

The Eden Mills Eco Conference, Activating Your Environmental Voice

On Monday, October 19th The Eden Mills Carbon Neutral Youth Group and the Community Environmental Leadership Program co-hosted an environmental workshop at Camp Edgewood in Eden Mills. **The Eden Mills Eco Conference, Activating Your Environmental Voice**, was for environmental clubs in the Upper Grand District School Board. One hundred students from eight different schools attended the one day conference. The day was divided into four sections: **Voices of Environmental Clubs, Activating Your Environmental Voice, A Conversation Café** and **Voices of Elders**.

Voices of Environmental Clubs had three Environmental Clubs share what their club has done at their school in the last year. They explained what worked and how they organized their initiatives. Topics ranged from special Earth Week Activities and an Environmental Fashion Show to organizing School Recycling Programs. Centennial Secondary School, Norwell District Secondary School and our own Eden Mills Carbon Neutral Youth Club were the three clubs presenting. The Eden Mills Youth Group, represented by Lyon Lay, Robin Bresnahan and Julian Del Bal Bulluz, talked about the hamlet of Eden Mills, our Going Carbon Neutral Initiative, club activities, volunteering in the community and organizing the Earth Day Celebration each year.

Activating Your Environmental Voice saw three highly motivated and articulate environmental student leaders explain what they have done to share the environmental message, why they became involved in environmental issues and what they have learned being involved in their school's or community's environmental club. Leslie Bothwell represented Centennial SS, Anna Bishop from J. F. Ross spoke and Chris spoke from Norwell SS.

Voices of Environmental Elders had ten adult environmental leaders share with the students in smaller workshops, their area of environmental expertise. Workshops included how to organize tree planting at your school, led by Green Legacy's Rob Johnson, funding sources for environmental clubs by Stan Kozak now working for the Gosling Foundation, and local and organic food by Chris Jess from Centre Wellington Secondary School. We also had two workshop leaders from Eden Mills: -- Charles Simon spoke on Passive Solar energy and Libby Little on Straw Bale buildings. Both Charles and Libby took students on tours of their homes.

Over lunch, which was provided by the Eden Mills Youth Group and Centre Wellington's food cooking class, we had a **Conversation Café**. Students discussed two questions as they ate their lunch. The questions were "What challenges does your club face?" and "What are the most effective environmental projects you have been involved in?"

The day also included a number of quick warm up activities that energized students, got them interacting with each other and having fun. Students left with renewed energy and new ideas to take back to schools.

~Kit Bresnahan
October 27, 2009