teacher, Tecumseh PS, Halton District School Board*

# Holy Trinity Secondary School grows great food



***“Sustainable agriculture and locally grown foods are a big part of our community. We’ve been producing food for our school and some families of classmates.”***

*Zachary, 18 years old*

Holy Trinity Secondary School in the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario is located just on the outskirts of the small city of Cornwall, Ontario. The school has certified as an EcoSchool for nine years, and achieved Platinum level status last year based on their well-developed environmental program, and a keen passion for growing local food.

Mike Smith, one of the EcoTeam teachers at Holy Trinity explains the start of the schools’ thriving food program: “When asked to start an Agriculture SHSM program in 2017-18, I thought about the 43 acres Holy Trinity sits on and decided it would be a great spot to start a farm. In class, we had been looking at sustainable farming practices and permaculture, so we contacted a local permaculture designer to help with a plan. ”

With this expert assistance, the school started production of a 4.5 acre farm featuring keyhole vegetable gardens. Students chose all the seeds and started them off in classrooms and the school greenhouse. They got their hands dirty planting the seedlings in the spring, and as Smith proudly notes, “Students maintained the greenhouse plants and outdoor plants well into the summer months . . . without me asking.”

Because of this exceptional effort, over a 1,000 pounds of vegetables were harvested from 50 keyhole gardens between the months of June and October. All of the

produce was then donated to students, teachers, families, and the school food program.

However, the EcoTeam didn’t stop at veggies - they also planted an orchard! Apple, pear, plum, cherry, olive, paw paw and hazelnut trees were planted in a staggered pattern to deter pests, and a small apple and pear cordon orchard is being maintained behind the greenhouse.

In keeping with these fantastic edible efforts, in 2018 the entire student population rallied together to plant 3,000 hardwood and softwood trees throughout the school property as part of the Ministry of Agriculture’s Million Tree project.

Smith remarks that the food and agriculture team have some innovative ideas for the coming year: everything from turning an old hay wagon into a vegetable stand, to building a composter out of used pallets and tires, and creating solar thermal heaters for classrooms and the greenhouse.

Andrea Stang, another EcoSchool lead teacher at Holy Trinity, explains what motivates their environmental efforts: “As a new school, we believe that minimizing our ecological footprint is important. As Catholics, we are called to be Stewards of the Earth and we are answering that call.”

With this level of motivation and creativity, we are excited to see what Holy Trinity will serve up next!

# Thank You

A sincere thank you to the following groups for their generous support of the Ontario EcoSchools program.

## **FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS**

Government of Ontario  
Employment and Social  
Development Canada  
J.W. McConnell Family Foundation  
Canada Summer Jobs  
Cascades Inc  
Edge Imaging  
ECO Canada  
Innoweave  
Interface  
Koru Distribution  
TD Friends of the Environment  
Foundation  
Wipebooks  
Enerlife Consulting

## **IN-KIND SUPPORT**

Greenhouse Juice  
Bullfrog  
Lamin-8  
Koru Distribution  
Toronto Region and Conservation  
Authority

## **PARTNERS**

EcoSuperior  
Halton Environmental Network  
Toronto and Region Conservation  
Authority  
York University

## **COLLABORATORS**

Action Against Hunger Canada  
Back to Nature Network  
Camp Kawartha and the Kawartha  
Outdoor Education Centre  
Climate Reality Project Canada  
Dr. Jackman Institute of Child Studies  
Earth Day Canada  
EcoSource  
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Fashion Takes Action  
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Green Teacher  
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Natural Curiosity  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
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Plug'n Drive  
Project Neutral  
TD Bank Group  
the p.i.n.e. Project  
The Ripple Effect Education  
Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation  
Trent University  
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WaterLution  
World Wildlife Fund, Canada  
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Fusion Jeunesse

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Steering Committee Member  
Eleanor Dudar, Alumni, Ontario EcoSchools  
Steering Committee Member

**“What motivates me to be part of an EcoTeam is that we need to conserve the land and we need to take responsibility for our actions.”**

*Jennifer, Grade 10, École Secondaire de Pain Court, Csc Providence*

# Our Team



## **STAFF (LEFT TO RIGHT)**

Galen Drinnan  
Josh Padolsky  
Sierra Frank  
Tania Cheng  
Melissa Benner  
Michelle Shahoud  
Lindsay Bunce  
Edvirge Prédestin

## **NOT PICTURED:**

Sarah Bradley  
Vladimir Lopez Flores  
Theresa Ramirez  
Lexi Salt  
Elanor Waslander

## **PART-TIME STAFF**

Natalia Bekirsky  
Ariel Estulin  
Maggie Chang  
Hayley Goodchild  
Laurie Kassabian  
Kirushanth Sriranjani

## **ASSESSORS**

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Neil Dunning  
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Caitlin Herckenrath  
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Eveline Lemieux  
Katie MacDonald

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Jillian Senyi  
Anita Smith  
Carol Stott  
Rachel Thompson  
Clare Weissflog  
Ginni Yeung

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Avon Maitland District School Board  
*Crystal Gascho*

Bluewater District School Board  
*Deborah Diebel*

Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board  
*Denise O'Brien*

Catholic District School Board Of Eastern Ontario  
*Tanya Sesbreno, Patrick McLeod*

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# Financials

To view our full audited financials, please visit [www.ontarioecoschools.org](http://www.ontarioecoschools.org).

