

Blogging The Battle

Caring for Our Watersheds 2024: Ideas into Action

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The 2024 Caring for Our Watersheds contest engaged students from across Alberta this past year, encouraging them to preserve and improve their local watersheds through student-led solutions. The 2024 contest saw:

- 645 students reached
- 598 students submit 299 proposals
- 25 teachers support submissions from 18 schools
- 4 implemented projects from the Top Ten Finalists

Four student projects took their ideas and turned them into real-world changes that benefited their communities. Each of the efforts of these young leaders resulted in tangible changes within their watersheds.

Guardians of the Circle

Sadey, the creator of the Guardians of the Circle program, successfully implemented her project to bring land-based education to her school through mentorship. She led her classmates in mentoring younger students in holistic watershed conservation by including both Indigenous and Western perspectives. Through this project, students engaged the local community and became



facilitators of learning. By fostering education about local watershed issues and conservation from a young age, this project helps students build a deep and meaningful understanding of watershed conservation which may motivate them to take action and become stewardship-minded individuals.

Sadey addressed 5 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) through her project: *Quality Education, Clean Water and Sanitation, Climate Action, Life on Land, and Partnerships for the Goals*.

Pollinator Garden

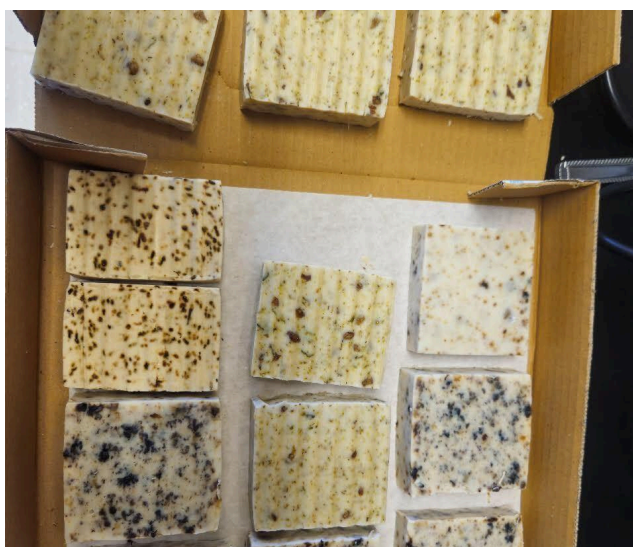


Julianna's project involved establishing a pollinator garden at her school. This garden was specifically designed to promote the health of native bee populations in Alberta by planting native plant species. She also educated her fellow students on the importance of bees, why their numbers are declining, and methods that everyone can implement to support

bee populations. Julianna sought to inspire her classmates to build pollinator gardens of their own through recruiting their involvement. Planting this pollinator garden has benefitted her local community by providing continuous support for native bees and other pollinator species, thereby promoting biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Julianna's project aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal of *Life on Land*.

Waste to Wash



Waste to Wash was a project created and implemented by Esther at her school. In order to address the issue of improper oil disposal and its impact on aquatic life and water quality, *Waste to Wash* involved recycling used cooking oil and repurposing it as

hand soap. Esther's simple soap recipe required only oil, NaOH, water, and either coffee grounds or tea leaves for scent, which made it incredibly cost effective. The soap created through this project was distributed throughout the community via the local farmers market and the school's student body, and helped convey the importance of reducing toxins from the environment.

The *Waste to Wash* project addressed the Sustainable Development Goals of *Responsible Consumption and Production*, *Clean Water and Sanitation*, and *Life on Land*.

Education by Rain Barrels

Alise, Maria, Makenna, and Sofia successfully implemented their project to encourage rainwater collection and use. This group purchased rain barrels and painted them with beautiful designs and advice for locals on how to care for their watershed, such as reducing fertilizer use and conserving water. The rain barrels were distributed



within their community, including to the local agricultural society. Through this project, the students engaged the local community and made an impact on their watershed through education as well as water collection and conservation.

The *Education by Rain Barrels* project aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal of *Clean Water and Sanitation*.

Get Involved

If you are interested in making a difference in your environment and community, consider taking part in the Caring for Our Watersheds program. There are many ways to support the program and encourage students from across Alberta to make a difference!

- Spread the Word: Please share about the contest with anyone who may be interested. The program is an excellent way for youth to become engaged in their communities and be mobilized to make a difference.
- Teachers: The BRWA offers virtual presentations across Alberta that are localized to your specific watershed. Book a presentation for your class to get them excited about the Caring for Our Watersheds contest.
- Students: Submit a proposal to make a difference in your watershed!

- Judging: We are always looking for community members to help with judging student proposals. There are multiple phases of judging:
 - Pre-Sort: Initial evaluation of proposals
 - Written Judging: Evaluation using the written rubric
 - Final Competition: In-person judging of the top 10 projects
- Mentoring: Students who are implementing their projects are paired with a mentor to guide them through the practical application of their project.
- Other Opportunities: If you have a special skill that could contribute to the finals or program, please let us know! We would love to have your support.

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