

**THANK YOU!**



2018 Youth Summit participants, Daynan Lepore

*Toronto Field Naturalists*

For supporting the 2018 Youth Summit for Biodiversity  
& Environmental Leadership



November 2, 2018

Dear Toronto Field Naturalists,

Thank you for your support of Ontario Nature's 2018 Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership. By sponsoring my peers to attend, you gave students an opportunity to learn how they can create positive environmental change in their own communities and helped inspire future environmentalists across the province.

To recap, 106 youth from 74 communities across Ontario attended this year's summit – the diversity was truly incredible! Of those, a record-breaking 101 youth were sponsored to attend by 71 nature groups, conservation authorities, schools, corporate partners and individuals. This support means a great deal to us and it allows more youth to get involved each year.

We had the pleasure of participating in a wide variety of outdoor activities and educational workshops. Some of the things we learned included:

- How to protect our wild pollinators
- How to conduct amphibian surveys and why this data is vital for conservation
- The natural habitats found in our province
- How to harness our power to affect change, both locally and provincially
- Traditional Indigenous medicine
- Understanding Indigenous clan systems
- Freshwater ecology
- The urgency to address climate change and how we can start
- Birds of prey in Ontario
- How to become effective young leaders
- Identifying invasive species and understanding their impact on the environment
- Primitive living and survival skills
- How to reduce our ecological footprint
- The negative impact of plastic waste on our environment

Other memorable moments included morning activities like yoga, bird watching, swimming in Lake Couchiching, getting up close and personal with native reptiles and amphibians, and an evening campfire with stories and songs to bring everyone together. The Great Group Challenge had teams facing off in fun challenges and participants were able to connect and discuss ideas with their peers in the Networking Forum.

On behalf of the Youth Council and Ontario Nature, thank you again for your support of this great event. Because of your generous contribution, you gave me and over 100 of my friends the ability to meet, share ideas and discover our potential to become the environmental leaders of today and tomorrow. Please enjoy the photos and testimonials from the Summit on the following pages.

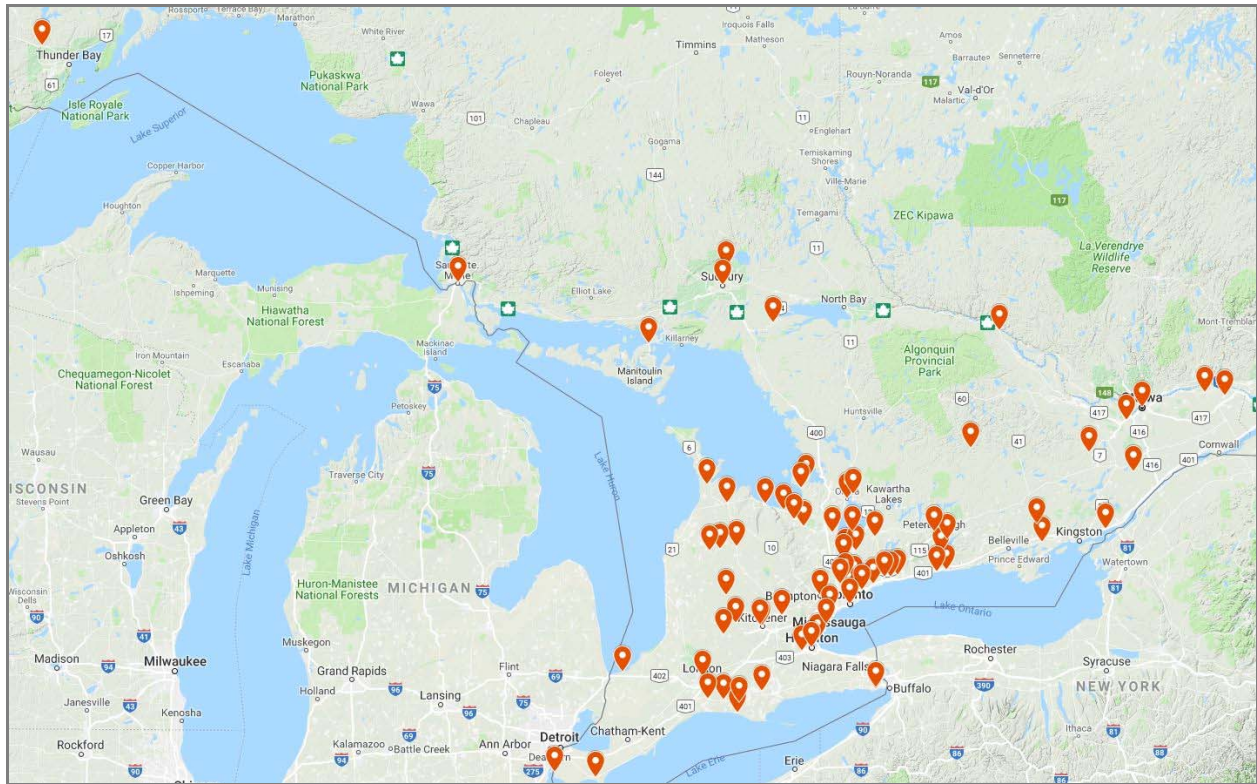


Yours sincerely,



Trevor Fung, Ontario Nature Youth Council

## Celebrating the diversity of Ontario!



106 young leaders from 74 communities across the province attended the 2018 Youth Summit

- |                  |                |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Alfred           | Hamilton       | New Lowell       | Scarborough    |
| Amherstburg      | Hanmer         | Newmarket        | South Bruce    |
| Ancaster         | Hanover        | Nithburg         | Peninsula      |
| Aylmer           | Innisfil       | North York       | St. Thomas     |
| Bancroft         | Kaministiquia  | Oakville         | Stayner        |
| Brampton         | Kanata         | Orillia          | Stratfordville |
| Bright's Grove   | Keene          | Oshawa           | Stratford      |
| Burlington       | Kitchener      | Ottawa           | Sudbury        |
| Cobourg          | Lanark         | Owen Sound       | Sunderland     |
| Collingwood      | Leamington     | Penetanguishene  | Sutton West    |
| Courtice         | Listowel       | Peterborough     | Thornbury      |
| Crystal Beach    | Little Current | Pickering        | Tiny           |
| Deep River       | London         | Port Burwell     | Toronto        |
| Delhi            | Markham        | Port Hope        | Vankleek Hill  |
| Durham           | Merrickville   | Rama             | Vaughan        |
| East Gwillimbury | Mississauga    | Richmond Hill    | Walkerton      |
| Gananoque        | Monetville     | Ridgeway         | Waterloo       |
| Gores Landing    | Mount Albert   | Roblin           | Whitby         |
| Guelph           | Napanee        | Sault Ste. Marie |                |

“I learned how we can better our lives and the planet by becoming waste free personally. The workshops I attended gave me valuable insight on what our planet will look like if we do not start to take care of it. I have also learned how to identify different species to help collect data on the populations of wildlife in my area. Some of my favourite activities during the Summit were the morning walks as we spotted birds, making our own toothpaste, the late night walks looking for salamanders, and waking up early to watch the sunrise as the local otter cruised by the dock.”

– Logan, age 15, Kaministiquia



“During the Youth Summit I learned a great deal through all the workshops, but even more so through all the unique people I met. It was so refreshing to be with such like-minded people, as we all care about the world we live in.

We were all able to share our unique environmental experiences and stories with each other. It gave me hope for the future.”

– Delenn, age 18, Scarborough

“The Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership was a weekend to remember and I will treasure all of the memories I made. I met a large number of students the same age as me from across the province who share the same interests and goals. In my culture, Mother Earth is held with high regard and the youth summit allowed me to value the environment and understand that we all have a purpose to protect it.”

– Whitney, age 15, Chippewas of Rama First Nation



“I got to really appreciate the environment for how amazing it really is. It also got me to learn more about climate change and similar problems, which I find very interesting and made me want to do something in order to make a change. I also met so many amazing people during the summit. It was truly astonishing to see so many different people coming from different places, cultures, families and race all come together for the same goal. Though I only knew these people for 2 days, it felt like I've known them all along.”

–Yuna, age 14, Toronto



“I had the opportunity to meet many individuals in my age group who share the same passion for protecting the environment. Often, as a youth, we think that we are alone and no one else shares this passion of sustainability and our voices remain unheard. It is with Youth Summits like these that we can really notice that this is not the case and that together we can make a difference and shape our future for the better.”

–Joseph, age 17, Sudbury



“I would just like to say that the summit was an unforgettable experience! I got to meet over 100 people who are passionate and dedicated to the environment. I made many new friendships and learnt so many new things. I hope to come back next year!”

– Kaylee, age 16, Hanmer



“Hearing inspiring environmentalists, going through thought-provoking workshops, and meeting like-minded people made this year’s youth summit like no other. The summit opened up my eyes to an incredible amount of environmental issues affecting our society today, and showed me that we can’t wait any longer to start fighting for the environment. The summit showed me that I have to start now and genuinely make an effort every day to help protect the environment.”

– Raj, age 17, Brampton

“I believe that other students should have the same experience that I had; being able to connect with and genuinely appreciate nature has motivated me to continue my efforts of protecting our planet. With the knowledge gained from this summit, I think that students will be empowered to take action against many serious issues such as climate change. This whole summit was so inspiring!”

– Jasmine, age 16, Kanata



"The Youth Summit was an amazing experience, being surrounded by fellow Youth Council members and summit attendees gives me hope about the future of the environment. It's incredible to be surrounded by people who care for the environment as much as I do. The summit creates connectivity and enthusiasm for the environment and its conservation. I hope to be able to take away what I learned at the summit to inform others and help them to become aware of the importance of being connected with the environment and protecting it."

– Emma, age 16, Vankleek Hill



"The summit was absolutely amazing! When my friend and I arrived at Geneva Park, we were immediately greeted with open arms. I got to enjoy many seminars and I learned a lot of thing that I would not otherwise have been able to learn. The summit inspired me to become a better person and become more conscious about the things that affect our planet and how I can help try to change it."

– Adia, age 17, Thornbury

"The Ontario Nature Youth Summit is truly one of my favourite parts of my year. I am continually inspired to make a difference in my community and province, and connected with other like-minded youth who I can work with to make this happen. After this year's summit, I can't wait for the great projects that lay ahead in the Youth Council and am excited for the change we are going to make!"

– Ben, age 17, Waterloo



## **SAVE THE DATE**

**September 20-22, 2018**

Ontario Nature's 10<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Summit for Biodiversity

For more information, please visit [ontarionature.org/youthsummit](http://ontarionature.org/youthsummit) or contact Christine Ambre at [christinea@ontarionature.org](mailto:christinea@ontarionature.org).

Dear Toronto Field Naturalists,

My name is Kelsey and I am writing to offer my sincere thanks for your Ontario Nature Youth Summit sponsorship this year. I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to attend the Youth Summit again, this year being on the Youth Council.

It was so exciting to reconnect with fellow activists and leaders, and meet like-minded youth from all over Ontario. For example, I had meet a few local farmers and learned about their agricultural issues. For example, they must pay around \$1000 per year in order to become a certified organic farm, which lessens the incentive to become one. This made me more aware about the power that government policymakers have in driving sustainability.

This idea was strengthened in the climate change workshop that I attended, lead by Grant Linney. I learned that oil and gas prices are much higher than what consumers pay; the government heavily subsidizes these sources of energy. If we want to turn around the climate crisis, we have to keep the oil in the ground. One of my peers commented that solar energy is tremendously powerful, but we don't yet have the technology to capture, store, and convert that energy into usable energy. Despite this, many countries have already switched to renewable energy sources, and every country, including Canada, should follow in their footsteps. Grant also reminded us that young people's voices are powerful in addressing the climate crisis, because we don't have ulterior motives, and we represent the future. I will certainly be aware of this when I choose to speak up.

Last year, Kale Black from Burlington Green gave a keynote presentation about his journey with environmental activism. I was so inspired then and this year I decided to attend his workshop - Be the Change. We discussed everyday sustainability choices and brainstormed ideas for our schools' eco teams. I learned that one way to target the single-use trash from the cafeteria is to contact my school's trustee and voice the problem to her. I didn't know before that they were willing to listen. In another workshop lead by Youth Council member Aidan Brushett, we brainstormed simple ways of breaking up with plastic in our lives, especially in food and hygiene products. We made toothpaste together, and I learned that bathroom products are quite easy to make myself. Though going completely zero-waste is difficult, we can each make our small impacts that add up - thrifting, buying reusable items, and eating less meat are great places to start.

Throughout this weekend, we were reminded of the traditional territories that we stand on. I learned about beliefs that related to how Indigenous peoples connect with the Mother Earth - harmony and equality between the people, the animals, and the land. One of the Indigenous Elders opened the Summit with a talk about our collective responsibility to take care of and give back to our planet. In one of the workshops, we learned about the Aboriginal clan governance system, and their sense of community and equality. We ended the workshop with a lovely nature scavenger hunt, and made artwork out of the plants, berries, flowers, and rocks that we found.

One of the most memorable scenes of the trip was everyone sitting around the campfire at night, telling stories, singing with the guitar and ukuleles, roasting marshmallows, and looking back at the star-dotted sky.

This weekend was special, and my eco spirit has been lifted to new heights. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,  
Kelsey Gao

Dear Ms. Dengler,

My name is Yumna Najeeb and I'm writing this letter to thank you for sponsoring me for the 2018 Ontario Nature Youth Summit. I'm an 18 year old student from Burlington, and some of the things I enjoy include sports, reading, and nature.

What made me want to attend the Youth Summit in the first place was my passion for everything nature and a chance to meet other youth that had the passions as me. Highlights of the Summit included the long walks in the woods, making my own medicine, and the campfire.

All in all, I sincerely enjoyed spending a weekend in the nature up in Orillia with friends and being active my community. The events I participated in at the Summit and the wonderful people I met have inspired me even more to make a difference in my community, so thank you for sponsoring me.

Sincerely,

Yumna Najeeb





Dear Toronto Field Naturalists, 11 Oct, 2018  
I am Haidi Wu, an IB student at Robert Bateman Highschool, Burlington. My interests include rock climbing, drawing and environmental engineering — ~~but~~ what I love... nature, music, loving people and soul-fueling experiences. The ON Youth Summit was all of the above.

I applied for the scholarship knowing that if I got in, it would be an experience. It would be fun, and it would lift me up. Also, I needed fresh inspiration to love the earth and put my heart into helping it. I was not disappointed. Whether by coincidence or by subconscious intent, as the summit neared I became much more interested in large-scale environmental issues. I had a sudden urge to be doing more, so, armed with wildlife magazine clippings, I dreamed of writing letters to governments urging for conservation. It was a daunting, overwhelming state of mind.

In short, the summit was just what I needed at the time.

It brought me back to the centre. The presenters and experiences reminded me that it all starts from within — loving nature and becoming part of the solution rather than just asking for one. This gave me hope, and a mission: to spread love and gratitude for the earth.

The amazing thing about it was the atmosphere — both physically and beyond. The people there weren't there because we were supposed to be; we were there because this was what we loved. So the energy was high; the love was flowing. It was a pure, healing environment.

I loved "Children in the Woods" because it gave me so much that I could bring back with me — new knowledge and perspectives. Skid was amazing and I named a tree after him.

The same could be said about "Be the Change," "Breaking up with Plastic," "Aboriginal Clan System"...

The campfire was so beautiful. The stories and drum beat were just magic. Never have I heard a blob of teenagers sing so off key yet feel so in tune.

And the little gaps in the schedule where we could be alone and still and vibe with the landscape, or hang out and vibe with each other — those stayed with me just as much as the scheduled events.

The keynote speaker, Chloe Dragon Smith, is a flipping hero!

TFN, thank you so much for your generosity. Thank you for allowing me to absorb these snapshots of people and places and feelings that will inspire me forever. — the moon over the lake, the swirling branches overhead, the quiet corner by the water, all the hippies and artists and weirdos. I will make sure none of it is wasted on me.

Love and gratitude,  
Haiki



Dear Toronto Field Naturalists,

This is Sophy Wu, a high school student (currently in Grade 10) you've sponsored to attend 2018 Youth Summit of Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership by Ontario Nature.

I am very grateful for this opportunity and experience which would not have been possible without your support. Thank you for providing sponsorship and for choosing me~ I am very passionate about environmental protection.

Quick eco-facts about me: I am a birder and an amateur of butterfly watching, I used to be a student leader in conservation projects and a local biodiversity textbook editor. I am currently volunteering in Green Toronto Community Stewardship Project at Riverdale Park site.

I found out about the Summit on Ontario Nature's website by chance while I was searching for volunteer opportunities. I decided to apply right away because I was so excited about the idea of gathering youth from all over Ontario to explore the field of citizen science and ecological conservation.

Below, I would like to share with you some memorable events and fun moment of the weekend with 119 other inspiring youths.

I still feel like I am immersed in the Summit, at YMCA Geneva Park, in the forest of the darkness and wonders by the peacefully fluctuating Lake Couchiching.

This weekend has been full of inspirations, adventures, and laughter! Whether it be the great circle self-introduction, workshops, morning activities, Great Team Challenge (Shout out to my Champion Green Team, We Are Green!), Bonfire, or Night Hike, I met so many amazing people and learned so much fresh eco info!

Highlights of the activities:

Workshops:

Snake and turtles Interactions

Children in the Woods

What's the Buzz About

(Youth Council + pollinator campaign)

Freshwater Life

(Catch sample organisms, Species Identifications)

Networking Discussion:

Environmental Career opportunities

Environmental Programming

Great Team Challenge:

Act out words

(Garlic mustard photosynthesis glacier)

Summit Fire Pit  
Indigenous stories

Night Hike  
Walking on the trail in the moonlight  
Crossing over long grass in the darkness  
Everyone gets on one rock  
Star spinning  
Circle Stargazing  
Shooting star  
Capturing wild sounds

Everyone is so welcoming and talented! I am inspired and encouraged to establish a volunteer club at my school to steward my school's backyard trail park by removing invasive species and native plants.

I certainly would go back to the summit in the next few years. I'd be thrilled to participate in some of your events as well! In addition, I am currently looking for an environmental internship. So hopefully we will be able to get in touch in the future. My email address is [xxxxxxxxxx@xxxx.xx](mailto:xxxxxxxxxx@xxxx.xx). Attached below this letter are some photos of me at the Summit.

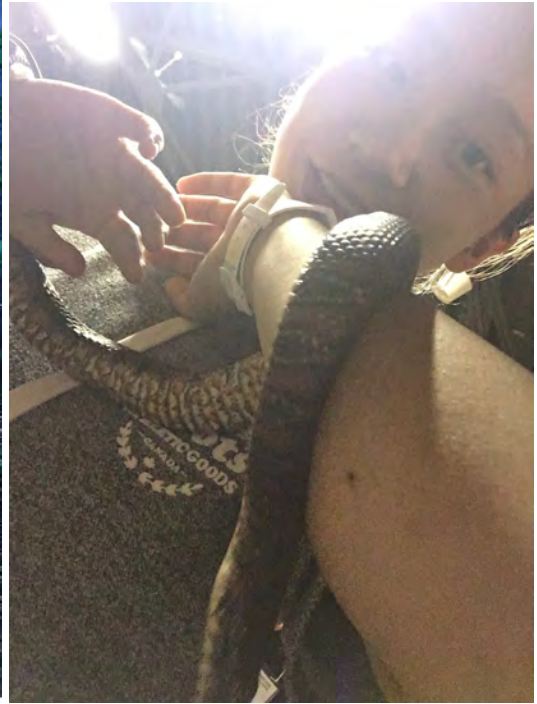
Regards and sincerely,

Sophy Wu (Fei Wu)



ecokale27  
Geneva Park







Dear Toronto Field Naturalists,

My name is Noor Toeama and I am a senior at Dr. Frank J. Hayden Secondary School. This past September, I had the wonderful opportunity of attending the Ontario Nature Youth Summit at the beautiful YMCA Geneva Park in Orillia. At the summit, I was able to make many new friends, learn amazing things about biodiversity, and get guidance from knowledgeable workshop leaders about how to live more environmentally sustainable. The entire weekend was incredible, and it was all because of you and your support. I wanted to thank you so much for sponsoring me and granting me the incredible experiences at the Summit. Below are some images of the wonderful memories that I made that weekend.



Thank you so much for sponsoring me to attend the Ontario Youth Summit. I had a wonderful time and I am so grateful for your support.

Best Regards,  
Noor Toeama