



ecosource
Growing a Green Community

CULTIVATING GREEN CHAMPIONS

Youth Leadership in
Building Resilient
Communities



Pathways to Resiliency

Youth are leaders in climate action globally and right here in Mississauga. They are also facing unique challenges that environmental education can help address.

Climate Anxiety

78% of young people reported that climate change impacts their mental health on a recent national survey (Galway & Field, 2023).

Social Disconnection

Young Canadians are more likely to report they lack reliable support and connection in their communities (Angus Reid Institute, 2022).

Screen Time

Weekday screen time increased on average of 1.35 hours per day among children and youth during the pandemic (Plamondon, McArthur & Eirich, 2023).



By designing education that's hopeful, connected to the land, and geared toward action, we empower youth to build resilience both for themselves and for our environment.



Promising policies

In the face of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, there is growing awareness of the role education can play in facilitating the adoption of sustainable practices across all sectors of our lives



2024

Consultation is underway toward a National Framework for Environmental Learning. Public consultation closes June 3.



2020

Canada's Youth Policy recognizes environment and climate change as a top priority for youth.



2019

City of Mississauga's Climate Change Action Plan identifies opportunities for youth engagement including Actions 20-3 and 21-3.

Overview

Cultivating Green Champions was a 9-month program designed to empower youth age 15-30 to take action for the environment through community engagement and leadership development.



35

Hands-on workshops & stewardship events

Volunteer hours dedicated to environmental service

6100+

42

Youth-led eco action projects

“ I learned how to be more sustainable and learned how to be a leader. ”

Program Components

We supported youth development through intensive skills-based programs, regular workshops, and peer-to-peer learning and connection.

Intensive Weeks



We hosted 3 weeks of intensive learning building skills related to a diverse range of environmental issues.

Regular Workshops



Getting youth outside regularly built teamwork and empowered them to make a difference in their community.

Peer Connection



By building trusted relationships between ourselves and participants, we leveraged the power of peer-to-peer learning.

Action Projects



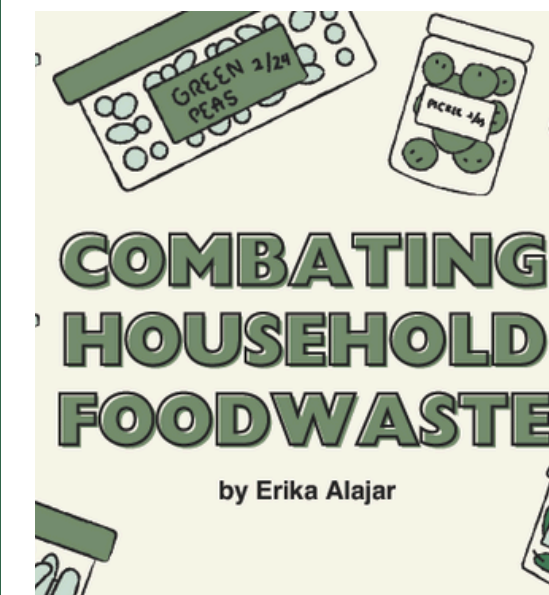
CLEANUPS



LOCAL FOOD



RETROFITS



FOOD WASTE



CLIMATE JUSTICE

Our participants devoted a collective 900+ hours to the development and implementation of impactful youth action projects.

A Hub of Activity

We heard from youth that they appreciated a centralized meeting site to build connections with our program staff and fellow participants.

In response, we hosted biweekly workshops at our Community Climate Hub near Eglinton and Hurontario.



67%

of workshops and
events held at
our hub

Action 19-5 in the City of Mississauga's Climate Change Action Plan identifies Ecosource as a stakeholder in the development of climate hubs for climate-related training.

Program results



120 native plants and trees were planted



519 hours was spent growing organic food for local food banks



75 youth engaged, 90% from equity-deserving groups



44 placements of 120 volunteer hours completed



End of program celebration

Program outcomes

Civic engagement

100% of participants deepened their understanding of the benefits of community service.

Leadership development

84% youth reported increased leadership skills through the design and delivery of action projects.

Intercultural learning

53% of partner workshops centered Indigenous perspectives and over 90% of youth belonged to equity-deserving groups.

Environmental stewardship

Together youth participants stewarded over 100,000 square meters of land.



Youth Voices

“

I found the program to be a great way to gain transferable skills and knowledge on topics related to using local food and Indigenous traditional knowledge.

These experiences were terrific, enriched not only by the engaging activities themselves but also by the opportunity to connect with fellow participants and staff.

I will always carry a sense of wonder and excitement for being outdoors and learning about things like gardening.



Strategies for Enhancing Youth Engagement

Meet youth where they are

Connect with youth through existing community networks.

Bring programming to high school eco clubs, student volunteer fairs, and other community events.

Start with the environmental issues youth care about.

Create a welcoming environment

Hold workshops at a consistent time and place.

Provide unprogrammed time for connection and fun activities.

Continue to grow our climate hub as a site for youth learning and skills training.

Remove barriers to participation

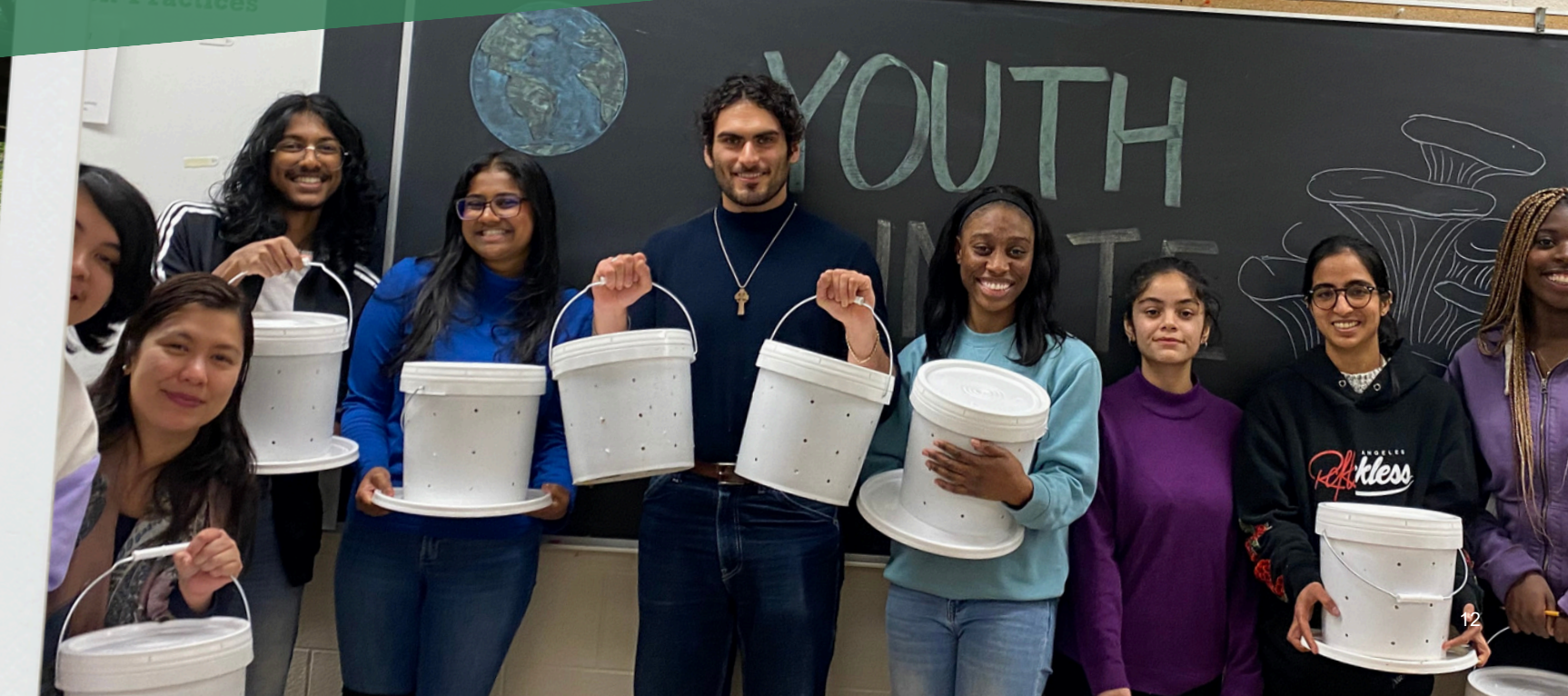
Provide alternative online programming for youth who cannot attend in-person.

Offer travel reimbursements to increase accessibility.

Encourage peer-to-peer mentorship and resource-sharing.



GREEN CHAMPIONS 2024



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The Cultivating Green Champions program was funded by Canada Service Corps, a national movement that empowers youth aged 15-30 to gain experience and build important skills while giving back to their community. Learn more at Canada.ca/CanadaServiceCorps.